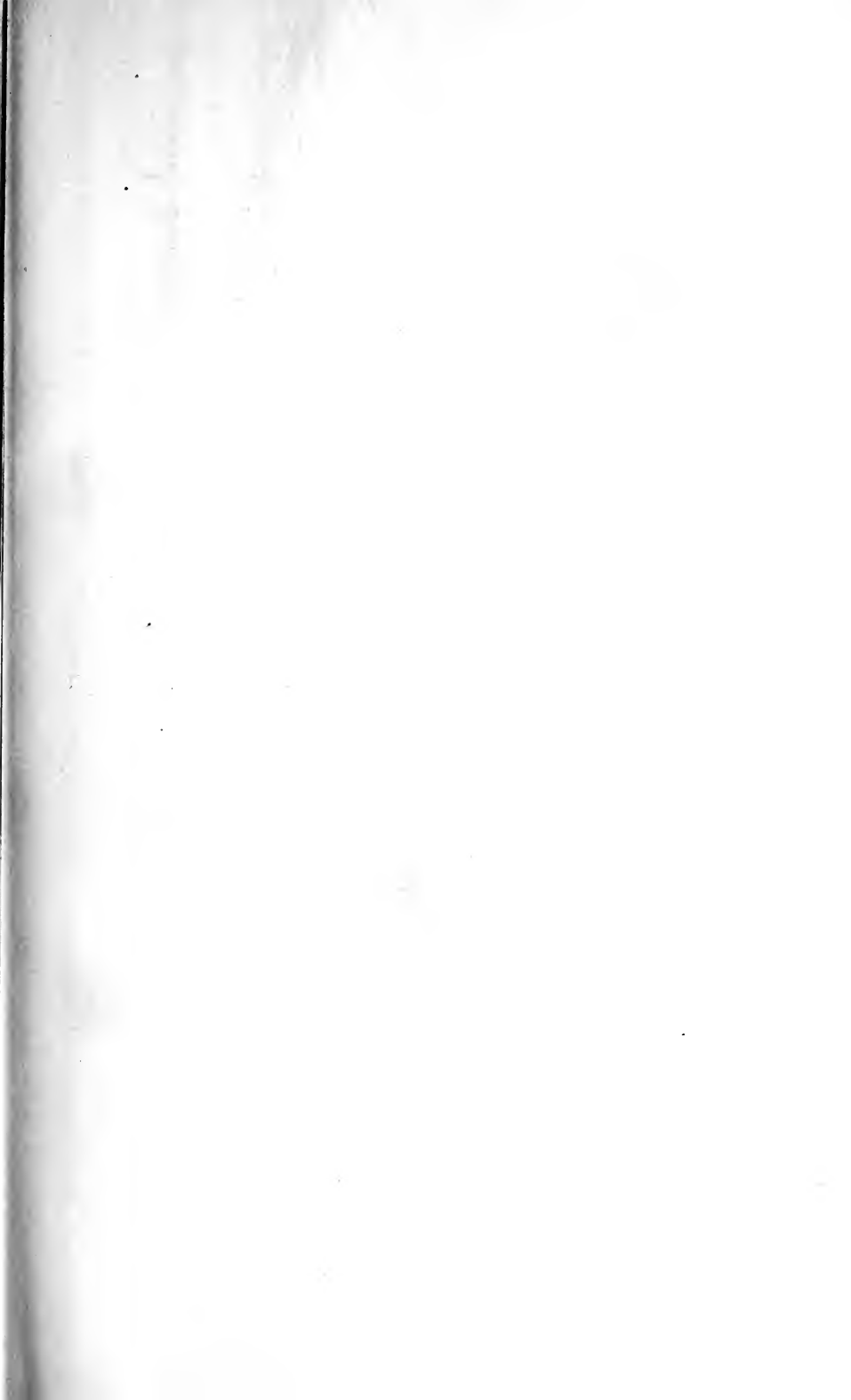


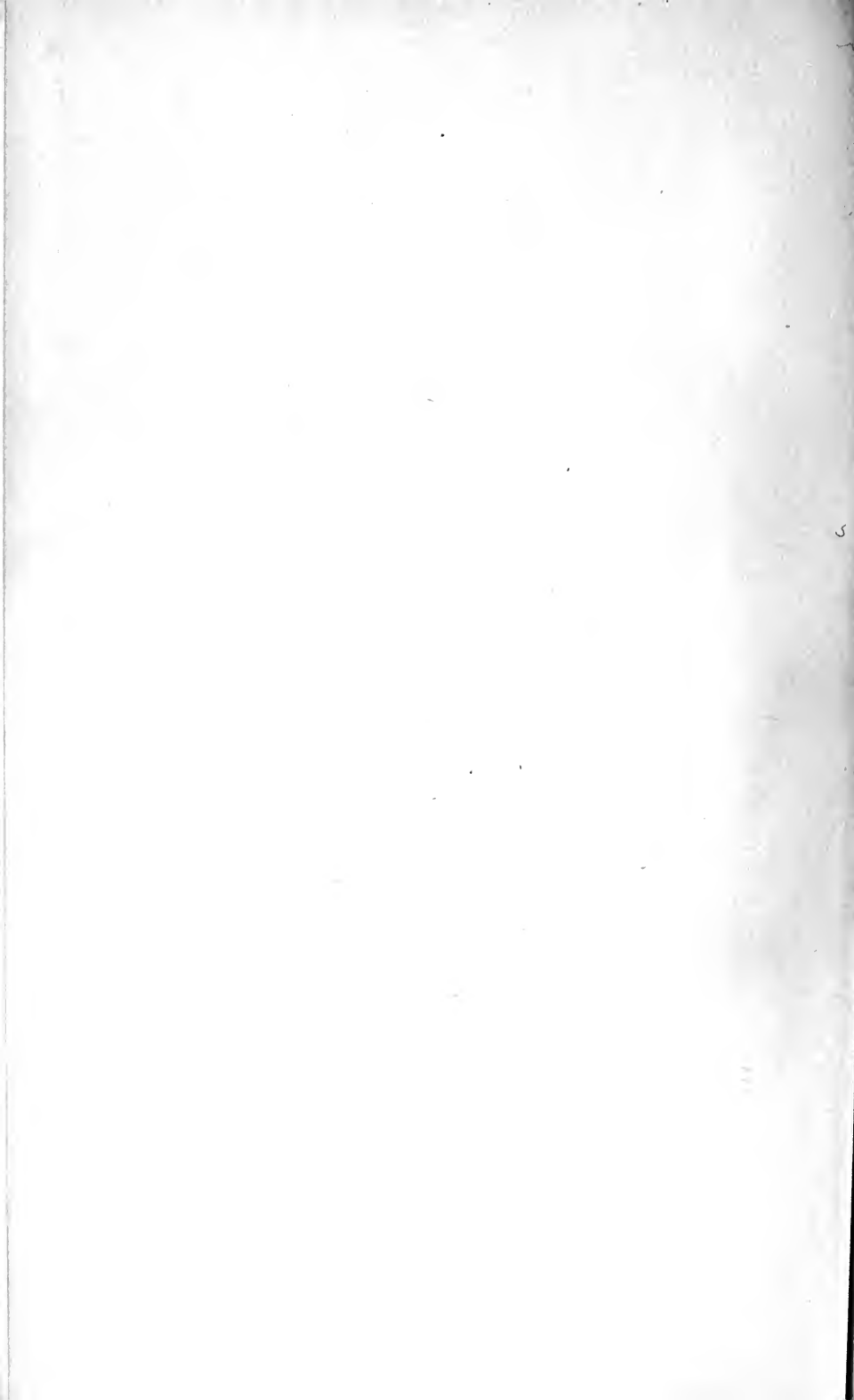
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STUDIES OF THE GREEK POETS

EARLY GREEK PHILOSOPHY.

By J. BURNET, M.A., LL.D., Professor of Greek in the United Colleges of St. Salvator and St. Leonard, St. Andrews.

Third Edition. *Demy 8vo, cloth.*

The first edition of this work was published in 1892, the second in 1908. It has been translated into German (1913) and into French (1919). The present edition (the third) has been brought up to date and largely rewritten. It is hoped that, in its present form, it will give a trustworthy account of the present state of our knowledge with regard to one of the most interesting periods in the history of human thought. It deals, in fact, with the origins of science, a subject which is beginning to excite great interest in wider circles than those of Greek scholars and philosophers.

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STUDIES OF THE GREEK POETS

BY

JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS

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TO
HENRY GRAHAM DAKYNS

MY DEAR GRAHAM,

It is about thirty years since I first set hand to the studies which compose these volumes. Our friendship, *Eheu Posthume*, has lasted during all this period.

It is twenty years since I first wrote a dedication of the *Studies of Greek Poets* to yourself. I now come again and ask you to accept this third edition.

I have rearranged the original studies in chronological order, adding one upon the newly-discovered *Mimiambi* of Herondas. I have also made certain additions of translated poems, which perhaps will form a feature of novelty. But, otherwise, I have left the substance of the book unaltered. I felt that it would be impossible to rehandle the style without entirely destroying its specific quality.

You know in what way the two Series of *Studies of Greek Poets* grew up. Some of the earliest were the recreations of my leisure hours during enforced sojourns upon the shores of the Riviera. Then came the Lectures which I delivered to the Sixth Form of Clifton College, at a bright and happy period of my life. Others have been composed from time to time, as inclination prompted, or as it seemed desirable to fill in gaps and to complete the scheme.

From a work of this kind unity of style and symmetry of plan are not to be expected. I hope that a certain freshness of feeling and spontaneity of expression may make up for what is deficient in systematic treatment.

Anyhow, pray accept the book again as a sign of my unalterable affection after the lapse of what is counted as a generation in the life of humanity.

JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS.

VENICE, 560 ZATTERE, March 19, 1893.



NOTE

I WISH to express my sincere thanks to Mr. Walter Headlam, of King's College, Cambridge, for the assistance he gave me in revising the English version of *Herondas*. I may take occasion here to mention Mr. Headlam's scholarly translation into English verse of *Fifty Poems of Meleager* (Macmillan, 1890).



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CHAPTER I

THE PERIODS OF GREEK LITERATURE

Language and Mythology—The Five Chief Periods of Greek Literature—
The First Period: Homer—Religion and State of the Homeric Age
—Achilles and Ulysses—Second Period: Transition—Breaking up of
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Sciences—Theocritus—the University of Athens—Sophistic Literature—
Byzantium—Hellas and Christendom.

THE most fascinating problems of history are veiled as closely from our curiosity as the statue of Egyptian Isis. Nothing is known for certain about the emergence from primitive barbarism of the great races, or about the determination of national characteristics. Analogies may be adduced from the material world; but the mysteries of organised vitality remain impenetrable. What made the Jew a Jew, the Greek a Greek, is as unexplained as what daily causes the germs of an oak and of an ash to produce different trees. All we know is that in the womb of the vague and infinitely distant past, the embryos of races were nourished into form and individuality by means of the unseen cord which attaches man to nature, his primitive mother. But the laws of that rudimentary growth are still unknown; "the abysmal depths of Personality" in nations as in men remain unsounded: we cannot even experimentalise upon the process of ethnical development.

Those mighty works of art which we call languages, in the construction of which whole peoples unconsciously co-operated, the forms of which were determined not by individual genius, but by the instincts of successive generations acting to one end inherent in the nature of the race:—those poems of pure thought and fancy, cadenced not in words but in living imagery, fountain-heads of inspiration, mirrors of

the mind of nascent nations, which we call Mythologies :—these surely are more marvellous in their infantine spontaneity than any more mature production of the races which evolved them. Yet we are utterly ignorant of their embryology : the true science of Origins is as yet not even in its cradle.

Experimental philologists may analyse what remains of early languages, may trace their connections and their points of divergence, may classify and group them. But the nature of the organs of humanity which secreted them is unknown, the problem of their vital structure is insoluble. Antiquarian theorists may attempt to persuade us that Myths are decayed, disintegrated, dilapidated phrases, the meaning of which had been lost to the first mythopœists. But they cannot tell us how these splendid flowers, springing upon the rich soil of rotting language, expressed in form and colour to the mental eye the thoughts and aspirations of whole races, and presented a measure of the faculties to be developed during long ages of expanding civilisation. If the boy is father of the man, Myths are the parents of philosophies, religions, politics.

To those unknown artists of the prehistoric age, to the language-builders and myth-makers, architects of cathedrals not raised with hands but with the Spirit of man for Humanity to dwell therein, poets of the characters of nations, sculptors of the substance of the very soul, melodists who improvised the themes upon which subsequent centuries have written variations, we ought to erect our noblest statues and our grandest temples. The work of these first artificers is more astonishing in its unconsciousness, more effective in its spontaneity, than are the deliberate and calculated arts of sculptor, painter, poet, philosopher, and lawgiver of the historic periods.

Some such reflections as these are the natural prelude to the study of a literature like that of the Greeks. Language and Mythology form the vestibules and outer courts to Homer, Pheidias, Lycurgus.

It is common to divide the history of Greek literature into three chief periods : the first embracing the early growth of Poetry and Prose before the age in which Athens became supreme in Hellas—that is, anterior to about 480 B.C. ; the second coinciding with the brilliant maturity of Greek genius during the supremacy of Athens—that is, from the termination of the Persian war to the age of Alexander ; the third extending over the Decline and Fall of the Greek spirit after Alexander's death—that is, from 323 B.C., and onwards, to the final extinction of Hellenic civilisation. There is much to be said in favour of this division. Indeed, Greek history falls naturally into these three sections. But a greater degree of accuracy may be attained by breaking up the first and last of these divisions, so as to make five periods instead of three. After having indicated these five periods in outline, we will return to the separate consideration of them in detail and in connection with the current of Greek history.

The first may be termed the Heroic, or Prehistoric, or Legendary

period. It ends with the first Olympiad, 776 B.C., and its chief monuments are the epics of Homer and Hesiod. The second is a period of transition from the Heroic or Epical to that of artistic maturity in all the branches of literature. In this stage history, properly so-called, begins. The Greeks try their strength in several branches of composition. Lyrical, Satirical, Moral, and Philosophical poetry supplant the Epic. Prose is cultivated. The first foundations of the Drama are laid. The earliest attempts at science emerge from the criticism of old mythologies. The whole mind of the race is in a ferment, and, for the moment, effort and endeavour are more apparent than mastery and achievement. This period extends from 776 to 477 B.C., the date of the Athenian league. The third period is that of the Athenian Supremacy. Whatever is great in Hellas is now concentrated upon Athens. Athens, after her brilliant activity during the Persian war, wins the confidence and assumes the leadership of Greece. Athens is the richest, grandest, most liberal, most cultivated, most enlightened state of Hellas. To Athens flock all the poets and historians and philosophers. The Drama attains maturity in her theatre. Philosophy takes its true direction from Anaxagoras and Socrates. The ideal of history is realised by Thucydides. Oratory flourishes under the great statesmen and the demagogues of the Republic. During the brief but splendid ascendancy of Athens, all the masterpieces of Greek literature are simultaneously produced with marvellous rapidity. Fixing 413 B.C. as the date of the commencement of Athenian Decline, our fourth period, which terminates in 323 B.C. with the death of Alexander, is again one of transition. The second period was transitional from adolescence to maturity. The fourth is transitional from maturity to old age. The creative genius of the Greeks is now less active. We have indeed the great names of Plato, Aristotle, and Demosthenes, to give splendour to this stage of national existence. But the sceptre has passed away from the Greek nation proper. Their protagonist, Athens, is in slavery. The civilisation which they had slowly matured, and which at Athens had been reflected in the masterpieces of Art and Literature, is now spread abroad and scattered over the earth. Asia and Egypt are Hellenised. The Greek spirit is less productive than it has been; but it is not less vigorous. It still asserts itself as the greatest in the world; but it does so, relying more upon its past acquirements than on any seeds of power that remain to be developed in the future. The fifth period, the longest of all, is one of decline and decay. It extends from 323 B.C. to the final extinction of classical civilisation. Two chief centres occupy our attention—Athens, where the traditions of art and philosophy yet linger, where the Stoics and Epicureans and the sages of the New Academy still educate the world and prepare a *nidus* for the ethics of Christianity—and Alexandria, where physical science is cultivated under the Ptolemies, where mystical theology flourishes in the schools of the Neoplatonists, where libraries are formed and the labour of literary criticism is conducted on a

gigantic scale, but where nothing new is produced except the single, most beautiful flower of Idyllic poetry and some few epigrams. In this fifth period, Rome and Byzantium, where the Greek spirit, still vital, overlives its natural decay upon a foreign soil, close the scene.

In these five periods—periods of superb adolescence, early manhood, magnificent maturity, robust old age, and senility—we can trace the genius of the Greeks putting forth its vigour in successive works of art and literature, concentrating its energy at first upon its own self-culture, then extending its influence in every direction, and controlling the education of humanity, finally contenting itself with pondering and poring on its past, with mystical metaphysics and pedantic criticism. Yet even in its extreme decadence the Hellenic spirit is still potent. It still assimilates, transmutes, and alchemises what it works upon. Coming into contact with the new and mightier genius of Christianity, it forces even that first-born of the Deity to take form from itself. One dying effort of the Greek intellect, if we may so speak, is to formulate the dogma of the Trinity and to impress the doctrine of the Logos upon the author of the Gospel of St. John. The analogy between the history of a race so undisturbed in its development as the Greek, and the life of a man, is not altogether fanciful. A man like Goethe, beautiful in soul and body, exceedingly strong and swift and active and inquisitive in all the movements of his spirit, first lives the life of the senses and of physical enjoyment. His soul, "immersed in rich foreshadowings of the world," has scarcely begun to think consciously in the first period. But he feels the glory of existence, the strivings of inexhaustible energy, the desire of infinite expansion. The second period is one of *Sturm und Drang*. New things are learned: much of the beautiful physical activity is sacrificed; he discovers that life involves care and responsibility as well as pleasure; he concentrates his mental faculty on hard and baffling study, in which at first he halts and falters. Then he goes forth to the world and wins great fame, and does the deeds and thinks the thoughts by which he shall be known to all posterity. His physical and mental faculties are now in perfect harmony; together they offer him the noblest and most enduring pleasures. But after a while his productiveness begins to dwindle. He has put forth his force, has fully expressed himself, has matured his principles, has formed his theory of the world. Our fourth period corresponds to the early old age of such a man's life. He now applies his principles, propagates his philosophy, subordinates his fancy, produces less, enjoys with more sobriety and less exhilaration, bears burdens, suffers disappointments, yet still, as Solon says, "learns always as he grows in years." Then comes the fifth stage. He who was so vigorous and splendid, now has but little joy in physical life; his brain is dry and withering; he dwells on his old thoughts, and has no faculty for generating new ones: yet his soul contains deep mines of wisdom; he gives counsel and frames

laws for younger generations. And so he gradually sinks into the grave. His acts remain : his life is written.

The great name of Homer covers the whole of the first period of Greek Literature. It is from the Homeric poems alone that we can form a picture to our imagination of the state of society in prehistoric Hellas. The picture which they present is so lively in its details, and so consistent in all its parts, that we have no reason to suspect that it was drawn from fancy. Its ideal, as distinguished from merely realistic, character is obvious. The poet professes to sing to us of heroes who were of the seed of gods, whose strength exceeded tenfold the strength of actual men, and who filled the world with valiant deeds surpassing all that their posterity achieved. Yet, in spite of this, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* may be taken as faithful mirrors of a certain phase of Greek society, just as the *Nibelungen Lied*, the romances of Charlemagne, and the tales of the Round Table reflect three stages in the history of feudalism. We find that in this earliest period of Greek history the nation was governed by monarchs each of whom claimed descent from a god. Thus the kings exercised their power over the people by divine right ; but at the same time a necessary condition of their maintaining this supremacy was that they should be superior in riches, lands, personal bravery, and wisdom. Their subjects obeyed them, not merely because they were *Διογενεῖς* (of kinship with Zeus), or because they were Fathers of the people, but also, and chiefly, because they were the ablest men, the men fitted by nature to rule, the men who could be depended upon in an emergency. The king had just so much personal authority as he had ability to acquire or to assert. As soon as this ability failed, the sceptre departed from him. Thus Laertes overlives his royalty ; and the suitors of Penelope, fancying that Ulysses is dead, take no heed of Telemachus, who ought to rule in his stead, because Telemachus is a mere lad ; but as soon as the hero returns, and proves his might by stringing the bow, the suitors are slain like sheep. Again, Achilles, while acknowledging the sway of Agamemnon, quarrels with him openly, proving his equality and right to such independence as he can assert for himself. The bond between the king in the Heroic age and his chieftains was founded on the personal superiority of the suzerain, and upon the necessity felt for the predominance of one individual in warfare and council. The chiefs were grouped around the monarch like the twelve peers round Charlemagne, or like the barons, whose turbulence Shakespeare has described in *Richard II.* The relation of the Homeric sovereign to his princes was, in fact, a feudal one. Olympus repeats the same form of government. There Zeus is monarch simply because he wields the thunder. When Heré wishes to rebel, Hephæstus advises her to submit, because Zeus can root up the world, or hurl them all from the crystal parapet of heaven. Such, then, is the society of kings and princes in Homer. They stand forth in brilliant relief against the background, gray, and misty, of the common

people. The masses of the nation, like the Chorus in Tragedy, kneel passive, deedless, appealing to heaven, trembling at the strokes of fate, watching with anxiety the action of the heroes. Meanwhile the heroes enact their drama for themselves. They assume responsibility. They do and suffer as their passions sway them. Of these the greatest, the most truly typical, is Achilles. In Achilles, Homer summed up and fixed for ever the ideal of the Greek character. He presented an imperishable picture of their national youthfulness, and of their ardent genius, to the Greeks. The "beautiful human heroism" of Achilles, his strong personality, his fierce passions controlled and tempered by divine wisdom, his intense friendship and love that passed the love of women, above all, the splendour of his youthful life in death made perfect, hovered like a dream above the imagination of the Greeks, and insensibly determined their subsequent development. At a later age this ideal was destined to be realised in Alexander. The reality fell below the ideal: for *rien n'est si beau que la fable, si triste que la vérité*. But the life of Alexander is the most convincing proof of the importance of Achilles in the history of the Greek race.

If Achilles be the type of the Hellenic genius, radiant, adolescent, passionate; as it still dazzles us in its artistic beauty and unrivalled physical energy; Ulysses is no less a true portrait of the Greek as known to us in history—stern in action, ruthless in his hatred, pitiless in his hostility; subtle, vengeful, cunning; yet at the same time the most adventurous of men, the most persuasive in eloquence, the wisest in counsel, the bravest and coolest in danger. The *Græculus esuriens* of Juvenal may be said to be the caricature in real life of the idealised Ulysses. And what remains to the present day of the Hellenic genius in the so-called *Greek nation* descends from Ulysses rather than Achilles. If the Homeric Achilles has the superiority of sculpturesque and dramatic splendour, the Homeric Ulysses beats him on the ground of permanence of type.

Homer, then, was the Poet of the Heroic age, the Poet of Achilles and Ulysses. Of Homer we know nothing, we have heard too much. Need we ask ourselves again the question whether he existed, or whether he sprang into the full possession of consummate art without a predecessor? That he had no predecessors, no scattered poems and ballads to build upon, no well-digested body of myths to synthesise, is an absurd hypothesis which the whole history of literature refutes. That, on the other hand, there never was a Homer,—that is to say, that some diaskeuast, acting under the orders of Pisistratus, gave its immortal outline to the colossus of the *Iliad*, and wove the magic web of the *Odyssey*—but that no supreme and conscious artist working toward a well-planned conclusion conceived and shaped these epics to the form they bear, appears to the spirit of sound criticism equally ridiculous. The very statement of this alternative involves a contradiction in terms; for such a diaskeuast must himself have been a supreme and conscious artist. Some Homer did exist. Some great

single poet intervened between the lost chaos of legendary material and the cosmos of artistic beauty which we now possess. His work may have been tampered with in a thousand ways, and religiously but inadequately restored. Of his age and date and country we may know nothing. But this we do *know*, that the fire of moulding, fusing, and controlling genius in some one single brain has made the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* what they are.¹

The Epic poet merges his personality in his poems, the words of which he ascribes to the inspiration of the Muse. The individual is nowhere, is forgotten in the subject and suppressed, while the luminous forms of gods and heroes move serenely across the stage, summoned and marshalled by the maidens of Helicon. In no other period of Greek literature shall we find the same unconsciousness of self, the same immersion in the work of Art. In this respect the poetry of the Heroic age answers to the condition of prehistoric Hellas, where as yet the elements of the Greek race remain still implicit in the general mass and undeveloped. We hear in Homer of no abrupt division between Dorians and Ionians. Athens and Sparta have not grown up into prominence as the two leaders of the nation. Argos is the centre of power; but Phthiotis, the cradle of the Hellenes, is the home of Achilles. Ulysses is an islander. In the same way, in Homer the art of the Greeks is still a mere potentiality. The artistic sentiment, indeed, exists in exquisite perfection; but it is germinal, not organised and expanded as it will be. We hear of embroidery for royal garments, of goldsmith's work for shields and breastplates, of stained ivory trappings for chariots and horses. But even here the poet's imagination had probably outrun the fact. What he saw with his fancy, could the heroic artisans have fashioned with their tools? Is not the shield of Achilles, like Dante's pavement of the Purgatorial staircase, a forecast of the future? Architecture and Sculpture at any rate can scarcely be said to exist. Ulysses builds his own house. The statues of the gods are fetishes. But, meanwhile, the foundation of the highest Greek art is being laid in the cultivation of the human body. The sentiment of beauty shows itself in dances and games, in the races of naked runners, in rhythmic processions, and the celebration of religious rites. This was the proper preparation for the aftergrowth of Sculpture. The whole race lived out its sculpture and its painting, rehearsed, as it were, the great works of Pheidias and Polygnotus in physical exercise before it learned to express itself in marble or in colour. The public games, which were instituted in this first period, further contributed to the cultivation of the sense of Beauty, which was inherent in the Greeks.

The second period is one of transition—in Politics, in Literature, in the Fine Arts. Everywhere the old landmarks are being broken

¹ I do not mean to assert by this that *one* poet composed both epics, but that each bears upon it the mark of unity in conception and execution. Whether the same poet produced both is a different question, and I am inclined to regard the *Odyssey* as a later work.

up, and the new ones are not yet fixed. The Heroic monarchies yield first of all to oligarchies, and then to tyrannies; the tyrannies in their turn give place to democracies, or to constitutional aristocracies. Argos, the centre of Heroic Hellas, is the first to change. Between 770 and 730 B.C. Pheidon usurps the sovereign power, and dies, leaving no dynasty behind him.¹ Between 650 and 500 we find despots springing up in all the chief Greek cities. At Corinth the oligarchical family of the Bacchiadæ are superseded by the tyrants Cypselus and Periander. At Megara the despot Theagenes is deposed and exiled. At Sicyon the Orthagoridæ terminate in the despot Cleisthenes, whose reign is marked by an attempt to supersede the ancient Doric order of government by caste. At Mitylene, Pittacus becomes a constitutional autocrat, or dictator for the public safety. At Samos, Polycrates holds a post of almost Oriental despotism. At Athens, we find the great family of the Pisistratidæ, who supersede the dynastic tyranny in commission of the house of Codrus. What is the meaning of these changes? How does the despot differ from the Heroic monarch, who held, as we have seen, his power by divine right, but who also had to depend for his ascendancy on personal prowess? Gradually the old respect for the seed of Zeus died out. Either the royal families abused their power, or became extinct, or, as in the case of Athens and Sparta, retained hereditary privileges under limitations. During this decay of the Zeus-born dynasties, the cities of Greece were a prey to the quarrels of great families; and it often happened that one of these obtained supreme power—in which case a monarchy, based not on divine right, but on force and fear, was founded; or else a few of the chief houses combined against the State, to establish an oligarchy. The oligarchies, owing their authority to no true, legal, or religious fount of honour, were essentially selfish, and were exposed to the encroachments of the more able among their own families. The cleverest man in an oligarchy tended to draw the power into his own hands; but in this he generally succeeded by first flattering, and then intimidating the people. Thus in one way or another the old type of dynastic government was superseded by despotisms, more or less arbitrary, tending to the tyranny of single individuals, or to the coalition of noble houses, and bringing with them the vices of greed, craft, and servile cruelty. The political ferment caused a vast political excitement. Party strove against party; and when one set gained the upper hand, the other had to fly. The cities of Hellas were filled with exiles. Diplomacy and criticism occupied the minds of men. Personal cleverness became the one essential point in politics. But two permanent advantages were secured by this anarchy to the Greeks. The one was a strong sense of the equality of citizens; the other a desire for established law, as opposed to the caprice of individuals and to the clash of factions in the State.

¹ The date of Pheidon is in truth unfixed. According to recent calculations, he may have celebrated the 28th and not the 8th Olympiad. The involved alteration in his date would bring him into closer connection with the other despots.

This then is the first point which marks the transitional period. The old monarchies break up, and give place to oligarchies first, and then to despotism. The tyrants maintain themselves by violence and by flattering the mob. At last they fall, or are displaced, and then the states agree to maintain their freedom by the means of constitutions and fixed laws. The despots are schoolmasters, who bring the people to *Nomos* (established laws and constitutions) as their lord.

Three other general features distinguish this period of transition. The first is Colonisation. In the political disturbances which attend the struggle for power, hundreds of citizens were forced to change their residence. So we find the mother cities sending settlers to Italy, to Sicily, to Africa, to the Gulf of Lyons, to Thrace, and to the islands. In these colonies the real life and vigour of Hellas show themselves at this stage more than in the mother states. It is in Sicily, on the coast of Magna Græcia, on the sea-board of Asia Minor, in the islands of the Ægean, that the first poets and philosophers and historians of Greece appear. Sparta and Athens, destined to become the protagonists of the real drama of Hellas, are meanwhile silent and apparently inert. Secondly, this is the age of the *Nomothetæ*. Thebes receives a constitution from the Corinthian lovers and lawgivers Philolaus and Diocles. Lycurgus and Solon form the states of Sparta and Athens. It is not a little wonderful to think of these three great cities, successively the leaders of historic Hellas, submitting to the intellect each of its own lawgiver, taking shape beneath his hands, cheerfully accepting and diligently executing his directions. Lastly, it is in this period that the two chief races of the Greeks—the Ionians and the Dorians—emerge into distinctness. Not only are Athens and Sparta fashioned to the form which they will afterwards maintain; but also in the colonies two distinct streams of thought and feeling begin to flow onwards side by side, and to absorb, each into its own current, those minor rivulets which it could best appropriate.

What happens to literature in this period of metamorphosis, expansion, and anarchy? We have seen that Homer covers the whole of the first period of literature; and in the Homeric poems we saw that the interests of the present were subordinated to a splendid picture of the ideal past, that the poet was merged in his work, that the individual joys and sorrows of the artist remained unspoken, and that his words were referred immediately to the Muse. All this is now to be altered. But meanwhile between the first and second period a link is made by Hesiod. In his *Works and Days* he still preserves the traditions of the Epic. But we no longer listen to the deeds of gods and heroes; and though the Muse is invoked, the poet appears before us as a living, sentient, suffering man. We descend to earth. We are instructed in the toils and duties of the beings who have to act and endure upon the prosaic stage of the world, as it exists in the common light of the present time. Even in Hesiod there has therefore been a change. Homer strung his lyre in the halls of princes who

loved to dwell on the great deeds of their god-descended ancestors. Hesiod utters a weaker and more subdued note to the tillers of the ground and the watchers of the seasons. In Homer we see the radiant heroes expiring with a smile upon their lips as on the Æginetan pediment. In Hesiod we hear the low sad outcry of humanity. The inner life, the daily loss and profit, the duties and the cares of men are his concern. Homer, too, was never analytical. He described the world without raising a single moral or psychological question. Hesiod poses the eternal problems: What is the origin and destiny of mankind? Why should we toil painfully upon the upward path of virtue? How came the gods to be our tyrants? What is Justice? How did evil and pain and disease begin? After Hesiod the Epical impulse ceases. Poets, indeed, go on writing narrative poems in hexameters. But the Cycle, so called by the Alexandrian critics, produced about this time, had not innate life enough to survive the wear and tear of centuries. We have lost the whole series, except in the tragedies which were composed from their materials. Literature had passed beyond the stage of the heroic Epic. The national ear demanded other and more varied forms of verse than the hexameter. Among the Ionians of Asia Minor was developed the pathetic melody of the Elegiac metre, which first apparently was used to express the emotions of love and sorrow, and afterwards came to be the vehicle of moral sentiment and all strong feeling. Callinus and Tyrtaeus adapted the Elegy to songs of battle. Solon consigned his wisdom to its couplets, and used it as a trumpet for awakening the zeal of Athens against her tyrants. Mimnermus confined the metre to its more plaintive melodies, and made it the mouthpiece of lamentations over the fleeting beauty of youth and the evils of old age. In Theognis the Elegy takes wider scope. He uses it alike for satire and invective, for precept, for autobiographic grumblings, for political discourses, and for philosophical apophthegms. Side by side with the Elegy arose the various forms of Lyric poetry. The names of Alcæus and Sappho, of Alcman, Anacreon, Simonides, Bacchylides, Stesichorus, Arion instantly suggest themselves. But it must be borne in mind that Lyric poetry in Greece at a very early period broke up into two distinct species. The one kind gave expression to strong personal emotion and became a safety-valve for perilous passions: the other was choric and complex in its form; designed for public festivals and solemn ceremonials, it consisted chiefly of odes sung in the honour of gods and great men. To the former or personal species belong the lyrics of the Ionian and Æolian families; to the latter, or more public species, belong the so-called Dorian odes. Besides the Elegy and all the forms of lyric stanza, the Iambic, if not invented in this period, was now adapted of set purpose to personal satire.¹ Archilochus is said to have preferred this metre, as being the closest in its form to common speech, and therefore suited to his

¹ The *Margites* and *Eiresione*, attributed by the Greeks to Homer, contain possibly the earliest fragments of Iambic verses.

unideal practical invective. From the lyric Dithyrambs of Arion, sung at festivals of Dionysus, and from the Iambic satires of Archilochus, recited at the feasts of Demeter,¹ was to be developed the metrical structure of the drama in the third period. As yet, it is only among the Dorians of Sicily and of Megara that we hear of any mimetic shows, and these of the simplest description.

In this period the first start in the direction of philosophy was made. The morality which had been implicit in Homer, and had received a partial development in Hesiod, was condensed in proverbial couplets by Solon, Theognis, Phocylides, and Simonides. These couplets formed the starting-points for discussion. Many of Plato's dialogues turn on sayings of Theognis and Simonides. Many of the sublimer flights of meditation in Sophocles are expansions of early Gnomes. Even the Ethics of Aristotle are indebted to their wisdom. The ferment of thought produced by the political struggles of this age tended to sharpen the intellect and to turn reflection inwards. Hence we find that the men who rose to greatest eminence in statecraft as tyrants or as lawgivers are also to be reckoned among the primitive philosophers of Greece. The aphorisms of the Seven Sages, two of whom were Nomothetæ, and several of whom were despots, contain the kernel of much that is peculiar in Greek thought. It is enough to mention these: *μηδὲν ἄγαν μέτρον ἄριστον· γνῶθι σεαυτόν· καιρὸν γνῶθι· ἀνάγκη δ' οὐδὲ θεοὶ μάχονται*, which are the germs of subsequent systems of ethics, metaphysics, and theories of art.² Solon, as a patriot, a modeller of the Athenian constitution, an elegiac poet, one of the Seven Sages, and the representative of Greece at the court of Cræsus, may be chosen as the one most eminent man in a period when literature and thought and politics were to a remarkable extent combined in single individuals.

Meanwhile philosophy began to flourish in more definite shape among the colonists of Asia Minor, Italy, and Sicily. The criticism of the Theogony of Hesiod led the Ionian thinkers, Thales, Anaximenes, Anaximander, Heraclitus, to evolve separate answers to the question of the origin of the universe. The problem of the physical ἀρχή, or starting-point, of the world occupied their attention. Some more scientific theory of existence than mythology afforded was imperatively demanded. The same spirit of criticism, the same demand for accuracy, gave birth to history. The Theogony of Hesiod and the Homeric version of the Trojan war, together with the genealogies of the Heroes, were reduced to simple statements of fact, stripped of their artistic trappings, and rationalised after a rude and simple fashion by the annalists of Asia Minor. This zeal for greater rigour of thought was instrumental

¹ Satire, it is well known, was permitted at some of the festivals of Demeter; and the legend of the maid Iambë, who alone could draw a smile from Demeter, after she had lost Persephone, seems to symbolise the connection of Iambic recitations with the cultus of this goddess.

² Nothing overmuch: measure is best: know thyself: know the right moment: against necessity not even gods fight.

in developing a new vehicle of language. The time had come at length for separation from poetry, for the creation of a prose style which should correspond in accuracy to the logical necessity of exact thinking. Prose accordingly was elaborated with infinite difficulty by these first speculators from the elements of common speech. It was a great epoch in the history of European culture when men ceased to produce their thoughts in the fixed cadences of verse, and consigned them to the more elastic periods of prose. Heraclitus of Ephesus was the first who achieved a notable success in this new and difficult art. He for his pains received the title of δ σκοτεινός, the obscure; so strange and novel did the language of science seem to minds accustomed hitherto to nothing but metre. Yet even after his date philosophy of the deepest species was still conveyed in verse. The Eleatic metaphysicians Xenophanes and Parmenides—Xenophanes, who dared to criticise the anthropomorphism of the Greek Pantheon, and Parmenides, who gave utterance to the word of Greek ontology, τὸ ὄν, or Being, which may be significantly contrasted with the Hebrew I am—wrote long poems in which they invoked the Muse, and dragged the hexameter along the pathway of their argument upon the entities, like a pompous sacrificial vestment. Empedocles of Agrigentum, to whom we owe the rough and ready theory of the four elements, cadenced his great work on Nature in the same sonorous verse, and interspersed his speculations on the Cycles of the Universe with passages of brilliant eloquence.

Thus the second period is marked alike by changes in politics and society, and by a revolution in the spirit of literature. The old Homeric monarchies are broken up. Oligarchies and tyrannies take their place. To the anarchy and unrest of transition succeeds the demand for constitutional order. The colonies are founded, and contain the very pith of Hellas at this epoch: of all the great names we have mentioned, only Solon and Theognis belong to Central Greece. The Homeric Epos has become obsolete. In its stead we have the greatest possible variety of literary forms. The Elegiac poetry of morality and war and love; the Lyrical poetry of personal feeling and of public ceremonial; the Philosophical poetry of metaphysics and mysticism; the Iambic, with its satire; Prose, in its adaptation to new science and a more accurate historical investigation; are all built up upon the ruins of the Epic. What is most prominent in the spirit of this second period is the emergence of private interests and individual activities. No dreams of a golden past now occupy the minds of men. No gods or heroes fill the canvas of the poet. Man, his daily life, his most crying necessities, his deepest problems, his loves and sorrows, his friendships, his social relations, his civic duties—these are the theme of poetry. Now for the first time in Europe a man tells his own hopes and fears, and expects the world to listen. Sappho simply sings her love; Archilochus, his hatred; Theognis, his wrongs; Mimnermus, his *ennui*; Alcæus, his misfortunes; Anacreon, his pleasure of the hour; and their songs find an echo in all hearts. The Individual and the Present have

triumphed over the Ideal and the Past. Finally, it should be added that the chief contributions to the culture of the fine arts in this period are Architecture, which is carried to perfection; Music, which receives elaborate form in the lyric of the Dorian order; and Sculpture, which appears as yet but rudimentary upon the pediments of the temples of Ægina and Selinus.

Our third period embraces the supremacy of Athens from the end of the Persian to the end of the Peloponnesian war. It was the struggle with Xerxes which developed all the latent energies of the Greeks, which intensified their national existence, and which secured for Athens, as the central power on which the scattered forces of the race converged, the intellectual dictatorship of Hellas. No contest equals for interest and for importance this contest of the Greeks with the Persians. It was a struggle of spiritual energy against brute force, of liberty against oppression, of intellectual freedom against superstitious ignorance, of civilisation against barbarism. The whole fate of humanity hung trembling in the scales at Marathon, at Salamis, at Plataea. On the one side were ranged the hordes of Asia, tribe after tribe, legion upon legion, myriad by myriad, under their generals and princes. On the other side stood forth a band of athletes, of Greek citizens, each one himself a prince and general. The countless masses of the herd-like Persian host were opposed to a handful of resolute men in whom the force of the spirit of the world was concentrated. The triumph of the Greeks was the triumph of the spirit, of the intellect of man, of light dispersing darkness, of energy repelling a dead weight of matter. Other nations have shown a temper as heroic as the Greeks. The Dutch, for instance, in their resistance against Philip, or the Swiss in their antagonism to Burgundy and Austria. But in no other single instance has heroism been exerted on so large a scale, in such a fateful struggle for the benefit of mankind at large. Had the Dutch, for example, been quelled by Spain, or the Swiss been crushed by the House of Hapsburg, the world could have survived the loss of these athletic nations. There were other mighty peoples, who held the torch of liberty and of the spirit, and who were ready to carry it onward in the race. But if Persia had overwhelmed the Greeks upon the plains of Marathon or in the straits of Salamis, that torch of spiritual liberty would have been extinguished. There was no runner in the race to catch it up from the dying hands of Hellas, and to bear it forward for the future age. No: this contest of the Greeks with Persia was the one supreme battle of history; and to the triumph of the Greeks we owe whatever is most great and glorious in the subsequent achievements of the human race.

Athens rose to her full height in this duel. She bore the brunt of Marathon alone. Her generals decided the sea-fight of Salamis. For the Spartans it remained to defeat Mardonius at Plataea. Consequently the olive-wreath of this more than Olympian victory crowned Athens. Athens was recognised as Saviour and Queen of Hellas. And Athens, who had fought the battle of the Spirit—by Spirit we mean the

greatness of the soul, liberty, intelligence, civilisation, culture, everything which raises men above brutes and slaves, and makes them free beneath the arch of heaven—Athens who had fought and won this battle of the Spirit, became immediately the recognised impersonation of the Spirit itself. Whatever was superb in human nature found its natural home and sphere in Athens. We hear no more of the colonies. All great works of Art and Literature now are produced in Athens. It is to Athens that the sages come to teach and to be taught. Anaxagoras, Socrates, Plato, the three masters of philosophy in this third period, are Athenians. It is, however, noticeable and significant that Anaxagoras, who forms a link between the philosophy of the second and third period, is a native of Clazomenæ, though the thirty years of his active life are spent at Athens. These thinkers introduce into speculation a new element. Instead of inquiries into the factors of the physical world or of ontological theorising, they approach all problems which involve the activities of the human soul, the presence in the universe of a controlling Spirit. Anaxagoras issues the famous apophthegm, *νοῦς πάντων κρατεῖ*: “intelligence disposes all things in the world.” Socrates founds his ethical investigation upon the Delphian precept, *γνώθι σεαυτόν*: or, “the proper study of mankind is man.” Plato, who belongs chronologically to the fourth period, but who may here be mentioned in connection with the great men of the third, as synthesising all the previous speculations of the Greeks, ascends to the conception of an ideal existence which unites Truth, Beauty, and Goodness in one scheme of universal order.

At the same time Greek art rises to its height of full maturity. Ictinus designs the Parthenon, and Mnesicles the Propylæa; Pheidias completes the development of Sculpture in his statue of Athene, his pediment and friezes of the Parthenon, his chryselephantine image of Zeus at Olympia, his marble Nemesis upon the plain of Marathon. These were the ultimate, consummate achievements of the sculptor's skill; the absolute standards of what the statuary in Greece could do. Nothing remained to be added. Subsequent progression—for a progression there was in the work of Praxiteles—was a deflection from the pure and perfect type.

Poetry, in the same way, receives incomparable treatment at the hands of the great dramatists. As the Epic of Homer contained implicitly all forms of poetry, so did the Athenian Drama consciously unite them in one supreme work of art. The energies aroused by the Persian war had made action and the delineation of action of prime importance to the Greeks. We no longer find the poets giving expression to merely personal feeling, or uttering wise saws and moral precepts, as in the second period. Human emotion is indeed their theme; but it is the phases of passion in living, acting, and conflicting personalities which the Drama undertakes to depict. Ethical philosophy is more than ever substantive in verse; but its lessons are set forth¹ by example and not by precept—they animate the conduct of whole² trilogies. The awakened activity of Hellas at this period produced the

first great drama of Europe, as the Reformation in England produced the second. The Greek Drama being essentially religious, the tragedians ascended to Mythology for their materials. Homer is dismembered, and his episodes or allusions, together with the substance of the Cyclic poems, supply the dramatist with plots. But notice the difference between Homer and Æschylus, the Epic and the Drama. In the latter we find no merely external delineation of mythical history. The legends are used as outlines to be filled in with living and eternally important details. The heroes are not interesting merely as heroes, but as the types and patterns of human nature, as representatives on a gigantic scale of that humanity which is common to all men in all ages, and as subject to the destinies which control all human affairs. Mythology has thus become the text-book of life, interpreted by the philosophical consciousness. With the names of Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, must be coupled that of Aristophanes. His Comedy is a peculiarly Athenian product—the strongest mixture of paradox and irony and broad buffoonery and splendid poetry, designed to serve a serious aim, the world has ever seen. Here the many-sided, flashing genius of the Ionian race appears in all its subtlety, variety, suppleness, and strength. The free spirit of Athens runs riot and proclaims its liberty by license in the prodigious saturnalia of the wit of Aristophanes.

It remains to be added that to this period belong the histories of Herodotus, the Halicarnassean by birth, who went to Thurii as colonist from Athens, and of Thucydides, the Athenian general; the lyrics of Pindar the Theban, who was made the public guest of Athens; the eloquence of Pericles, and the wit of Aspasia. This brief enumeration suffices to show that in the third period of Greek Literature was contained whatever is most splendid in the achievements of the genius of the Greeks, and that all these triumphs converged and were centred upon Athens.

The public events of this period are summed up in the struggle for supremacy between Athens and Sparta. The race which had shown itself capable of united action against the common foe, now develops within itself two antagonistic and mutually exclusive principles. The age of the despots is past. The flowering-time of the colonies is over. The stone of Tantalus in Persia has been removed from Hellas. But it remains for Sparta and Athens to fight out the duel of Dorian against Ionian prejudices, of Oligarchy against Democracy. Both states have received their definite stamp, or permanent *ἦθος*—Sparta from semi-mythical Lycurgus; Athens from Solon, Cleisthenes, and Pericles. Their war is the warfare of the powers of the land with the powers of the sea, of Conservatives with Liberals, of the rigid principle of established order with the expansive spirit of intellectual and artistic freedom. What is called the Peloponnesian war—that internecine struggle of the Greeks—is the historical outcome of this deep-seated antagonism. And the greatest historical narrative in the world, that of Thucydides, is its record. To dwell upon the events of this war would be superfluous.

Athens uniformly exhibits herself as a dazzling, brilliant, impatient power, led astray by the desire of novelty, and the intoxicating sense of force in freedom. Sparta proceeds slowly, coldly, cautiously; secures her steps; acts on the defensive; spends no strength in vain; is timid, tentative, and economical of energy; but at the decisive moment she steps in and crushes her antagonist. Deluded by the wandering fire of the inspiration of Alcibiades, the Athenians venture to abandon the policy of Pericles and to contemplate the conquest of Syracuse. A dream of gigantic empire, in harmony with their expansive spirit, but inconsistent with the very conditions of vitality in a Greek state, floated before their imaginations. In attempting to execute it, they over-reached themselves and fell a prey to Sparta. With the fall of Athens faded the real beauty and grandeur of Greece. Athens had incarnated that ideal of loveliness and sublimity. During her days of prosperity she had expressed it in superb works of art and literature, and in the splendid life of a free people governed solely by their own intelligence. Sparta was strong to destroy this life, to extinguish this light of culture. But to do more she had no strength. Stiffened in her narrow rules of discipline, she was utterly unable to sustain the spiritual vitality of Hellas, or to carry its still vigorous energy into new spheres. It remained for aliens to accomplish this.

Just before passing to the fourth period of comparative decline, we may halt a moment to contemplate the man who represents this age of full maturity. Pericles, called half in derision by the comic poets the Zeus of Athens, called afterwards, with reverence, by Plutarch, the Olympian—Pericles expresses in himself the spirit of this age. He is the typical Athenian, who governed Athens during the years in which Athens governed Greece, who formed the taste of the Athenians at the time when they were educating the world by the production of immortal works of beauty. We have seen that the conquest of the Persians was the triumph of the spirit, and that after this conquest the spirit of humanity found itself for the first time absolutely and consciously free in Athens. This spirit was, so to speak, incarnated in Pericles. The Greek genius was made flesh in him, and dwelt at Athens. In obedience to its dictates, he extended the political liberties of the Athenians to the utmost, while he controlled those liberties with the laws of his own reason. In obedience to the same spirit, he expended the treasures of the Ionian League upon the public works, which formed the subsequent glory of Hellas, and made her august even in humiliation. "That," says Plutarch, "which now is Greece's only evidence that the power she boasts of and her ancient wealth are no romance or idle story, was his construction of the public and sacred buildings." It was, again, by the same inspiration that Pericles divined the true ideal of the Athenian commonwealth. In the Funeral Oration he says: "We love the beautiful, but without ostentation or extravagance; we philosophise without being seduced into effeminacy; we are bold and daring; but this energy in action does not prevent us from giving to

ourselves a strict account of what we undertake. Among other nations, on the contrary, martial courage has its foundation in deficiency of culture; we know best how to distinguish between the agreeable and the irksome; notwithstanding which we do not shrink from perils." In this panegyric of the national character, Pericles has rightly expressed the real spirit of Athens as distinguished from Sparta. The courage and activity of the Athenians were the result of open-eyed wisdom, and not of mere gymnastic training. Athens knew that the arts of life and the pleasures of the intellect were superior to merely physical exercises, to drill, and to discipline.

While fixing our thoughts upon Pericles as the exponent of the mature spirit of free Hellas, we owe some attention to his master, the great Anaxagoras, who first made Reason play the chief part in the scheme of the universe. Of the relations of Anaxagoras to his pupil Pericles, this is what Plutarch tells us: "He that saw most of Pericles, and furnished him most especially with a weight and grandeur of sense, superior to all arts of popularity, and in general gave him his elevation and sublimity of purpose and of character, was Anaxagoras of Clazomenæ, whom the men of those times called by the name of Nous, that is, mind or intelligence; whether in admiration of the great and extraordinary gift he displayed for the science of nature, or because he was the first of the philosophers who did not refer the first ordering of the world to fortune or chance, nor to necessity or compulsion, but to a pure, unadulterated intelligence, which in all other existing mixed and compound things acts as a principle of discrimination, and of combination of like with like." Thus we may say, without mysticism, that at the very moment in history when the intelligence of mankind attained to freedom, there arose a philosopher in Anaxagoras to proclaim the freedom and absolute supremacy of intelligence in the universe; and a ruler in Pericles to carry into action the laws of that intelligence, and to govern the most uncontrollably free of nations by Reason. When Pericles died, Athens lost her Zeus, her head, her real king. She was left a prey to parties, to demagogues, to the cold encroaching policy of Sparta. But Pericles had lived long enough to secure the immortality of what was greatest in his city, to make of Athens in her beauty "a joy for ever."

"If the army of Nicias had not been defeated under the walls of Syracuse; if the Athenians had, acquiring Sicily, held the balance between Rome and Carthage, sent garrisons to the Greek colonies in the south of Italy, Rome might have been all that its intellectual condition entitled it to be, a tributary, not the conqueror, of Greece; the Macedonian power would never have attained to the dictatorship of the civilised states of the world." Such is the exclamation of Shelley over the fall of Athens. But, according to the Greek proverb, to desire impossibilities—in the past as in the present—is a sickness of the soul. No Greek state could have maintained its *ἦθος* (specific character in customs, institutions, and political temperament) while it ruled a

foreign empire ; nor is the right to govern measured by merely intellectual capacity. The work of Greece was essentially spiritual and not political. The chief sign of weakness which meets us in the fourth period is in the region of politics. After the humiliation of Athens, Sparta assumed the leadership of Greece. But she shamefully misused her power by betraying the Greek cities of Asia to the Persians, while her generals and harmosts made use of their authority for the indulgence of their private vices. Nothing in the previous training of the Spartan race fitted them for the control of nations with whose more liberal institutions and refined manners they could not sympathise. Their tyranny proved insupportable, and was at last reduced to the dust by the Thebans under Pelopidas and Epaminondas. But Thebes had neither the wealth nor the vigour to administer the government of Hellas. Therefore the Greek states fell into a chaos of discord, without leadership, without a generous spirit of mutual confidence and aid ; while at the same time the power of the Macedonian kingdom was rapidly increasing under the control of Philip. An occasion offered itself to Philip for interfering in the Greek affairs. From that moment forward for ever the cities of Greece became the fiefs of foreign despots. The occasion in question was a great one. The Phocians had plundered the Delphian temple, and none of the Greeks were strong enough to punish them. The act of the Phocians was parricidal in its sacrilege, suicidal in short-sightedness. Defiling the altar of the ancestral god, on whose oracles the states had hitherto depended for counsel, and destroying, with the sanctity of Delphi, the sacred symbol of Greek national existence, they abandoned themselves to desecration and dishonour. With as little impunity could a king of Judah have robbed the temple and invaded the Holiest of Holies. But neither Spartans, nor Athenians, nor yet Thebans arose to avenge the affront offered to their common nationality. The whole of Greece proper lay paralysed, and the foreigner stepped in—Philip, whom in their pride they had hitherto called the Barbarian. He took up the cause of Phœbus and punished the children of the Delphian god for their impiety. It was clearly proved to the states of Hellas that their independence was at an end. They submitted. Greece became the passive spectator of the deeds of Macedonia. Hellas, who had been the hero, was now the chorus. It was Alexander of Macedon who played the part of Achilles in her future drama.

One man vindicated the spirit of Greek freedom against this despotism. The genius of Athens, militant once more, but destined not to triumph, incarnates itself in Demosthenes. By dint of eloquence and weight of character he strives to stem the tide of dissolution. But it is in vain. His orations remain as the monuments of a valiant but ineffectual resistance. The old intelligence of Athens shines, nay, fulminates, in these tremendous periods ; but it is no longer intelligence combined with power. The sceptre of empire has passed from the hands of the Athenians.

Still, though the states of Greece are humiliated, though we hear no more of Ionians and Dorians, but only of Macedonians, yet the real force of the Greek race is by no means exhausted in this fourth period. On the contrary, their practical work in the world is just beginning. Under the guidance of Alexander, the Greek spirit conquers and attempts to civilise the East. The parallel between Alexander and Achilles, as before hinted, is more than accidental. Trained in the study of Homer as we are in the study of the Bible, he compared his destinies with those of the great hero, and formed himself upon the type of Pelides. At Troy he pays peculiar reverence to the tomb of Patroclus. He celebrates Hephæstion's death with Homeric games and pyres up-piled to heaven. He carries Homer with him on war-marches, and consults the *Iliad* on occasions of doubt. Alexander's purpose was to fight out to the end the fight begun by Achilles between West and East, and to avenge Greece for the injuries of Asia. But it was not a merely military conquest which he executed. Battles were the means to higher ends. Alexander sought to subject the world to the Greek spirit, to stamp the customs, the thoughts, the language, and the culture of the Greeks upon surrounding nations. Poets and philosophers accompanied his armies. In the deserts of Bactria and Syria and Libya he founded Greek cities. During the few years of his short life he not only swept those continents, but he effaced the past and inaugurated a new state of things throughout them; so that, in subsequent years, when the Romans, themselves refined by contact with the Greeks, advanced to take possession of those territories, they found their work half done. The alchemising touch of the Greek genius had transformed languages, cities, constitutions, customs, nay, religions also, to its own likeness. This fourth period, a period of transition from maturity to decay, is the period of Alexander. In it the Greek spirit, which had been gathering strength through so many generations, poured itself abroad over the world. What it lost in intensity and splendour, it gained in extension. It was impossible even for Greeks, while thus impressing their civilisation on the whole earth, to go on increasing in the beauty of their life and art at home.

Some of the greatest names in Art, Philosophy, and Literature still belong to this fourth period. The chief of all is Aristotle, *il maestro di color che sanno*, "the master of those who know," the absorber of all previous and contemporary knowledge into one coherent system, the legislator for the human intellect through eighteen centuries after his death. It is worth observing that Aristotle, unlike Socrates and Plato, is not a citizen of Athens, but of the small Thracian town Stageira. Thus, at the moment when philosophy lost its essentially Hellenic character and became cosmopolitan in Aristotle, the mantle devolved upon an alien. Again Aristotle was the tutor of Alexander. The two greatest men of the fourth period are thus brought into the closest relations. In pure literature the most eminent productions of this period are the orations of Æschines, Demosthenes, Isocrates; and the

comedies of Menander. It is not a little significant that we should have retained no authentic fragment of the speeches of Pericles—except in so far as we may trust Thucydides,—while the studied Rhetoric of these politically far less important orators should have been so copiously preserved. The reign of mere talk was imminent. Oratory was coming to be studied as an art, and practised, not as a potent instrument in politics, but as an end in itself. Men were beginning to think more of how they spoke than of what they might achieve by speaking. Besides, the whole Athenian nation, as dikasts and as ecclesiasts, were interested in Rhetoric. The first masters of eloquence considered as a fine art were therefore idolised. Demosthenes, Æschines, Isocrates, combined the fire of vehement partisans and impassioned politicians with the consummate skill of professional speech-makers. After their days Rhetoric in Greece became a matter of frigid display—an *ἀγώνισμα ἐς τὸ παράχρημα* (off-hand declamation). In the comedies of Menander, as far as we may judge of them from fragments and critiques, and from their Latin copies, a very noticeable change in the spirit of literature is apparent. The so-called New Comedy, of which he was the representative, is the product of a meditative and inactive age. The great concerns of the world, and of human life seen in its profoundest depth, which formed the staple of Aristophanes, have been abandoned. We are brought close to domesticities: the events of common life occupy the stage of Menander. The audience of Aristophanes listened with avidity to comedies of which politics upon the grandest scale were the substance. Menander invited his Athenians to the intrigues of young men, slaves, and hetairai, at warfare with niggardly parents. Athens has ceased to be an empress. She has become a garrulous housewife. She contents herself with amusements,—still splendid with intelligence and dignified with wisdom, but not weighty with the consciousness of power, nor throbbing with the pulses of superabundant youthfulness and vigour.

In the Fine Arts this fourth period was still inventive. Under Alexander painting, which had received its Hellenic character from Polygnotus and Zeuxis, continued to flourish with Apelles. Indeed, it may be fairly said that while Art in the Heroic period was confined to the perfecting of the human body, in the second period it produced Architecture, in the third Sculpture, and in the fourth Painting—this being apparently the natural order of progression in the evolution of the fine arts. Lysippus, meanwhile, worthily represents the craft of the statuary in Alexander's age; while the coins and gems of this time show that the glyptic and numismatic arts were at their zenith of technical perfection. Of Greek Music, in the absence of all sure information, it is difficult to speak. Yet it is probable that the age of Alexander witnessed a new and more complex development of orchestral music. We hear of vast symphonies performed at the Macedonian court. Nor is this inconsistent with what we know about the history of Art:

for music attains independence, ceases to be the handmaid of Poetry or Dancing, only in an age of intellectual reflectiveness. When nations have expressed themselves in the more obvious and external arts, they seek through harmonies and melodies to give form to their emotions.

The fifth, last, and longest period is one of Decline and Decay. But these words must be used with qualification when we speak of a people like the Greeks. What is meant is that the Greeks never recovered their national vigour or produced men so great as those whom we have hitherto been mentioning. The Macedonian empire prepared the way for the Roman: Hellenic civilisation put on the garb of servitude to Rome and to Christianity. Henceforth we must not look to Greece proper for the more eminent achievements of the still surviving spirit of the Greeks. Greek culture in its decadence has become the heritage of the whole world. Syrians, Egyptians, Phrygians, Romans, carry on the tradition inherited from Athens. Hellas is less a nation now than an intellectual commonwealth, a society of culture holding various races in communion. The spiritual republic established thus by the Greek genius prepares the way for Christian brotherhood; the liberty of the children of the Muses leads onward to the freedom of the sons of God.

In this period, the chief centres are first Alexandria and Athens, then Rome and Byzantium. The real successors of Alexander were his generals. But the only dynasty founded by them which rises into eminence by its protection of the arts and literature was the Ptolemaic. At Alexandria, under the Ptolemies, libraries were formed and sciences were studied. Euclid the geometer, Aratus the astronomer, Ptolemy the cosmographer, add lustre to the golden age of Alexandrian culture. Callimachus at the same time leads a tribe of learned poets and erudite men of letters. Dramas meant to be read, like Lycophron's *Cassandra*; epics composed in the study, like the *Argonautica* of Apollonius Rhodius, form the diversion of the educated world. Meanwhile the whole genus of parasitic *littérateurs* begin to flourish: grammarians, who settle and elucidate texts with infinite labour and some skill; sophists and rhetoricians, whose purpose in life it is to adorn imaginary subjects and to defend problematical theses with conceits of the fancy and ingenious subtleties of reasoning. A young man writing to his mistress, a dinner-seeker who has failed to get an invitation, Themistocles at the Persian court, celebrated statues, philosophical puzzles — everything that can be wordily elaborated, is grist for their mill. The art of writing without having anything particular to say, the sister art of quarrying the thoughts of other people and setting them in elaborate prolixities of style, are brought to perfection. At the same time, side by side with these literary moths and woodlice, are the more industrious ants, — the collectors of anecdotes, compilers of biographies, recorders of quotations, composers of all sorts of commonplace books, students of the paste-brush and scissors sort, to whom we owe much for the pre-

servation of scraps of otherwise lost treasures. Into such mechanical and frigid channels has the life of literature passed. Literature is no longer an integral part of the national existence, but a form of polite amusement. The genius of Hellas has nothing better to do than to potter about like a dilettante among her treasures.

The only true poets of this period are the Sicilian Idyllists. Over the waning day of Greek poetry Theocritus, Bion, and Moschus cast the sunset hues of their excessive beauty. Genuine and exquisite is their inspiration; pure, sincere, and true is their execution. Yet we agree with Shelley, who compares their perfume to "the odour of the tuberose, which overcomes and sickens the spirit with excess of sweetness." In the same way the erotic epigrammatists, though many of them genuine poets, especially the exquisite Meleager of Gadara, in the very perfection of their peculiar quality of genius offer an unmistakable sign of decay. It is the fashion among a certain class of modern critics to rave about the art of Decadence, to praise the hectic hues of consumption and even the strange livors of corruption more than the roses and the lilies of health. Let them peruse the epigrams of Meleager and of Straton. Of beauty in decay sufficient splendours may be found there.

While Alexandria was thus carrying the poetic tradition of Hellas to its extremity in the Idyll and the Epigram—carving cherrystones after the sculptor's mallet had been laid aside—and was continuing the criticism which had been set on foot by Aristotle, Athens persisted in her function of educating Europe. She remained a sort of university, in which the doctrines of Plato and Aristotle were adequately developed, though not in the most comprehensive spirit, by a crowd of Peripatetic and Academic sages, and where the founders of the Epicurean and Stoic schools gave a new direction to thought. It was during the first vigour of the Epicurean and Stoic teaching that the spirit of Hellas came into contact with the spirit of Rome. Hence Lucretius, Cicero, the Satirists—whatever, in fact, Rome may boast of philosophy, retains the tincture of the ethics of her schoolmasters. Rome, as Virgil proudly said, was called to govern—not to write poems or carve statues—but to quell the proud and spare the abject. Still she caught, to some extent, the æsthetic manners of her captive. Consequently, long after the complete political ascendancy of Rome was an established fact, and geographical Greece had become an insignificant province, the Hellenic spirit led the world. And some of its latest products are still dazzling in beauty, marvellous in ingenuity, Titanic in force. A few names selected from the list of Græco-Roman authors will be more impressive than much description. Plutarch of Chæronea, in the first century, the author of the great biographies; Lucian, the Syrian, in the second century, the master of irony and graceful dialogue and delicate description; Epictetus, the Phrygian slave, in the second century, who taught the latest form of Stoicism to the Romans, and had for his successor Marcus Aurelius; Philostratus of Lemnos, the

rhetorician and author of the life of Apollonius ; Plotinus, Porphyrius, and Proclus, the revivers of Platonic philosophy under a new form of mysticism at Alexandria during the third and fourth centuries ; Longinus, the critic, who adorned Palmyra in the third century ; Heliodorus of Emesa, Achilles Tattius, Longus, Musæus, the erotic novelists and poets of the fourth and fifth centuries ; these, not to mention the Christian fathers, are a few of the great men whom Greece produced in this last period. But now notice how miscellaneous in nationality and in pursuit they are. One only is a Greek of the old stock—Plutarch, the Bœotian. One is a slave from Phrygia. Another is a Roman Emperor. A fourth is a native of the desert city of Tadmor. Two are Syrians. One is a Greek of the Ægean. Another is an Egyptian. From this we may see how the genius of the Greeks had been spread abroad to embrace all lands. No fact better illustrates the complete leavening of the world by their spirit.

But considering that this fifth period may be said to cover six centuries, from the death of Alexander to about 300 after Christ,—for why should we continue our computation into the dreary regions of Byzantine dulness ?—it must be confessed that it is sterile in productiveness and inferior in the quality of its crop to any of the previous periods. Subtle and beautiful is the genius of Hellas still, because it *is* Greek ; strong and stern it is in part, because it has been grafted on the Roman character ; its fascinations and compulsions are powerful enough to bend the metaphysics of the Christian faith. Yet, after all, it is but a shadow of its own self.

After the end of the fourth century the iconoclastic zeal and piety of the Christians put an end practically to Greek art and literature. Christianity was at that time the superior force in the world ; and though Clement of Alexandria contended for an amicable treaty of peace between Greek culture and the new creed, though the two Gregories and Basil were, to use the words of Gibbon, “ distinguished above all their contemporaries by the rare union of profane eloquence and orthodox piety,” though the Bishops of the Church were selected from the ranks of scholars trained by Libanius and other Greek Sophists, yet the spirit of Christianity proved fatal to the spirit of Greek art. Early in the fifth century the Christian rabble at Alexandria, under the inspiration of their ferocious despot Cyril, tore in pieces Hypatia, the last incarnation of the dying beauty of the Greeks. She had turned her eye backwards to Homer and to Plato, dreaming that haply even yet the gods of Hellas might assert their power and resume the government of the world, and that the wisdom of Athens might supplant the folly of Jerusalem. But it was a vain and idle dream. The genius of Greece was effete. Christianity was pregnant with the mediæval and the modern world. In violence and bloodshed the Gospel triumphed. This rending in pieces of the past, this breaking down of temples and withering of illusions, was no doubt necessary. New wine cannot be poured into old bottles. No cycle succeeds another

cycle in human affairs without convulsions and revolutions that rouse the passions of humanity. It is thus that

“ God fulfils Himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.”

Yet even in this last dire struggle of the spirit of Pagan art with the spirit of Christian faith, when Beauty had become an abomination in the eyes of the Holiest, on the ruins, as it were, of the desecrated fanes of Hellas, weeds lovely in their rankness flourished. While Cyril's mobs were dismembering Hypatia, the erotic novelists went on writing about Daphnis, and Musæus sang the lamentable death of Leander. Nonnus was perfecting a new and more polished form of the hexameter. These were the last, the very swan's notes, of Greek poetry. In these faint and too melodious strains the Muse took final farewell of her beloved Hellas. And when, after the lapse of 1000 years, the world awoke upon the ruins of the past, these were among the first melodies which caught its ear. One of the three first Greek books issued from the Aldine press about the year 1493, and called by Aldus the “precursors,” was the poem of Hero and Leander. It was reprinted at Paris in 1507 by De Gourmont, at Alcala, in Spain, in 1514, and at Cologne in 1517 by Hirschhorn. Our Marlowe in the sixteenth century translated Musæus. The French Amyot translated Longus, and bequeathed to his nation a voluminous literature of pastorals founded upon the tale of Chloe. Tasso and Guarini, in Italy, caught the same strain; so that the accents of the modern Renaissance were an echo of the last utterances of dying Greece. The golden age of pastoral innocence, the *bell' età dell' oro*, of which the Alexandrians had been dreaming in the midst of their effete and decaying civilisation, fascinated the imagination of our immediate ancestors, when, four centuries ago, they found the Sun of Art and Beauty shining in the heavens, new worlds to conquer, and indefinite expansions of the spirit to be realised.

CHAPTER II

MYTHOLOGY

The Notion of a Systematic Pantheon—Homer and Hesiod—Mythology before Homer—Supposed Conditions of the Mythopœic Age—Vico—The Childhood of the World—Goethe's Boyhood—Mythology is a Body of Rudimentary Thought, penetrated with the Spirit of the Nation—Different Views of the Greek Myths—Grote—Relics of a Primitive Revelation—The Symbolic Hypothesis—Rationalism and Eucmerus—Fetishism—Poetic Theory—The Linguistic Theory—Comparative Philology—Solar Theory—The Myth of Herakles—Its Solar Interpretation—Its Ethical Significance—Summary of the Points suggested with regard to Mythology—Mediæval Myths—The Action of the Greek Intelligence upon Mythology—In Art—In Philosophy—Persistence of the National Polytheism—Homer Allegorised at Alexandria—Triumph of Christianity—The Greek Pantheon in the Middle Ages—Greek Mythology recovers Poetic and Artistic Value in the Renaissance.

It has been remarked with justice that, when we use the word Mythology, we are too apt to think of a Pantheon, of a well-defined hierarchy of gods, and demigods, and heroes, all fabulous indeed, but all arranged in one coherent system. This conception of Greek Mythology arises partly from the fact that we learn to know it in dictionaries, compiled from the works of authors who lived long after the age in which myths were produced, and partly from the fact that the conditions under which myth-making was a possibility are so far removed from us as to be almost unintelligible. Yet there is some truth in what, upon the whole, is an erroneous view. Although the Greek myths, in their origin, were not a well-digested system, still they formed a complete body of national thought, on which the intelligence of the Greek race, in its art and its religion, was continually working, until it took the final form in which we have it in our dictionaries. What remained in the Pantheon of Apollodorus and Hyginus, remained there by no freak of accident. What was omitted by Homer and by Hesiod was omitted by no operation of blind chance. The spirit of the Greeks was concerned in the purification and the

preservation of their myths, and the unity of that spirit constitutes the unity of their mythology.

Two great poets gave to Greek mythology the form which it maintained in the historic period. Herodotus says that "Homer and Hesiod named the gods, and settled their genealogies for the Hellenes." What this means is, that at a certain prehistoric epoch, the epoch of Epic poetry, mythology had passed from the primitive and fluid state, and had become the subject-matter of the arts. Between the mythopœic liberty of creation and the collections of the grammarians was interposed the poetry, the sculpture, and the religious ritual of the historic Greeks. What we have to deal with at the present moment is, not mythology as it appears in art, but the genesis of the myths conceived as a body of Greek thought and fancy in their infantine or rudimentary stages.

What was mythology before Homer? How did it come into existence? How were the Greeks brought to believe that there was a supreme father of gods and men called Zeus, a wise patroness of arts and sciences called Pallas, a pure and glorious and far-darting deity called Phœbus? There is no one who does not acknowledge something sublime and beautiful in this part of the Greek mythology. Even those who do not care to comprehend the growth of these conceptions, admit that the genius of the race shone with splendour peculiar to itself in their creation.

To this question must be counterpoised another. What are we to think about the many repulsive, grotesque, and hideous elements of Greek mythology—the incest and adultery of Zeus, the cannibalism of Kronos, the profligacy of Aphrodite, the cruelty of Phœbus? When thought began to be conscious of itself in Greece these abominations moved the anger of the philosophers. Xenophanes, Heraclitus, Pythagoras, Pindar, and Plato, in succession, recognised that the mythical fables were incompatible with the notion of deity, and rejected them forthwith. Modern students have been so disgusted by the same indecencies that some of them have abandoned Greek mythology as hopeless, while others have taken refuge in the extraordinary paradox that myths are a disease of language. These methods of dealing with the problem are alike unphilosophical. It is impossible for the historian to reject what formed the groundwork of religious and artistic thought in Greece. It is childish to represent the human mind as a sort of bound Mazeppa, stretched helpless on the wild horse, Language, which carries it away into the wilderness.

In order to understand the two questions which have been propounded, we must make a demand upon our imagination, and endeavour to return, in thought at least, to the conditions of a people in the mythopœic age—the age, that is to say, in which not only were myths naturally made, but all the thinking of a nation took the form of myths. We must go back to a time when there were no written records, when there were no systems of thought, when language

had not been subjected to analysis of any kind, when abstract notions were unknown, when science had not begun to exist, when history was impossible, and when the whole world was a land of miracles. There was no check then laid upon fancy, because nothing as yet was conceived as thought, but everything existed as sensation. In this infancy the nation told itself stories, and believed in them. The same faculties of the mind which afterwards gave birth to poetry and theology, philosophy and statecraft, science and history, were now so ill-defined and merely germinal that they produced but fables. Yet these faculties were vigorous and vivid. The fables they produced were infinite in number and variety, beautiful, and so pregnant with thought under the guise of fancy that long centuries scarcely sufficed for disengaging all that they contained. In dealing with Greek mythology it must be remembered that the nation with whose mythopœic imagination we are concerned, was the Greek nation. It had already in itself all Hellas, as the seed unfolds the plant.

A famous passage in Vico's work *Della Metafisica Poetica* may here be paraphrased, in order to make the conditions under which we must imagine myths to have arisen more intelligible :¹ "Poetry, which was the first form of wisdom, began with a system of thought, not reasoned or abstract, as ours is now, but felt and imagined, as was natural in the case of those primitive human beings who had developed no reasoning faculties, but were all made up of senses in the highest physical perfection, and of the most vigorous imaginations. In their total ignorance of causes they wondered at everything; and their poetry was all divine, because they ascribed to gods the objects of their wonder, and thought that beings like themselves but greater could alone have caused them. Thus they were like children, whom we notice taking into their hands inanimate things, and playing and talking with them as though they were living persons. When thunder terrified them, they attributed their own nature to the phenomenon; and, being apt to express their most violent passions by howls and roarings, they conceived heaven as a vast body, which gave notice of its anger by lightnings and thunderings. The whole of nature, in like manner, they imagined to be a vast animated body, capable of feeling and passion." Vico then proceeds to point out how difficult it is for us who, through long centuries, have removed ourselves as far as possible from the life of the instincts, senses, and imagination, whose language has become full of abstract terms, whose conception of the universe has been formed by science, whose thought is critical and reflective, and who have been educated in a rational theology, to comprehend the attitude of primitive humanity in its personifying stage of thought.

In this childhood of the world, when the Greek myths came into existence, the sun was called a shepherd, and the clouds were his sheep; or an archer, and the sunbeams were his arrows. It was

¹ The original is quoted in the notes to Grote, vol. i. p. 474.

easier then to think of the sea as a husky-voiced and turbulent old man, whose true form none might clearly know, because he changed so often and was so secret in his ways, who shook the earth in his anger, and had the white-maned billows of the deep for horses, than to form a theory of the tides. The spring of the year became a beautiful youth, beloved by the whole earth, or beloved like Hyacinthus by the sun, or like Adonis by the queen of beauty, over whom the fate of death was suspended, and for whose loss annual mourning was made. Such tales the Greeks told themselves in their youth ; and it would be wrong to suppose that deliberate fiction played any part in their creation. To conceive of the world thus was natural to the whole race ; and the tales that sprang up formed the substance of their intellectual activity. Here, then, if anywhere, we watch the process of a people in its entirety contributing to form a body of imaginative thought, projecting itself in a common and unconscious work of art. Nor will it avail to demur that behind the Greeks there stretched a dim and distant past, that many of their myths had already taken shape to some extent before the separation of the Aryan families. That is now an ascertained fact, the bearings of which will have to be discussed further on in this chapter. For the moment it is enough to reply that, not the similarities, but the differences, brought to light by the study of comparative mythology, are important for the historian of each several race. The raw material of silk may interest the merchant or the man of science ; the artist cares for the manufactured fabric, with its curious patterns and refulgent hues.

In order further to illustrate the conditions of the mythopœic age, a passage from the *Dichtung und Wahrheit* of Goethe might be quoted. If it is not a mere fancy to suppose that the individual lives, to some extent at least, in his own self the life of humanity, and therefore to conclude that the childhood of the world can be mirrored in the childhood of a man, a poet like Goethe is precisely fitted, by the record of his own boyhood, to throw light upon the early operations of the human mind. For, in one sense of the term, the mythopœic faculty never dies with poets ; in their own persons they prolong the youth and adolescence of the race, retaining the faculty, now lost to nearly all, of looking on the universe as living. Goethe, then, relates that when he was at school at Frankfort, he used to invent stories about himself and the places he frequented, half consciously, and half by a spontaneous working of his fancy. These stories he told to his school-fellows so vividly that they accepted them as fact. " It greatly rejoiced them," he says, " to know that such wonderful things could befall one of their own playmates ; nor was it any harm that they did not understand how I could find time and space for such adventures, as they must have been pretty well aware of all my comings and goings, and how I was occupied the whole day." He goes on to recount one of these marvellous narratives. The scene of it was laid in Frankfort, in a street familiar to his schoolfellows. Down this street, which had

a long blank wall surmounted by trees, he supposed himself to have been walking one day, and to have found a door in the wall, not noticed by him on any previous occasion. His curiosity being aroused, he knocked at the door, and after some delay was admitted. Inside he found a garden full of wonders, fountains, and fair nymphs, exotic shrubs, and quaint old men, magicians, knights, sylphs, and all the proper furniture of a romance. Goethe's comrades, the first time that they heard him describe this enchanted pleasure-ground in glowing terms, already more than half believed in its existence; "and," says the poet, "each of them visited alone the place, without confiding it to me or to the others, and discovered the nut-trees," but none found the door. Still, they did not disbelieve what Goethe told them, but preferred to imagine that the magic door had once at least been seen by him, and opened for him only, though it remained invisible and closed for them. And herein they were literally right, for Goethe trod an enchanted ground of poetry which few can hope to win. The story proved so fascinating that he had to tell it over and over again, always repeating the same order of events, until, he says, "by the uniformity of the narrative I converted the fable into truth in the minds of my hearers."

This, then, may be used as an illustration of the mythopœic faculty. All that was needed for the growth of myths was imagination on the one side and receptive fancy on the other. It did not, probably, require a Goethe to make a myth, though we may still believe that the greatest and best myths owed their form to the intervention at some period of unknown and unacknowledged Goethes. When the logical faculty was in abeyance, when the critical faculty had not been aroused, when sympathy was quick, language fertile, fancy exuberant, and belief sincere, there was nothing to check mythopœy. The nation had to make the step from boyhood to adolescence before the impulse ceased; nor was there any education from without in a fixed body of systematised knowledge to coerce its freedom. Forming the first activity of the intellect, it held in solution, as it were, the rudiments of religion and morality, of psychological reflection, of politics, geography, and history. Had there been any one to ask the myth-maker: Who told you this strange tale? what is your authority for imposing it upon us? he would have answered: The goddess told me, the divine daughter of memory, as I walked alone. And this he would sincerely and conscientiously have believed; and those who heard him would have given credence to his words; and thus his intuitions became their intuitions. Creative faculty and credence, insight and sympathy, two forms of the same as yet scarcely divided operation of the mind, gave permanence to myths. What the fathers received they transmitted to their sons. Successive generations dealt freely with them, moulding and remodelling, within the limits set upon the genius of the race. Hundreds may have been produced simultaneously, and among them must have raged a fierce struggle for existence, so that multi-

tudes perished or were hopelessly defaced, just as in the animal and vegetable kingdom whole species disappear or survive only in fragments and fossils.

It cannot be too often repeated that the power which presided over the transmission of the myths was the spirit of the people: an inherent selective instinct in the nation determined which of them should ultimately survive; and thus a body of legend, truly national, was formed, in which the nation saw itself reflected. When, therefore, we say that Greek Mythology is Hellenic and original, we are admitting this unconscious, silent, steady, irresistible faculty of the mind to fashion gods in its own image, to come to a knowledge of itself in its divinities, to create a glorified likeness of all that it admires in its own nature, to deify its truest and its best, and to invest its thought with an imperishable form of art. Nor will it here again avail to demur that Zeus was originally the open sky, Pallas the dawn, Phœbus and Artemis the sun and moon. The student of the Greeks accepts this information placidly and gratefully from the philologist; but he passes immediately beyond it. For him Zeus, Pallas, Phœbus, Artemis are no longer any more the sky and dawn, the sun and moon. Whatever their origin may have been, the very mythopœic process placed them in quite a different and more important relation to Greek thought when it handed them over to Hesiod and Homer, to Pindar and Æschylus, to Pheidias and Polygnotus.

To discuss the bearings of the linguistic and solar theories of mythology may be reserved for another part of this chapter. It is enough, at this point, to bear in mind that there was nothing in the consciousness of the prehistoric Greeks which did not take the form of myth. Consequently their mythology, instead of being a compact system of polytheism, is really a whole mass of thought, belonging to a particular period of human history, when it was impossible to think except by pictures, or to record impressions of the world except in stories. That all these tales are religious or semi-religious—concerned, that is to say, with deities—must be explained by the tendency of mankind at an early period of culture to conceive the powers of nature as persons, and to dignify them with superhuman attributes. To the apprehension of infantine humanity everything is a god. Viewed even as a Pantheon, reduced to rule and order by subsequent reflection, Greek Mythology is, therefore, a mass of the most heterogeneous materials. Side by side with some of the sublimest and most beautiful conceptions which the mind has ever produced, we find in it much that is absurd and trivial and revolting. Different ages and conditions of thought have left their products embedded in its strange conglomerate. While it contains fragments of fossilised stories, the meaning of which has either been misunderstood or can only be explained by reference to barbaric customs, it also contains, emergent from the rest and towering above the rubbish, the serene forms of the Olympians. Those furnish the vital and important elements of Greek

mythology. To perfect them was the work of poets and sculptors in the brief, bright, blooming time of Hellas; yet, when we pay these deities homage in the temple of the human spirit, let us not forget that they first received form in the mythopœic age—the age of “the disease of language,” as Max Müller whimsically states it.

In order to comprehend a problem so complex as that which is offered by mythology we must not be satisfied with approaching it from one point of view, but must sift opinion, submit our theory to the crucible in more than one experiment, and, after all our labour, be content to find that much remains still unexplained. Therefore, it will not do to accept without further inquiry the general description of the mythopœic faculty which has just been advanced. After examining the various methods which may be adopted for dealing with the myths, and welcoming the light which can be thrown upon the subject from different quarters, it will, perhaps, be possible to return to the original position with a fuller understanding of the problem. If nothing else be gained by this process, it is, at least, useful to be reminded that intricate historical questions cannot be settled by one answer alone; that a variety of agencies must be admitted; and that the domination of a favourite hypothesis is prejudicial to the end which serious inquiry has in view.

Regarding the Greek myths in their totality as a thickly-tufted jungle of inexplicable stories, and presupposing the activity of the mythopœic faculty to be a play of irrational fancy, it is possible for the political historian to state them as he finds them, and then to pass on and to disregard them. This is, practically speaking, what Grote has done, though the luminous and exhaustive treatment of mythology in his sixteenth chapter proves his complete mastery of the subject from the philosophic point of view. Solely occupied with history, and especially interested in political history, when he has once recognised “the uselessness of digging for a supposed basis of truth” in legends which relate to “a past which was never present,” he is justified in leaving them alone. The strong political bias which concentrates attention upon the development of constitutions and the history of States, while it throws the æsthetic activity of the race into the background, sufficiently accounts for this negative relation to the myths. Its value for our purpose consists in the recognition that mythology must not be confounded with history.

Another method of dealing with mythology requires a passing notice, and a brief dismissal. It has not unfrequently been suggested at uncritical periods of culture, and by uncritical minds in our own age, that the Greek myths are the degradation of primitive truth revealed to mankind by God. As they are Christians who advance this view, the essential dogmas of Christianity are sought for in the Greek Pantheon. The three persons of the Trinity, the personality of the devil, the Divine Redeemer, and so forth, are read into the sagas of Kronos, and Prometheus, and Phœbus. To bring arguments

against a theory so visionary, and so devoid of real historical imagination, would be superfluous. Otherwise it might be questioned how a primitive revelation, after undergoing such complete disintegration and debasement, blossomed forth again into the æsthetical beauty which no one can deny to be the special property of the Greek race. According to the terms of the hypothesis, a primal truth was first degraded, so as to lose its spiritual character; and then, from this corruption of decay, arose a polytheism eminently artistic, which produced works of beauty in their kind unsurpassable, but in their essence diverse from the starting-point of revelation. Moreover, the very dogmas which these visionaries detect in Greek mythology, had a historical development posterior to the formation of the Greek Olympus. It was, for instance, the Greek genius in its old age which gave the substantiality of thought to the doctrine of the Trinity. The only good to be got from the consideration of this vain method is the conviction that a problem like that of Greek mythology must be studied in itself and for itself. Whatever its antecedents may have been, its outgrowth in poetry, philosophy, and sculpture—in other words, its realised or permanent manifestation—is not Christian, and has nothing but general human elements in common with Christianity.

A third hypothesis for the explanation of Greek myths, which used to find much favour with the learned, may be stated thus. Myths were originally invented by priests and sages, in order to convey to the popular mind weighty truths and doctrines which could not be communicated in abstract terms to weak intelligences. Thus, each myth was a dark speech uttered in parables. The first fatal objection to this theory is that it does not fulfil its own conditions. To extract a body of doctrine from the vast majority of the myths is not possible. Moreover, it is an inversion of the natural order to assume that priests and sages in a very early age of culture should have been able to arrive at profound truth, and clever enough to clothe it in parable, and yet that, as the nation grew in mental power, the truths should have been forgotten, and the symbols which expressed them have been taken as truth in and for itself. Without, however, entering into a discussion of this hypothesis in detail, it is enough to point out that it implies the same incapacity for realising the early conditions of society as that which is involved in Locke's and Adam Smith's theory of the Origin of Language. It presupposes fully-developed intelligence, whereas we are concerned precisely with the first and germinal commencement of intelligence. At the same time there is a certain foundation for the symbolic theory. Just in the same way as all language is unconsciously metaphorical, so all myths are parabolical, inasmuch as they involve the operation of thought seeking to express itself externally. The mistake lies in maintaining that the parabolic form was deliberately used in the prehistoric period. Its deliberate employment must rather be confined to the age of self-conscious thinking. Thus the myths by which Plato illustrated his philosophy, the Empedoclean parable

of Love and Hate, the Choice of Herakles invented by the sophist Prodicus, are purposely symbolical. It is also worth noticing that, among genuine myths, those which seem to justify this hypothesis are of comparatively late origin, or are immediately concerned with psychological questions—such, for example, as the myths of Cupid and Psyche and of Pandora and Epimetheus.

A fourth way of dealing with mythology is to rationalise it, by assuming that all the marvellous stories told about the gods and heroes had historical foundation in the past. Myths, according to this method, become the reminiscences of actual facts, the biographies of persons, which in course of time have lost their positive truth. In order to recover and reconstitute that truth, it is necessary to reduce them to prose. Thus Hecataeus, who was one of the earliest among the Greeks to attempt this interpretation, declared that Geryon was a king of Epirus, and that Cerberus was a serpent haunting the caverns of Cape Tænarus. Herodotus, in like manner, explained the sacred black dove of Dodona by saying that she was a woman, who came from Egyptian Thebes, and introduced a peculiar cult of Zeus into Hellas. After the same fashion, Python, slain by Phœbus, was supposed to have been a troublesome freebooter. Æolus was changed into a weather-wise seaman, the Centaurs into horsemen, Atlas into an astronomer, Herakles into a strong-limbed knight-errant. It was when the old feeling for the myths had died out among the learned, when physical hypotheses were adopted for the explanation of the heavens and the earth instead of the religious belief in nature-deities, and when prose had usurped on poetry, that this theory was worked into a system. Eumerus, the contemporary of the Macedonian Cassander, wrote a kind of novel in which he made out that all the gods and heroes had once been men. Ennius translated this work into Latin, and the rationalising method was called Eumerism. The hold which it has retained upon the minds of succeeding ages is sufficient to show that it readily approves itself to the understanding. It seems to make everything quite smooth and easy. When, for instance, we read the revolting legend of Pasiphaë we like to fancy that after all she only fell in love with a captain called Taurus, and that Dædalus was an artful go-between. Unfortunately, however, there is no guide more delusive than Eumerism. It destroys the true value of mythology, considered as the expression of primitive thought and fancy, reducing it to a mere decayed and weed-grown ruin of prosaic fact. Plato was right when he refused to rationalise the myths, and when, by his own use of myths, he showed their proper nature as the vehicle for thoughts as yet incapable of more exact expression. At the same time it would be unphilosophical to deny that real persons and actual events have supplied in some cases the subject-matter of mythology. The wanderings of Odysseus, the Trojan War, the voyage of the Argonauts, the kingdom of Minos, the achievements of Herakles, have, all of them, the appearance of dimly-preserved or poetised history. Yet to seek to reconstruct history from them, "to

dig for a supposed basis of truth" in them, is idle. The real thing to bear in mind is that great men and stirring events must have been remembered even in the mythopœic age, and that to eliminate them from the national consciousness would have been impossible. A nucleus of fact may, therefore, have formed the basis of certain myths, just as a wire immersed in a solution of salts will cause the fluid to condense in crystals round it. But, as in the case just used by way of illustration, we do not see the wire but the crystals after the process has been finished, so in mythology it is not the fact but the fancy which attracts our attention and calls for our consideration. This illustration might be extended so as to apply to any substratum, linguistic, solar, symbolical, or other, that may be supposed to underlie the fancy-fabric of mythology. The truth to be looked for in myths is psychological, not historical, æsthetic rather than positive.

In order to make the relation of actuality to imagination in the mythopœic process still more intelligible, another illustration can be drawn from nature. Pearls are said to be the result of a secretion effused from the pearl-oyster round a piece of grit or thorn inserted between its flesh and the shell in which it lives. To the production of the pearl this extraneous object and the irritation which it causes, are both necessary; yet the pearl is something in itself quite independent of the stimulating substance. Just so the myth, which corresponds to the pearl, is a secretion of the national imagination which has been roused into activity by something accidental and exterior.

It is possible to take a fifth line and to refer mythology to fetishism. Strictly speaking, fetishism can never explain the problem of the mythopœic faculty, except in so far as we may assume it to have formed a necessary stage of human development anterior to polytheism. The term, moreover, is inadequate to describe those conditions of savage life, by studying which we come to understand best what myths really are. Anthropology and comparative folk-lore have cast in recent years a flood of new light upon the problem under consideration. We now perceive that, at a certain period in the development of the human race, all nations passed through a stage of thinking in fables and fancies. There is even a singular similarity between the myths of peoples so remote from one another as Aryans and Polynesians. Totemism and Animism—the sense of kinship with beasts, of close consanguinity with nature—the dim belief, derived perhaps from dreams, of spirits surviving death on earth—explain many mythological conceptions. Others are connected with tribal customs and habits of life peculiar to the savage state. Again we are enabled to interpret the origin of nature-worship, and to account for the fact that external objects were regarded as living sentient beings in the myths. Long before the philosophers of Ionia conjectured that the stars are fiery vapours, people fancied they were gods. It has been well observed that the Greeks never speak of a god *of the sun*, or a goddess *of the moon*. They worshipped the sun as a god in Helios, the moon as a goddess in Selene

This direct reference of the mind to natural things as objects of adoration began with savage ways of attributing to them a will and senses, intellect and vital force, analogous to those of men.¹

According to yet a sixth view the myths are to be considered as nothing more or less than poems. This theory is not, at first sight, very different from that which is involved in the first account given of the mythopœic faculty. It is clear that the stories of Galatea, of Pan and Pitys, of Hesperus and Hymenæus, and, in a deeper sense, perhaps, of Prometheus and Pandora, are pure poems. That is to say, the power which produced them was analogous to the power which we observe in poetic creation at the present day, and which has continued the mythopœic age into the nineteenth century. Yet we should lose a great deal in exactitude and fulness of conception if we identified mythology with poetry. Poetry is conscious of its aim; it demands a fixed form; it knows itself to be an art, and, as an art, to be different from religion and distinguished from history. Now, mythology in its origin was antecedent to all such distinctions, and to all the conscious adaptations of means to ends. Behind the oldest poetry which we possess there looms a background of mythology, substantially existing, already expressed in language, nebulous, potential, containing in itself the germs of all the several productions of the human intellect. The whole intellect is there in embryo; and behind mythology nothing is discoverable but thought and language in the same sphere. Therefore we lose rather than gain by a too strict adherence to what may be termed the poetical hypothesis, although the analogy of poetry, and of poetry alone, places us at the right point of view for comprehending the exercise of the myth-making faculty.

Before completing the circle of inquiry by a return with fuller knowledge to the point from which we started, it is necessary to discuss a seventh way of dealing with the problem, which professes to be alone the truly scientific method. It may be called the Linguistic theory, since it rests upon analysis of language, and maintains that mythology is not so much an independent product of the human mind, expressed in words, as a morbid phase of language, considered as a thing apart. Max Müller, who has given currency to this view in England, states expressly that "Mythology, which was the bane of the ancient world, is in truth a disease of language. A mythe means a word, but a word which, from being a name or an attribute, has been allowed to assume a more substantial existence;" and again, under mythology "I include every case in which language assumes an independent power, and reacts on the mind, instead of being, as it was intended to be, the mere realisation and outward embodiment of the mind." The first thing which strikes a student accustomed to regard mythology as a necessary and important phase in the evolution of thought, when he reads these definitions, is the assumption that *μῦθος* is synonymous

¹ Mr. Andrew Lang, in his *Myth, Ritual, and Religion*, fully discusses and illustrates this method of interpreting mythology.

with what we mean by word, instead of including the wider content of a story told in words. He is thus led to suspect a theory which contrives to make the problem of mythology pass for a branch of philology. Nor can he comprehend in what sense mythology may be called "a disease of language," rather than a disease of the mind which uses language. Does Max Müller mean that language suffered, or that the thinking subject suffered through the action of the bane? He probably means the former; but if so, language must be supposed to live a life apart from thought, triumphing over the freedom of the human mind, and imposing its fignments on the intellect. Such a belief might seem due partly to a too exclusive study of language in itself, in the course of which the philologer comes to regard it as disconnected from thought, and partly to the neglect of the fact that it is the same human subject which produces language and myths, that language and thought in their origin are inseparable, but that when language has once been started, it has to serve the various purposes of thought, and lend itself to myth and poem, philosophical analysis and religious dogma. Another point to criticise is the inevitable corollary that the soul of a great nation, like the Greeks, for instance, in the course of its advance to the maturity of art and freedom, passes through a period of derangement and disease, by which its civilisation is vitiated, its vitality poisoned at the root, and all its subsequent achievements tainted; and that this spiritual phthisis can be traced to a sickly state of language, at a very remote historical period, when as yet the nation was scarcely constituted. Seriously to entertain this view is tantamount to maintaining that corruption and disease may be the direct efficient causes of the highest art on which humanity can pride itself, since it is indubitable that the poems of Homer and the sculptures of Pheidias are the direct outgrowth of that "bane of the ancient world," which, to quote another pithy saying of Max Müller, converted *nomina* into *numina*. It is hardly necessary to point out the curious want of faith in the Welt-Geist (or God) which this implies; the unimaginative habit of mind we should encourage if we failed to discern the excellence of a civilisation that owed its specific character to mythology; the unphilosophical conclusions to which we might be brought if we denied that the intelligence is free while following the fixed laws of its evolution, and that the essential feature in this evolution is the advance from rudimentary to more developed thought. Language, however potent in reaction upon thought, is after all the vehicle and instrument of thought, and not its master. This leads to yet a further criticism; granting that language was "intended to be the mere realisation and outward embodiment of the mind"—though this is a wide begging of the most difficult of all questions—it does not follow that in mythology language is not pursuing its appointed function. If the mythological phase of thought is less apparent among the Semitic than among the Aryan nations, are we to say that this is so because the Semitic languages escaped the whooping-cough of mythology, or not far rather because

the mind of the Aryan races had a greater aptitude for mythology, a greater aptitude for art? In the fifth place, the definition of mythology is too wide for the special purpose of the problem. Bacon long ago pointed out that one of the chief sources of error arises from our tendency to mistake words for realities. This imperfect adjustment of language to the purposes of thought is not peculiar to the mythopœic age. When we use such phrases as "vital force," we are designating the results of observation and experience by a word which ought not to be regarded as more than a sign. Yet, because "vital force" has sometimes been recognised as something positive and substantially existent, we cannot on that account call it a myth without impoverishing the resources of language, and making one word do the work of two. The truth, therefore, is, that in the mythopœic, as in every other age, words have done violence to thought, nor need it be contested that the *eidôla fori* were more potent in the infancy than in the maturity of intelligence. While concerned with this branch of our critique, it is curious to observe the satisfaction with which the advocates of the linguistic theory use it as the means of rehabilitating the moral character of the ancient Greeks, by trying to make out that the tales of Œdipus, Pelops, and Kronos owe their repulsive elements to verbal mistakes. To the student it is undoubtedly a relief to fancy that the incest of Jocasta was originally no more than a figurative way of speaking about the alternations of day and night. He derives, indeed, the same sort of contentment by this method as the rationalist who explains the legend of Pasiphaë upon Eumeristic principles. Yet it is surely a poor way of whitewashing the imagination of the ancients to have recourse to a theory which sees in myths nothing better than a mange or distemper breaking out in language, and tormenting the human mind for a season. Nor can the theory be stretched so far as to exonerate the nation from its share of interest in these stories. The people who made the supposed linguistic mistakes, delighted in the grotesque and fantastic legends which were produced. Even if words deluded them, their wills were free and their brains at work while under the pernicious influence. The real way of exculpating the conscience of the Greeks, indicated both by philosophy and common sense, is to point out that, in the age of reflection, the tragic poets moralised these very myths, and made them the subject-matter of the gravest art, while the sages instituted a polemic against the confusion of fabulous mythology with the pure notion of Godhead obtained by reflection.

The theory of development which seems to underlie the linguistic doctrine, is that thought in its earliest stage is positive and clear and adequate. The first savage who thinks, sees the sun, for example, and calls it the sun; but in talking about the sun he begins to use figurative language, and so converts his simple propositions into myths. At this point, argues the philologist, he goes wrong and becomes the victim of delusions. The fallacy in this view appears to lie in attributing to the simple and sensuous apprehension of the savage the same sort

of simplicity as that which we have gained by a process of abstraction, and consequently inferring that the importation of fancy into the thinking process implies a species of degeneracy. The truth seems rather to be quite the contrary. If we grant, for the sake of argument, that the first thoughts are in a certain sense simple, they have nothing in common with the generalisations of the understanding. Except in relation to immediate perceptions, their generality is empty until it has been filled up with the varied matter of the senses and the imagination. Mythology and poetry are, therefore, an advance upon the primitive prose of simple apprehension. What was a mere round ball becomes a dædal world; and it is not till the full cycle of the myth-creating fancy has been exhausted, that the understanding can return upon a higher level by abstraction to intellectual simplicity. The same is true about theology. The first dim sense of the divine in nature as an unity may, possibly, have been prior to the many deities of polytheism: men may have looked upon the open sky and called that god. Yet it was not a retrogression but an advance from that first perception to the mythological fulness and variety which gave concreteness to the notion of the deity. In this way the whole content of human nature—feeling, sense, activity, and so forth—was imported into the original and hollow notion; or, to state the process with greater accuracy, the germ of thought, by unfolding its potentiality, showed that what had seemed a barren unit was a complicated organism with a multiplicity of parts. It remained for a further stage of thought, by reflection and abstraction, to return at a higher level to the conception of intellectual unity. What we have to guard against is the temptation to attribute our own abstractedness, the definiteness of positivism, the purity of monotheism, to the first stage of thought. Ours is the triumph of the understanding in its vigour over bewildering fulness; theirs was the poverty and nakedness of a first awakening of intelligence. The same critique might be applied to the theory that language starts with universals. Here, again, all turns upon the question, what sort of universals? Unless we are cautious, we run the risk of ending in a view almost identical with the theory of primitive revelation, by following which to its conclusions we are forced to regard the history of the human race, not as a process of development, but as a series of disastrous errors and of gradual decline.

What remains the solid outcome of the linguistic theory is that in the mythopœic age when there was no criticism and no reflection possible, the *idola fori* were far more powerful than now, and consequently many legends were invented to account for words of which the true meaning had been forgotten. Accordingly philology is one of the keys by which the door of mythology may be unlocked. At the same time, considering the complex relations of thought to language, especially in their commencement, it is wrong to concentrate attention upon language. In like manner, it will be admitted that the genders of the nouns contributed their quota to the personification of female

and male deities ; but it would be wrong to argue that the *numina* were divided into male and female because the *nomina* were so distinguished. In order to appreciate the personifying instinct, we must go back in imagination to a point beyond the divergence of thought and language ; and we shall find that if priority can be assigned to either, it will be to thought as that by which alone the human subject can be said to be. Language has sex because sex is a property of the talking being. The deities are male and female, not because their names have genders, but because the thinking being, for whom sex is all-important, thinks its own conditions into the world outside it.

The linguistic theory for the interpretation of mythology is based upon comparative philology, which has proved beyond all contest that the Aryan races had not only their grammar but a certain number of their myths in common before the separation of the Hindhu, Hellenic, and Teutonic stocks. The Vedic literature exhibits the mythological material in rudiment, and its style approximates to that of poetry. Hence it has been assumed that the disease of language was less virulent in the oldest Aryan writings than it afterwards became in Hesiod and Homer. The *nomina* had not as yet been so utterly deformed and corrupted into *numina*. The inefficiency of arguments like this is that they have no value except in relation to a previously adopted view. To the opponent of the linguistic as the only scientific method for the explanation of myths, it is left to answer : What you regard as corruption of language I regard as development of thought. What interests me in Greek mythology is precisely this : that the Aryan poems have passed into complicated stories, illustrative of pure Hellenic modes of thought and feeling, which in their turn will give occasion for epics, dramas, statues, and philosophies. In the same way, the amount of similarity which comparative mythology has demonstrated in the myths of all the members of the Aryan family is, from the Greek historian's point of view, far less important than their differences. The similarity belongs to the stock as it existed in prehistoric times. The differences mark the external conditions and internal qualities of the nations as they played their part in the world's history. The "disease of language" which severally afflicted the Hindhus, the Persians, the Greeks, and the Scandinavians, turns out to be a faithful mirror of their concrete life. Any one, by way of illustration, can work out the problem of national psychology offered by the nature-worship of the sun in Ormuzd, in Phœbus, and in Balder. The pale and beautiful Balder, who must perish and whose death involves the world in wailing ; the radiant and conquering Phœbus, the healing deity, the purifier, the voice of prophecy and poetry and music ; Ormuzd, the antagonist of darkness and of evil, the object of desire and adoration to the virtuous and pure ; these sun-gods answer to the races, as their geographical conditions and their spirit made them. Nor is this all. The mythology of each nation has a physiognomy and character of its own—that of the Greeks being clearness and articulation in opposition to the formlessness and misty

vagueness of the Hindhus. To mistake a Greek tale of deity or hero for a Hindhu tale of deity or hero is impossible. While the student of prehistorical antiquities will, therefore, direct attention to the likeness revealed by comparative mythology, the historian of nations will rather be attracted by those differences which express themselves in mature art, literature, and religion.¹

One of the most salient points of similarity between the several families of Aryan myths concerns those which are called solar legends. In all of these we read of children fated to slay their fathers, of strong giants condemned to obey the rule of feeble princes, of heroic young men forced to quit their first love for another woman. The heroes of these stories are marked out in their cradle by miraculous signs and wonders, or are suckled by wild beasts in the absence of their parents; in their youth they slay serpents sent to destroy them; in their manhood they shine forth as conquerors. Their death is not unfrequently caused by slight and unforeseen, though fated, occurrences—by a weapon that strikes the only vulnerable part of their body, in the case of Achilles and Siegfried; by a twig of mistletoe, in the case of Balder; by a thorn, in the case of Isfendiyar; by an envenomed mantle, in the case of Herakles. One great mythus fascinated the imagination of Norseman and Hindhu, Greek and Persian, German and Roman; interwove itself with their history; gave a form to their poetry; and assumed a prominent place in their religion. So far, it may be said that comparative philology has established something solid, which is at the same time of vast importance for the student of prehistorical antiquity. It is also not improbable that these legends referred originally to the vicissitudes of the sun in his yearly and daily journeys through the heavens. Thus much may be conceded to the solar theorists, remembering always that this primitive astronomical significance, if it existed, was forgotten by the races for whom the myths became the material of poetry and religion. But, unfortunately, the discovery has been strained beyond its proper limits by students who combine a solar theory with the linguistic in their interpretation of mythology. In their hands all the myths are made to refer to the sun and the moon, to dawn and evening. "The difficulty," says Max Müller, "which I myself have most keenly felt is the monotonous character of the dawn and sun legends. Is everything the dawn? is everything the sun? This question I had asked myself many times before it was addressed me by others." How consistently Professor Max Müller found himself obliged to answer this question in the affirmative is known to every student of his works, not

¹ The dissimilarity between Greek and Roman religion has often been observed, and will be touched upon below. Supposing it to be proved that the Romans can produce one relic of an Aryan myth in Romulus, we find that their most native deities—Saturnus, Ops, Bellona, Janus, Terminus, Concordia, Fides, Bonus Eventus, and so forth—are abstractions which have nothing in common with Greek or other Aryan legends. They are the characteristic product of the Roman mind, and indicate its habit of thought. In like manner it is only by a crisis amounting to confusion that Mercurius can be identified with Hermes, or Hercules with Herakles.

to mention those of Mr. Cox. The handbooks of mythology which are now in vogue in England, expound this solar theory so persistently that it is probable a race is growing up who fancy that the early Greeks talked with most "damnable iteration" of nothing but the weather, and that their conversation on that fruitful topic fell sick of some disease breeding the tales of Thebes and Achilles and Pelops' line, as a child breeds measles. It is therefore necessary to subject it to criticism.

The first point for notice is that mythology lends itself almost as well to meteorological as to solar theories. Kuhn and Schwartz, as Professor Müller himself informs us, arrived at the conclusion that "originally the sun was conceived implicitly as a mere accident in the heavenly scenery." Instead, therefore, of finding the sun and the dawn in all the myths, they are always stumbling upon clouds and winds and thunder. This differing of the doctors is, after all, no great matter. Yet it warns us to be careful in adopting so exclusively as is the present fashion either the solar or the meteorological hypothesis. A second consideration which inclines to caution is the facility of adapting the solar theory to every story, whether fabulous or historical. In this sense the famous tract which proved that Napoleon the Great only existed in the mythical imagination may be taken as a *reductio ad absurdum* of the method. A third ground for suspension of judgment lies in the very elaborate manipulation which the etymologies of such words as Erôs, Erinnyes, and the Charites have undergone before they yielded up their solar content. But the multiplication of general objections is not to the present purpose. It is enough to bear in mind that, however important the sun was to the ancient Aryans, he could not have been everything; he was, after all, but one among many objects of interest; and what requires to be still more remembered, is that the Greeks themselves, in dealing with the tales of Achilles, or of Kephelos and Prokris, did not know that they were handling solar stories. It is, therefore, misleading to base handbooks which serve as introductions to Greek literature and art, upon speculation about the solar groundwork of the myths. In the works of Homer and Hesiod, of Æschylus and Sophocles, the myths were animated with spiritual, intellectual, and moral life. To draw the lessons from them which those poets drew, to demonstrate the grandeur of the imagination which could deal with those primæval tragic tales, should be the object of the educator; not to fill his pages with extremely doubtful matter about sun and dawn *ad infinitum*. The true relation of the solar theory to a Greek myth may be illustrated by the tale of Herakles, whom the Greeks themselves may perhaps have recognised as a solar deity, since Herodotus identified him with a Phœnician god.¹ We are therefore justified in dealing with this hero as a personification of the sun. Herakles is the child of Zeus. He strangles in his cradle the serpents of the night. He loves Iole, or the violet-coloured clouds of dawn. He performs twelve labours, corresponding to the twelve months of the

¹ ii. 44.

solar year. He dies of a poisoned robe amid flames that may be taken for the blood-red sunset clouds. The maiden Iole, now evening and not morning, visits him again in death; and he ascends from his funeral pyre of empurpled mountain peaks to heaven. Let all this be granted. So far the solar theory carries us. But is this all? In other words, is this, which the current handbooks tell us about Herakles, the pith of the matter as it appeared to the Greeks? When we turn to the *Philosophy of History* of Hegel, who worked by another than the solar method, and was more anxious to discover thoughts than etymologies, we read: "Hercules is among the Hellenes that spiritual humanity which, by native energy, attains Olympus through the twelve far-famed labours; but the foreign idea that lies at the basis, is the sun completing its revolution through the twelve signs of the Zodiac." Here we touch the truth. The solar foundation of the mythus is wholly valueless and unimportant—in other words, is alien to its essence, when compared with the moral import it acquired among the Greeks. It is the conception of lifelong service to duty, of strength combined with patience, of glory followed at the cost of ease, of godhead achieved by manhood through arduous endeavour—it is this that is really vital in the myth of Herakles. By right of this the legend entered the sphere of religion and of art. In this spirit the sophist enlarged upon it, when he told how Herakles in his youth chose virtue with toil rather than pleasure, incorporating thus the high morality of Hesiod with the mythical element. If myths like these are in any sense diseased words about the sun, we must go further and call them immortalised words, words that have attained eternal significance by dying of the disease that afflicted them. The same remarks apply to all the solar and lunar stories—to Achilles, Endymion, Kephalos, and all the rest. As solar myths these tales had died to the Greeks. As poems, highly capable of artistic treatment, in sculpture, or in verse, pregnant with humanity, fit to form the subject of dramatic presentation or ethical debate, they retained incalculable value. The soul of the nation was in them. And that is their value for us.

To deny the important part which the sun, like the earth or the sea, played in early mythology would be absurd. To dispute the illumination which comparative philology has thrown, not only upon the problem of the myths, but also upon the early unity of races until recently divided in our thought, would be still more ridiculous. The point at issue is simply this, that in Greek mythology there is far more than linguistic and solar theories can explain, and that *more* is precisely the Greek genius. The philologist from his point of view is justified in directing attention to the verbal husk of myths; but the student of art and literature must keep steadily in view the kernel of thought and feeling which the myths contain. It is only by so doing that the poetry and art which sprang from them can be intelligently studied. Thus the modern text-books of mythology are misleading, in so far as they draw the learner's mind away from subjects of historical importance to bare archæology.

As the result of analysis, the following propositions may be advanced. In the earliest ages the races to whom we owe languages and literature and art, possessed a faculty which may be called the mythopœic, now almost wholly extinct, or rather superseded by the exercise of other faculties which it contained in embryo. The operation of this faculty was analogous to that of the poetic; that is to say, it was guided by the imagination more than by the dry light of the understanding, and its creative energy varied in proportion to the imaginative vigour of the race which exercised it. The distinction here introduced is all-important; for only thus can we explain the very different nature of the Greek and Roman religions. The tendency to personification which distinguishes mythology was due to the instinct of uncivilised humanity to impute to external objects a consciousness similar to that by which men are governed—in other words, to regard them as living agents with wills and passions like our own. If fetishism be the rudimentary phase of this instinct, polytheism indicates an advance by which the mind has passed from the mere recognition of spiritual power in nature to the investment of that power with personal and corporeal qualities. But just as the imagination varies in degree and force in different races, so will this power of carrying the personifying instinct onward into art be found to vary. The Romans stopped short at allegories; in other words, they did not carry their personification beyond the first stage. The Greeks created divine personalities. Many myths contain moral and philosophical ideas conveyed in parables, and some of them have indubitable reference to real events and persons. But in no case of a primitive and genuine mythus are we to expect deliberate fiction or conscious symbolism; or, again, to seek for a discoverable substratum of solid fact. Entering the sphere of mythology, facts become etherealised into fancies, the actual value of which lies in the expression of the national mind, so that mythical and spiritual are in this respect synonymous. To use a metaphor, a myth is a Brocken-spectre of the thought which produced it, and owes the features by which we can distinguish it to the specific character of the people among whom it sprang into existence. The analysis of language shows that the whole Aryan family held a great number of their myths in common, that many legends are stories told to account for words and phrases which had lost their original significance, and that in these stories the alternations of night and day and the procession of the seasons played a very important part. Philology can, however, furnish no more than the prolegomena to mythology. After hearing its report, the student of Greek art and literature must take the Greek myths at a Greek valuation—must consider what they were for the Athenians, for example, and not what they had once been. Finally, it may be remembered that to hope for a complete elucidation of a problem so far removed from observation and experiment, would be vain. The conditions of the mythopœic age cannot be reconstituted; and were

they to reappear through the destruction of civilisations, the reflective understanding would not be present to examine and record them.

The difficulty which besets the problem of mythology owing to the remote antiquity of the myth-making age, is to some extent removed by observing the operation of the mythopœic faculty in the historic period. Given social circumstances similar, if even only in a limited degree, to those of the prehistoric age; given a defect of the critical and reflective faculty, an absence of fixed records, and a susceptible condition of the popular imagination, myths have always sprung up. While it is not, therefore, possible to find exact analogies to the conditions under which the Greek mythology originated, something may be gained by directing attention to mediæval romance. The legends which in Italy converted Virgil into a magician, the epic cycles of Charles the Great and Arthur, the Lives of the Saints, the fable of Tannhäuser and the Venusberg, the Spanish tale of Don Juan, and the German tale of Faust, are essentially mythical. What is instructive about mediæval romance for the student of mythology in general, is that here the mythopœic imagination has been either dealing with dim recollections of past history, or else has been constructing for itself a story to express a doctrine. After excluding the hypothesis of conscious working to a prefixed end, we, therefore, find in these legends an illustration of the sense in which the symbolical and rationalistic theories can be said to be justified. In the case of Virgil, the poetry of Rome's greatest singer never ceased to be studied during the darkest years of the dark ages, and his name was familiar even to people who could not read his verse. He was known to have been a Pagan, and at the same time possessed with what then seemed like superhuman knowledge. It followed that he must have been a wizard, and have gained his power and wisdom by compelling fiends. Having formed this notion of Virgil, the popular fancy ascribed to him all the vast works of architecture and engineering which remained at Rome and Naples, inventing the most curious stories to explain why he had made them. Ovid, in his native place, Sulmona, was subjected to the same mythologising process, and many curious legends about his magic power exist there still. When we turn to the Carolingian cycle, we discover that the great name of the Frankish Emperor, the memory of his wars, and the fame of his generals have survived and been connected with the crusading enthusiasm which pervaded Europe at a later period. Border-warfare between France and Spain plays a prominent part in this epic, and gradually the figure of Roland usurps upon the more historically important personages. To "dig for a supposed basis of truth" in the Carolingian cycle would be vain; yet the view is forced upon us that without some historical basis the cycle would not have sprung into existence, or have formed a framework for the thought and feeling of one period of the Middle Ages. The achievements of Arthur must be regarded as still more wholly mythological. The more we inquire into his personality the less we

find of real historical subsistence. A Celtic hero, how created it is impossible to say, becomes the central figure of the most refined romance which occupied the attention of German, French, and British poets in the Middle Ages. Round the fictitious incidents of his biography gathers all that chivalry, with its high sense of humanity and its profound religious mysticism, conceived of purest and most noble; while, at the same time, certain dark and disagreeable details, especially the incestuous union from which Mordred sprang, remind us of the savage and unmoralised origin of the fable. We therefore find in the Arthurian cycle something very much analogous to the Tale of Troy. The dim memory of a national struggle, an astronomical myth, perchance, and many incidents of merely local interest have been blent together and filled with the very spirit of the ages and the races that delighted in the story as a story. This spiritual content gives its value to the epic. Mediæval hagiography furnishes abundant examples of the way in which facts transform themselves into fables, and mythological material is moulded into shape around some well-remembered name, the religious consciousness externalising itself in acts which it attributes to its heroes. When we read the *Fioretti di San Francesco*, we are well aware that the saint lived—his life is one of the chief realities of the thirteenth century; but we perceive that the signs and wonders wrought by him proceed from the imagination of disciples ascribing to St. Francis what belongs partly to the ideal of his own character and partly to that of monastic sanctity in general. In the fable of Tannhäuser we meet with another kind of reminiscence. There is less of fact and more of pure invention. The Pagan past, existent as a sort of dæmonic survival, is localised at Hørsel. The interest, however, consists here wholly in the parabolic meaning—whether Tannhäuser ever existed does not signify. His legend is a poem of the Christian knight ensnared by sin, aroused to a sense of guilt, condemned by the supreme tribunal of the Church, and pardoned by the grace of God. In like manner, the lust for knowledge, for power, and for pleasure, withheld by God and nature, finds expression in the Faust legend; while inordinate carnal appetite is treated tragically in Don Juan. These three legends deserve to be called myths rather than poems in the stricter sense of the word, because they appear at many points and cannot be traced up to three definite artistic sources, while it is clear from their wide acceptance that they embodied thoughts which were held to be of great importance. In them, therefore, we find illustrated the theory which explains mythology by the analogy of poetry. That the mediæval myths which have been mentioned, never attained the importance of Greek mythology, is immediately accounted for by the fact that they sprang up, as it were, under the shadow of philosophy, religion, and history. They belonged to the popular consciousness; and this popular consciousness had no need or opportunity of converting its creatures into a body of beliefs, because both science and orthodoxy existed. In the historic period mythology must

always occupy this subordinate position ; and, perhaps, this fact might be reflected back as a further argument, if such were needed, against the theories that the Greek myths, while leading onward to the Greek Pantheon and Greek art, originated as an undergrowth beneath the decaying fabric of revealed truth or firmly apprehended philosophical ideas. At all events, both the positive and negative circumstances which we observe in them, confirm the general view of mythology that has been advanced.

The Homeric and Hesiodic poems were interposed between the reflective consciousness of the Greeks in the historic age and the mass of myths already existent in Hellas at the time of their composition, and thus mythology passed into the more advanced stage of art. It did not, however, cease on that account to retain some portion of its original plasticity and fluidity. It is clear from Pindar and the fragments of the minor lyric poets, from the works of the dramatists, from Plato, and from other sources, that what Herodotus reports about Homer and Hesiod having fixed the genealogies of the gods, cannot be taken too literally. Non-Homeric and non-Hesiodic versions of the same tales were current in various parts of Greece. The same deities in different places received different attributes and different forms of worship ; and the same legends were localised in widely separated spots. Each division of the Hellenic family selected its own patron deities, expressing in their cult and ritual the specific characteristics which distinguished Dorian, Æolian, and Ionian Hellas. At the same time certain headquarters of worship, like the shrine of Delphi and the temple of Olympian Zeus, were strictly Panhellenic. In this way it is clear that while Greek mythology acquired the consistence of a national religion, it retained its free poetic character in a great measure. The nation never regarded their myths as a body of fixed dogma to alter which was impious. Great liberty consequently was secured for artists ; and it may be said with truth that the Greeks arrived through sculpture at a consciousness of their gods. A new statue was, in a certain sense, a new deity, although the whole aim of the sculptor must, undoubtedly, have been to render visible the thoughts contained in myths and purified by poetry, and so to pass onward step-wise to a fuller and fuller realisation of the spiritual type. It is this unity combined with difference that makes the study of Greek sculpture fascinating in itself, and fruitful for the understanding of the Greek religion.

It lies beyond the scope of this chapter to consider how the Greek intelligence was first employed upon the articulation of its mythology, and next upon its criticism. The tradition of a Titanomachy, or contest between nature powers and deities of reason, marks the first step in the former process. The cosmogonical forces personified in the Titans gave place to the presiding deities of political life and organised society, in whom the human reason recognised itself as superior to mere nature. Olympus was reserved for gods of intellectual

order, and thus the Greeks worshipped what was best and noblest in themselves. At the same time the cosmogonical divinities were not excluded from the Greek Pantheon, and so there grew up a kind of hierarchy of greater and lesser deities. Oceanus, Poseidon, Proteus, the Tritons and the Nereids, Amphitrite and Thetis, for example, are all powers of the sea. They are the sea, conceived under different aspects, its divine personality being multitudinously divided and delicately characterised in each case to accord with the changes in the element. The same kind of articulation is observable in the worship of deities under several attributes. Aphrodite Ourania and Aphrodite Pandemos are one as well as two; Erôs and Himeros and Pothos are not so much three separate Loves, as Love regarded from three different points of view. Here the hierarchy is psychological, and represents an advance made in reflection upon moral qualities; whereas in the former case it was based on the observation of external nature. To this inquiry, again, belongs the question of imported myths and foreign cults. The worship of Corinthian Aphrodite, for example, was originally Asiatic. Yet, on entering Greek thought, Mylitta ceased to be Oriental and assumed Hellenic form and character. Sensuality was recognised as pertaining to the goddess whose domain included love and beauty and the natural desires.

More than the vaguest outlines of such subjects of interest cannot be indicated here. It is enough to have pointed out that, as Greek mythology was eminently imaginative, fertile in fancy and prolific in dramatic incident, so it found its full development in poetry and art. Only through art can it be rightly comprehended; and the religion for which it supplied the groundwork was itself a kind of art. It is just this artistic quality which distinguished the Greeks from the Romans. As Mommsen well observes, "there was no formation of legend in the strict sense in Italy." The Italian gods were in their origin more matter-of-fact than Greek gods. They contained from the first a prosaic element which they never threw aside, nor did they give occasion to the growth of fable with its varied fabric of human action and passion. Thus the legal and political genius of the Latin race worshipped its own qualities in these allegorical beings.

The process hitherto described has been the passage of mythology into religion and the expression of religion by art. When the Greek intelligence became reflective in the first dawn of philosophy, it recognised that the notion of divinity, τὸ θεῖον, was independent and in some sense separable from the persons of the Pantheon in whom it inhered. This recognition led to a criticism of the myths by the standard of ideal godhead. Just as the Olympic deities, as representative of pure intellect or spirit, had superseded the bare nature forces, so now the philosophers sought to distil a refined conception of God from the myths in general. Their polemic was directed against Homer, in whom, like Herodotus, they recognised the founder of the current mythological theology. Both Pythagoras and Heraclitus are reported

to have said that Homer ought to be publicly thrust from the assembly and scourged. Xenophanes plainly asserted that the Greek anthropomorphism was no better than a worship of humanity with all its vices, illustrating his critique by adding that just in the same way might lions adore lions and horses horses. His own conception of the deity was monotheistic, to this extent at least that he abstracted from the universe a notion of divine power and wisdom, and ascribed to it the only reality. Plato, in the *Republic*, unified these points of view, severely criticising Homer for the immorality of his fictions, and attributing to his own demiurgic deity those qualities of Goodness, Truth, and Beauty which are the highest ideals of the human spirit. In connection with this polemic against poetical theology, we have to notice the attempts of physical philosophers to explain the universe by natural causes, and the great saying of Anaxagoras that reason rules the world. Thus the speculative understanding, following various lines of thought and adopting divers theories, tended to react upon mythology and to corrode the ancient fabric of Greek polytheism. In the course of this disintegrating process a new and higher religion was developed, which Plato expressed by saying that we ought "to become like God, as far as this is possible; and to become like Him is to become holy and just and wise." At the same time those who felt the force of the critique, but could not place themselves at the new scientific point of view, remained sceptical; and against this kind of scepticism, which implied personal lawlessness, Aristophanes directed his satire. Whatever may have been the attitude of philosophers in their schools, mythology meanwhile retained its hold upon the popular mind. It was bound up with the political traditions, the Gentile customs, the ritual, and the arts of the whole race. To displace it by a reasoned system of theology, enforced by nothing stronger than the theories of the sages, was impossible. The extent to which philosophy permanently affected the creed of thinking and religious men in Greece by substituting theism for the fabulous theology of the poets has been well expressed in Plutarch's *Life of Pericles*. "So dispassionate a temper," he observes, "a life so pure and unblemished in authority, might well be called Olympian, in accordance with our conceptions of the divine beings to whom, as the natural authors of all good and of nothing evil, we ascribe the rule and government of the world—not as the poets represent, who, while confounding us with their ignorant fancies, are themselves confuted by their own poems and fictions, and call the place, indeed, where they say the gods make their abode 'a secure and quiet seat, untroubled with winds or clouds,' and 'equally through all time illumined with a soft serenity and a pure light,' as though such were a home most agreeable for a blessed and immortal nature; and yet, in the meanwhile, affirm that the gods themselves are full of trouble and enmity and anger, and other passions, which no way become or belong to even men that have any understanding." It is clear that when the

religious consciousness had reached this point of purified clairvoyance, the race was ready for a more spiritual theology, which philosophers like Marcus Aurelius found in natural religion, while the common folk accepted Christianity.

After flowing side by side for many centuries, the currents of mythological belief and of philosophical speculation reunited at Alexandria, where a final attempt was made to animate the Homeric Pantheon with the spirit of metaphysical mysticism. Homer became a priest as well as poet, and the *Iliad* was made to furnish allegories for an age grown old in intellectual subtlety. This was the last period of mythology. While Hypatia was lecturing on Homer the Christians were converting the world. To keep the gods of Greece alive was no longer possible. Regarded from the beginning as persons with a body corresponding to their spiritual substance, they had in them the certainty of dissolution. Though removed ideally beyond the sphere of human chance and change, they remained men and women with passions like our own. Pure spirit had not been realised in them; and blind fate had from the first been held to be supreme above them. Unlike the incarnate God of Christianity, they had not passed forth from the spiritual world to abide here for a season and return to it again. Therefore they perished. During the domination of mediæval Christianity the utmost they could do was to haunt the memory like wraiths and phantoms, to linger in neglected and unholy places like malignant powers of evil. But when the force of ascetic Christianity declined, and the spirit of humane culture reawoke in Europe, these old gods reasserted their ascendancy—no longer as divinities indeed, but as poems forming an essential element of the imagination. The painters and sculptors of Italy gave once more in breathing marble and fair colour form to those immortal thoughts. The poets sang the old songs of Hellas in new language to new measures. Even the churchmen invoked God from Roman pulpits as *Summus Jupiter*, and dignified Madonna with the attributes of Artemis and Pallas.

Such is the marvellous vitality of this mythology. Such is its indissoluble connection with the art and culture which sprang from it, of which it was the first essential phase, and to which we owe so much. Long after it has died as religion, it lives on as poetry, retaining its original quality, though the theology contained in it has been for ever superseded or absorbed into more spiritual creeds.

CHAPTER III

ACHILLES

Unity of *Iliad*—Character of Achilles—Structure of the whole Poem—Comparison with other Epics—Energy dividing into Anger and Love—Personality of Achilles—The Quarrel with Agamemnon—Pallas Athene—The Embassy—Achilles' Foreknowledge of his Death—The Message of Antilochus—Interview with Thetis—The Shouting in the Trench—The Speech of Xanthus—The Pæan over Hector's Corpse—The Ghost of Patroclus—The Funeral Obsequies of Patroclus—Achilles and Priam—Achilles in Hades—Achilles considered as a Greek Ideal—Friendship among the Greeks—Heroism and Knighthood: Ancient and Modern Chivalry—The *Myrmidones* of Æschylus—Achilles and Hector—Alexander the Great—The Dæmonic Nature of Achilles.

It is the sign of a return to healthy criticism that scholars are beginning to acknowledge that the *Iliad* may be one poem—that is to say, no mere patchwork of ballads and minor epics put together by some diaskeuast in the age of Pisistratus, but the work of a single poet, who surveyed his creation as an artist, and was satisfied with its unity. We are not bound to pronounce an opinion as to whether this poet was named Homer, whether Homer ever existed, and, if so, at what period of the world's history he lived. We are not bound to put forward a complete view concerning the college of Homeridæ, from which the poet must have arisen, if he did not found it. Nor, again, need we deny that the *Iliad* itself presents unmistakable signs of having been constructed in a great measure out of material already existing in songs and romances, dear to the Greek nation in their youth, and familiar to the poet. The æsthetic critic finds no difficulty in conceding, nay, is eager to claim, a long genealogy through antecedent, now forgotten, poems for the *Iliad*. But about this, of one thing, at any rate, he will be sure, after due experience of the tests applied by Wolf and his followers, that a great artist gave its present form to the *Iliad*, that he chose from the whole Trojan tale a central subject for development, and that all the episodes and collateral matter with which he enriched his epic were arranged by him with a view to the effect that he had calculated.

What, then, was this central subject, which gives the unity of a true work of art to the *Iliad*? We answer, the person and the character of Achilles. It is not fanciful to say, with the old grammarians of Alexandria, that the first line of the poem sets forth the whole of its action.

“Sing, goddess, the wrath of Achilles, son of Peleus.”

The wrath of Achilles and the consequences of that wrath in the misery of the Greeks, left alone to fight without their fated hero; the death of Patroclus, caused by his sullen anger; the energy of Achilles, reawakened by his remorse for his friend's death; and the consequent slaughter of Hector; form the whole of the simple structure of the *Iliad*. This seems clear enough when we analyse the conduct of the poem.

The first book describes the quarrel of Achilles with Agamemnon and his secession from the war. The next seven books and a half, from the second to the middle of the ninth, are occupied with the fortunes of the Greeks and Trojans in the field, the exploits of Diomedes and Ajax, and Hector's attack upon the camp. In the middle of the ninth book Achilles reappears upon the scene. Agamemnon sends Ulysses and Phœnix to entreat him to relax his wrath and save the Greeks; but the hero remains obdurate. He has resolved that his countrymen shall pay the uttermost penalty for the offence of their King. The poet having foredetermined that Achilles shall only consent to fight in order to revenge Patroclus, is obliged to show the inefficacy of the strongest motives from without; and this he has effected by the episode of the embassy. The tenth book relates the night attack upon the camp of the Trojan allies and the theft of the horses of Rhesus. The next five books contain a further account of the warfare carried on among the ships between the Achæians and their foes. It is in the course of these events that Patroclus comes into prominence. We find him attending on the wounded Eurypylus and warning Achilles of the imminent peril of the fleet. At last, in the sixteenth book, when Hector has carried fire to the ship of Protesilaus, Achilles commands Patroclus to assume the armour of Peleus and lead his Myrmidons to war. The same book describes the repulse of Hector and the death of Patroclus, while the seventeenth is taken up with the fight for the body of Achilles' friend. But from the eighteenth onward the true hero assumes his rank as protagonist, making us feel that what has gone before has only been a preface to his action. His seclusion from the war has not only enabled the poet to vary the interest by displaying other characters, but has also proved the final intervention of Achilles to be absolutely necessary for the success of the Greek army. All the threads of interest are gathered together and converge on him. Whatever we have learned concerning the situation of the armies, the characters of the chiefs, and the jealousies of the gods, now serves to dignify his single person and to augment

the terror he inspires. With his mere shout he dislodges the Trojans from the camp. The divine arms of Hephæstus are fashioned for him, and forth he goes to drive the foe like mice before him. Then he contends with Simois and Scamander, the river-gods. Lastly, he slays Hector. What follows in the twenty-third and twenty-fourth books seems to be intended as a repose from the vehement action and high-wrought passion of the preceding five. Patroclus is buried, and his funeral games are celebrated. Then, at the very end, Achilles appears before us in the interview with Priam, no longer as a petulant spoilt child or fiery barbarian chief, but as a hero, capable of sacrificing his still fierce passion for revenge to the nobler emotion of reverence for the age and sorrow of the sonless king.

The centralisation of interest in the character of Achilles, constitutes the grandeur of the *Iliad*. It is also by this that the *Iliad* is distinguished from all the narrative epics of the world. In the case of all the rest there is one main event, one deed which has to be accomplished, one series of actions with a definite beginning and ending. In none else are the passions of the hero made the main points of the movement. This may be observed at once by comparing the *Iliad* with the chief epical poems of European literature. To begin with the *Odyssey*. The restoration, after many wanderings, of Odysseus to his wife and kingdom forms the subject of this romance. When that has been accomplished, the *Odyssey* is completed. In the same way the subject of the *Æneid* is the foundation of the Trojan kingdom in Italy. *Æneas* is conducted from Troy to Carthage, from Carthage to Latium. He flies from Dido, because fate has decreed that his empire should not take root in Africa. He conquers Turnus because it is destined that he, and not the Latin prince, should be the ancestor of Roman kings. As soon as Turnus has been killed and Lavinia has been wedded to *Æneas*, the action of the poem is accomplished and the *Æneid* is completed. When we pass to modern epics, the first that meets us is the *Nibelungen Lied*. Here the action turns upon the murder of Sigfrid by Hagen, and the vengeance of his bride Chriemhilt. As soon as Chriemhilt has assembled her husband's murderers in the halls of King Etzel, and there has compassed their destruction, the subject is complete, the *Nibelungen* is at an end. The British epic of the Round Table, if we may regard Sir Thomas Mallory's *Morte d'Arthur* as a poem, centres in the life and predestined death of King Arthur. Upon the fate of Arthur hangs the whole complex series of events which compose the romance. His death is its natural climax, for with him expires the Round Table he had framed to keep the Pagans in awe. After that event nothing remains for the epic poet to relate. Next in date and importance is the *Orlando Furioso* of Ariosto. The action of this poem is bound up with the destinies of Ruggiero and Bradamante. Their separations and wanderings supply the main fabric of the plot. When these are finally ended, and their marriage has been consummated, nothing remains to be described. The theme of the *Gerusalemme*

Liberata, again, is the conquest of the Holy City from the Saracens. When this has been described, there is nothing left for Tasso to tell. The *Paradise Lost*, in spite of its more stationary character, does not differ from this type. It sets forth the single event of the Fall. After Adam and Eve have disobeyed the commands of their Maker and have been expelled from Eden, the subject is exhausted, the epic is at an end.

Thus each of these great epic poems has one principal event, on which the whole action hinges and which leaves nothing more to be narrated. But with the *Iliad* it is different. At the end of the *Iliad* we leave Achilles with his fate still unaccomplished, the Trojan war still undecided. The *Iliad* has no one great external event or series of events to narrate. It is an episode in the war of Troy, a chapter in the life of Peleus' son. But it does set forth, with the vivid and absorbing interest that attaches to true æsthetic unity, the character of its hero, selecting for that purpose the group of incidents which best display it.

The *Iliad*, therefore, has for its whole subject the Passion of Achilles—that ardent energy or ΜΗΝΙΣ of the hero, which displayed itself first as anger against Agamemnon, and afterwards as love for the lost Patroclus. The truth of this was perceived by one of the greatest poets and profoundest critics of the modern world, Dante. When Dante, in the *Inferno*, wished to describe Achilles, he wrote, with characteristic brevity:—

“ Achille
Che per amore al fine combatteo.”

“ Achilles
Who at the last was brought to fight by love.”

In this pregnant sentence Dante sounded the whole depth of the *Iliad*.¹ The wrath of Achilles against Agamemnon, which prevented him at first from fighting; the love of Achilles, passing the love of women, for Patroclus, which induced him to forego his anger and to fight at last; these are the two poles on which the *Iliad* turns. Two passions—heroic anger and measureless love—in the breast of the chief actor, are the motive forces of the poem. It is this simplicity in the structure of the *Iliad* which constitutes its nobleness. There is no double plot, no attempt to keep our interest alive by misunderstandings, or treacheries, or thwartings of the hero in his aims. These subtleties and resources of art the poet, whom we will call Homer, for the sake of brevity, discards. He trusts to the magnitude of his chief actor, to the sublime central figure of Achilles, for the whole effect of his epic. It is hardly necessary to insist upon the highly tragic value of this subject. The destinies of two great nations hang trembling in the balance. Kings on the earth below, gods in the heavens above, are moved to turn this way or that the scale of war. Meanwhile the whole

¹ I am bound to admit that this interpretation of the line is not taken by all commentators, and that Scartazzini reads *con amore*.—*Inferno* v. 65.

must wait upon the passions of one man. Nowhere else, in any work of art, has the relation of a single heroic character to the history of the world been set forth with more of tragic pomp and splendid incident. Across the scene on which gods and men are contending in fierce rivalry, moves the lustrous figure of Achilles, ever potent, ever young, but with the ash-white aureole of coming death around his forehead. He too is in the clutch of destiny. As the price of his decisive action, he must lay his life down and retire with sorrow to the shades. It is thus that in the very dawn of civilisation the Greek poet divined the pathos and expounded the philosophy of human life, showing how the fate of nations may depend upon the passions of a man, who in his turn is but the creature of a day, a ripple on the stream of time. Nothing need be said by the æsthetic critic about the solar theory, which pretends to explain the tale of Troy. The Mythos of Achilles may possibly in very distant ages have expressed some simple astronomical idea. But for a man to think of this with the actual *Iliad* before his eyes would be about as bad as botanising on his mother's grave. Homer was not thinking of the sun when he composed the *Iliad*. He wove, as in a web, all elements of tragic pity and fear, pathos and passion and fateful energy, which constitute the dramas of nations and of men.

In the two passions, anger and love, which form the prominent features of the character of Achilles, there is nothing small or mean. Anger has scarcely less right than ambition to be styled the last infirmity of noble minds. And love, when it gives the motive force to great action, is sublime. The love of Achilles had no softness or effeminacy. The wrath of Achilles never degenerated into savagery. Both of these passions, instead of weakening the hero, add force to his activity. Homer has traced the outlines of the portrait of Achilles so largely that criticism can scarcely avoid dwarfing them. In looking closely at the picture, there is a danger lest, while we examine the parts, we should fail to seize the greatness of the whole. It is better to bring together in rapid succession those passages of the *Iliad* which display the character of Achilles under the double aspect of anger and love. The first scene (i. 148-246) shows us Agamemnon surrounded by the captains of the Greek host, holding the same position among them as Charlemagne among his peers, or King John among the English Barons. They recognise his heaven-descended right of monarchy; but their allegiance holds by a slight thread. They are not afraid of bearding him, browbeating him with threats, and roundly accusing him of his faults. This turbulent feudal society has been admirably sketched by Marlowe in *Edward II.*, and by Shakespeare in *Richard II.* And it must be remembered that between Agamemnon and the Hellenic βασιλεῖς (kings or chieftains), there was not even so much as a feudal bond of fealty. Calchas has just told Agamemnon that, in order to avert the plague, Chryseis must be restored to her father. The king has answered that if he is forced to relinquish her, the Greeks must indemnify him richly. Then the anger of Achilles boils over:—

“ Ah, clothed upon with impudence, and greedy-souled ! How, thinkest thou, can man of the Achaians with glad heart follow at thy word to take the field or fight the foe ? Not for the quarrel of the warlike Trojans did I come unto these shores, for they had wronged me not. They never drove my cattle nor my steeds, nor ever, in rich, populous Phthia, did they waste the corn ; since far between us lie both shadowy mountains and a sounding sea : but following thee, thou shameless king, we came to gladden thee, for Menelaus and for thee, thou hound, to win you fame from Troy. Of this thou reckest not and hast no care. Yea, and behold thou threatenest even from me to wrest my guerdon with thy hands, for which I sorely strove, and which the sons of the Achaians gave to me. Never, in sooth, do I take equally with thee, when Achaians sack a well-walled Trojan town. My hands do all the work of furious war ; but when division comes, thy guerdon is far greater, and I go back with small but well-loved treasure to the ships, tired out with fighting. Now, lo ! I am again for Phthia ; for better far, I ween, it is homeward to sail with beaked ships : nor do I think that if I stay unhonoured wilt thou get much wealth and gain.

“ Him, then, in answer, Agamemnon, king of men, bespake :—

“ Away ! fly, if thy soul is set on flying. I beg thee not to stay for me. With me are many who will honour me, and most of all, the Counsellor Zeus. Most hateful to me of the Zeus-born kings art thou. For ever dost thou love strife, warfare, wrangling. If very stout of limb thou art, that did God give thee. Go home, then, with thy ships and friends. Go, rule the Myrmidons. I care not for thee, nor regard thy wrath, but this will I threaten—since Phœbus robs me of Chryseis, her with my ship and with my followers will I send ; but I will take fair-cheeked Briseis, thy own prize, and fetch her from thy tent, that thou mayest know how far thy better I am, and that others too may dread to call themselves my equal, and to paragon themselves with me.

“ So spake he. And Peleides was filled with grief ; and his heart within his shaggy bosom was cut in twain with thought, whether to draw his sharp sword from his thigh, and, breaking through the heroes, kill the king, or to stay his anger and refrain his soul. While thus he raged within his heart and mind, and from its scabbard was in act to draw the mighty sword, came Athene from heaven ; for Here, white-armed goddess, sent her forth, loving both heroes in her soul, and caring for them. She stood behind, and took Peleides by the yellow hair, seen by him only, but of the rest none saw her. Achilles marvelled, and turned back ; and suddenly he knew Pallas Athene, and awful seemed her eyes to him ; and, speaking winged words, he thus addressed her :—

“ Why, daughter of ægis-bearing Zeus, art thou come hither ? Say, is it to behold the violence of Agamemnon, Atreus' son ? But I will tell to thee what verily I think shall be accomplished, that by his own pride he soon shall slay his soul.

“ Him then the gray-eyed goddess Athene bespake :—

“ I came to stay thy might, if thou wilt hear me, from Heaven ; for Here, white-armed goddess, sent me forth, loving you both alike, and caring for you. But come, give up strife, nor draw thy sword ! But, lo, I bid thee taunt him with sharp words, as verily shall be. For this I say to thee, and it shall be accomplished : the time shall come when thou shalt have thrice-fold as many splendid gifts, because of his violence. Only restrain thyself ; obey me.

“ To her, in turn, spake swift-footed Achilles :—

“ Needs must I, goddess, keep thy word and hers, though sorely grieved in soul ; for thus is it best. He who obeys the gods, him have they listened to in time of need.

“ He spake, and on the silver handle pressed a heavy hand, and back into the scabbard thrust the mighty sword, nor swerved from Athene's counsel. But she back to Olympus fared, to the house of ægis-bearing Zeus unto the other gods.

“ Then Peleides again with bitter words bespake Atrides, and not yet awhile surceased from wrath :—

“ Wine-weighted, with a dog's eyes and a heart of deer ! Never hadst thou

spirit to harness thee for the battle with the folk, nor yet to join the ambush with the best of the Achaians. *This* to thee seems certain death. Far better is it, verily, throughout the broad camp of Achaians to flch gifts when a man stands up to speak against thee—thou folk-consuming king, that swayest men of nought. Lo, of a sooth, Atrides, now for the last time wilt thou have dealt knavishly. But I declare unto thee, and will swear thereon a mighty oath; yea, by this sceptre, which shall never put forth leaf nor twig since that day that it left the stock upon the mountains, nor again shall bud or bloom, for of its leafage and its bark the iron stripped it bare; and sons of the Achaians hold it in their palms for judgment, they who guard the laws by ordinance of Zeus; and this shall be to thee a mighty oath. Verily, and of a truth, the day shall be when sore desire for Achilles shall come upon Achaians one and all. Then shalt thou, though grieved in soul, have no power to help, while in multitudes they fall and die at Hector's murderous hands; but thou shalt tear thy heart within thy breast for rage, seeing thou honouredst not the best of the Achaians aught.

“So spake Peleides; and on the earth cast down the sceptre studded with nails of gold; and he sat down upon his seat.”

What is chiefly noticeable in this passage is the grand scale upon which the anger of Achilles is displayed. He is not content with taunting Agamemnon, but he includes all the princes in his scorn:

δημοβόρος βασιλεὺς, ἐπεὶ οὐτιδανοῖσιν ἀνάσσεις.

“Thou folk-consuming king, that swayest men of nought.”

We may also notice the interference of Athene. The Athene of the *Iliad* is a different goddess from the Athene of the Parthenon. In strength she is more than a match for Ares; her cunning she subordinates to great and masculine ends, not to the arts of beauty or to study. She is the saint of the valiant and wary soldier. While checking Achilles, she does not advise him to avoid strife in any meek and gentle spirit. She simply reminds him that, if he gets to blows with Agamemnon, he will put himself in the wrong; whereas, by contenting himself with sharp words and with secession from the war, he will reduce the haughty king to sue him with gifts and submission. Athene in this place acts like all the other deities in Homer when they come into direct contact with the heroes. She is exterior to Achilles, and at the same time a part of his soul. She is the expression of both thought and passion deeply seated in his nature, the force of his own character developed by circumstance, the god within his breast externalised and rendered visible to him alone. What Athene is to the son of Peleus, Ate is to Agamemnon.

The next passage in which Achilles appears in the forefront of the scene is in the Ninth Book (307-429). Worn out with the losses of the war, Agamemnon has at last humbled his pride, and sent the wisest of the chiefs, silver-tongued Odysseus, and Phœnix, the old guardian of the son of Peleus, to beg Achilles to receive back Briseis, and to take great gifts if only he will relax his wrath. But Achilles remains inflexible. In order to maintain the firmness of his character, to justify the righteousness of his indignation, Homer cannot suffer him to abandon his resentment at the first entreaty. Some more potent

influence must break his resolution than the mere offer to restore Briseis. Homer has the death of Patroclus in the background. He means to show the iron heart of Peleides at last softened by his sorrow and his love. Therefore, for the time, he must protract the situation in which Achilles is still haughty, still implacable toward his repentant injurer. In this interview with the ambassadors we have to observe how confident Achilles abides in the justice of his cause and in his own prowess. It is he with his valiant bands who has sacked the Trojan cities; it is he who kept Hector from the ships; and now in his absence the Achaians have had to build a wall in self-defence. And for whom has he done this? For the sons of Atreus and for Helen. And what has he received as guerdon? Nothing but dishonour. These arguments might seem to savour too much of egotism and want of feeling for the dangers of the host. But at the end come those great lines upon the vanity of gifts and possessions in comparison with life, and upon the doom which hangs above the hero:—

“You may make oxen and sheep your prey; you may gather together tripods and the tawny mane of horses; but none can make the soul of man return by theft or craft when once it has escaped. As for me,” he resumes, “my goddess mother, silver-footed Thetis, warns me that fate lays two paths to bear me deathward. If I abide and fight before the walls of Troy, my return to Hellas is undone, but fame imperishable remains for me. If I return to my dear country then my good glory dies, but long life awaits me, nor will the term of death be hastened.”

This foreknowledge of Achilles that he has to choose between a long, inglorious life, and a swift-coming, but splendid death, illuminates his ultimate action with a fateful radiance. In the passage before us it lends dignity to his obstinate and obdurate endurance. He says: I am sick at heart for the insults thrust on me. I am wounded in my pride. Toiling for others I get no reward. And behold, if I begin to act again, swift death is before me. Shall I, to please Agamemnon, hasten on my own end?

When the moment arrives for Achilles to be aroused from inactivity by his own noblest passion, then, and not till then, does he fling aside the thought of death, and trample on a long reposeful life. He is conscious that his glory can only be achieved by the sacrifice of ease and happiness and life itself; but he holds honour dearer than these good things. Yet at the same time he is not eager to throw away his life for a worthless object, or to buy mere fame by an untimely end. It requires another motive, the strong pressure of sorrow and remorse, to quicken his resolution; but when once quickened nothing can retard it. Achilles at this point might be compared to a mass of ice and snow hanging at the jagged edge of a glacier, suspended on a mountain brow. We have seen such avalanches brooding upon Monte Rosa, or the Jungfrau, beaten by storms, loosened, perchance, by summer sun, but motionless. In a moment a lightning-flash strikes the mass, and it roars crumbling to the deep.

This lightning-flash in the case of Achilles was the death of Patroclus

(xviii. 15). Patroclus has gone forth to aid the Achaians and has fallen beneath Hector's sword. Antilochus, sent to bear the news to Achilles, finds him standing before the ships, already anxious about the long delay of his comrade. Antilochus does not break the news gently. His tears betray the import of his message, and he begins :—

“Woe is me, son of brave Peleus! Verily thou shalt hear right sorrowful tidings: Patroclus lies slain; round his corpse they are fighting; stripped it lies, but plumed Hector hath his armour.

“So he spake. But a black cloud of woe covered the hero. With both hands he took the dust of ashes and flung them down upon his head, and disfigured his fair face, and on his fragrant tunic lay the black cinders. But he, huge in his hugeness, stretched upon the dust lay, and with his hands he tore and ravaged his hair.”

Thus Achilles receives the first shock of grief. When his mother rises from the sea to comfort him, he refuses consolation, and cries :—

“My mother, the Olympian hath done all these things; but of what pleasure is this to me, now that my dear friend is dead, Patroclus, whom above all my comrades I honoured, even as myself? Him have I slain!”

This is the pith and marrow of his anguish. I slew Patroclus; it was I who sent him forth to fight. “Now,” he resumes a few lines lower down, “Now my soul bids me no longer live or be with men, save only I strike Hector first and slay him with my spear, and make him pay the fine of Patroclus.”

Thetis reminds him that, if he slay Hector, his own life will be short. This only serves to turn his anguish into desperate resolve :—

“Straight let me die, seeing I might not come to the aid of my comrade when he was dying. Far from his fatherland he perished. He looked for me that I should have been his helper. But now, since never to my home shall I return, nor was I a light in trouble to Patroclus, nor to my other comrades who are slain by hundreds by the god-like Hector—while I here sit beside the ships, a useless load upon the earth—I who am such as there is none else like me among brazen-coated Achaians in the war—others may be better perchance in council—now let strife perish from among gods and men, with anger which stirs up the prudent even to fury.”

Thus he foregoes his wrath, and flings resentment from him like a mantle. Then he rises ready for the fight. “If death come, let death be welcome. Death came to Herakles. In his due time he comes to me. Meanwhile I thirst to make Dardan ladies widows in the land.”

When he next appears, his very form and outward semblance are transfigured. He stands alone and unarmed in the trench. A fire surrounds his head and flames upon his curls. His voice thrills the armies like the blare of a victorious trumpet. This is how Homer has described him shouting in the trench (xviii. 203) :—

“But Achilles, dear to Zeus, arose, and around his mighty shoulders Athene cast her tasselled ægis; and about his head the queenly goddess set a crown of golden mist, and from it she made blaze a dazzling flame. As when smoke rises to the clear sky from a town, afar from an island which foemen beleaguer, who all day long contend in grisly war, issuing from their own town; but at sundown

beacons blaze in rows, and on high the glare goes up, and soars for neighbouring men to see, if haply warders off of woe may come to them with ships—so from the head of Achilles the flame went up to heaven. He stood at the trench, away from the wall, nor joined the Achæians, for he honoured his mother's wise command. There he stood and shouted; and beside him Pallas Athene cried; but among the Trojans he raised infinite tumult. As when a mighty voice, when the trumpet shrills for the murderous foemen that surround a town, so was the mighty voice of the son of Æacus. They then, when they heard the brazen cry of Æacides, in the breasts of all of them the heart was troubled; but the fair-maned horses turned the cars backward; for in their heart they knew the sorrows that were to be. And the charioteers were stricken when they saw the tireless flame terrible above the head of big-hearted Peleus' son blazing. The gray-eyed goddess Athene kindled it. Thrice above the trench shouted the godlike Achilles in his might: thrice were the Trojans and their noble allies troubled."

From this moment the action of the *Iliad* advances rapidly. Achilles takes his proper place, and occupies the whole stage. The body of Patroclus is brought home to him; he mourns over it, and promises to bury it, when he shall have slain Hector, and slaughtered twelve sons of the Trojans on the pyre. Then he reconciles himself with Agamemnon, and formally renounces anger. Lastly, when he has put on the divine armour made for him by Hephæstus, he ascends his car, and hastens into the fight. But again at this point, when Achilles is at the very pitch and summit of his glory, the voice of fate is heard. It is with the promise of the tomb that he enters the battle. Turn to Book xix. 399. Achilles has just mounted his chariot:—

"Fiercely did he cheer the horses of his sire:—Xanthus and Balius, far-famed children of Podargé, take other heed, I warn ye, how to save your master, and to bring him to the Danaan host, returning of war satisfied; nor leave him, like Patroclus, dead there on the field.

"To him then from beneath the yoke spake the fleet-footed horse Xanthus, and straightway drooped his head; and all his mane, escaping from the collar by the yoke, fell earthward. Goddess Here, of the white arms, gave him speech:—

"Verily shall we save thee yet this time, fierce Achilles; but close at hand is thy doom's day. Nor of this are we the cause, but great God in heaven and resistless fate. For neither was it by our sloth or sluggishness that Trojans stripped the arms from Patroclus his shoulders; but of Gods the best, whom fair-haired Leto bare, slew him among the foremost, and gave to Hector glory of the deed. We, though we should run apace with Zephyr's breath, the fleetest, as 'tis said, yet for thee it is decreed to perish by the might of God and man.

"When he had thus spoken the Erinyes stayed his voice; and, high in wrath, fleet-foot Achilles answered him:—

"Xanthus! why prophesy my death? Thou hast no call. Right well know I, too, that it is my fate to perish here, far from dear sire and mother; yet for all this will I not surcease before I satiate the Trojans with war.

"He spoke, and vanward held his steeds with mighty yell."

This dialogue between Achilles and Xanthus is not without great importance. Homer is about to show the hero raging in carnage, exulting over suppliants and slain foes, terrible in his ferocity. It is consistent with the whole character of Achilles, who is fiery, of indomitable fury, that he should act thus. Stung as he is by remorse and by the sorrow for Patroclus, which does not unnerve him, but rather kindles

his whole spirit to a flame, we are prepared to see him fierce even to cruelty. But when we know that in the midst of the carnage he is himself moving a dying man, when we remember that he is sending his slain foes like messengers before his face to Hades, when we keep the warning words of Thetis and of Xanthus in our minds, then the grim frenzy of Achilles becomes dignified. The world is in a manner over for him, and he appears the incarnation of disdainful anger and revengeful love, the conscious scourge of God and instrument of destiny. We need not dwell upon the details of the battle, in which Achilles drives the Trojans before him, and is only withheld by the direct interposition of the gods from carrying Ilium by assault. To borrow a simile from Dante, his foes are like frogs scurrying away from the approach of their great foe, the water-snake. Then follow the episode of Lycaon's slaughter, the fight with the river-gods, and the death of Hector. To the assembled Greeks Achilles cries (xxii. 386):—

“By the ships, a corpse, unburied, unbewailed, lies Patroclus: but of him I will not be unmindful so long as I abide among the living and my knees have movement. Nay, should there be oblivion of the dead in Hades, yet I even there will remember my loved comrade. But rise, ye youths of Achaia, and singing Pæan, let us hasten to the ships, and take this slain man with us. Great glory have we got. Divine Hector have we slain, to whom the Trojans in their city prayed as to a god.”

So the Pæan rings. But Achilles by the ships, after the hateful banquet, as he calls it in the sorrowful loathing of all comfort, has been finished, lays himself to sleep (xxiii. 59):—

“The son of Peleus, by the shore of the roaring sea lay, heavily groaning, surrounded by his Myrmidons; on a fair space of sand he lay, where the waves lapped the beach. Then slumber took him, loosing the cares of his heart, and mantling softly around him, for sorely wearied were his radiant limbs with driving Hector on by windy Troy. There to him came the soul of poor Patroclus, in all things like himself, in stature, and in the beauty of his eyes and voice, and on his form was raiment like his own. He stood above the hero's head, and spake to him:—

“Sleepest thou, and me hast thou forgotten, Achilles? Not in my life wert thou neglectful of me, but in death. Bury me soon, that I may pass the gates of Hades. Far off the souls, the shadows of the dead, repel me, nor suffer me to join them on the river bank; but, as it is, thus I roam around the wide-doored house of Hades. But stretch to me thy hand, I entreat; for never again shall I return from Hades when once ye shall have given me the meed of funeral fire. Nay, never shall we sit in life apart from our dear comrades, and take counsel together. But me hath hateful fate enveloped—fate that was mine at the moment of my birth. And for thyself, divine Achilles, it is doomed to die beneath the noble Trojans' wall. Another thing I will say to thee, and bid thee do it if thou wilt obey me:—Lay not my bones apart from thine, Achilles, but lay them together; for we were brought up together in your house, when Menœtius brought me, a child, from Opus to your house, because of woful bloodshed on the day in which I slew the son of Amphidamas, myself a child, not willing it, but in anger at our games. Then did the horseman, Peleus, take me, and rear me in his house, and cause me to be called thy squire. So then let one grave also hide the bones of both of us, the golden urn thy goddess-mother gave to thee.

“Him answered swift-footed Achilles:—

“Why, dearest and most honoured, hast thou hither come, to lay on me this thy behest? All things most certainly will I perform, and bow to what thou

biddest. But stand thou near : even for one moment let us throw our arms upon each other's neck, and take our fill of sorrowful wailing.

"So spake he, and with his outstretched hands he clasped, but could not seize. The spirit, earthward, like smoke, vanished with a shriek. Then all astonished arose Achilles, and beat his palms together, and spoke a piteous word :—

"Heavens! is there then, among the dead, soul and the shade of life, but thought is theirs no more at all? For through the night the soul of poor Patroclus stood above my head, wailing and sorrowing loud, and bade me do his will : it was the very semblance of himself.

"So spake he, and in the hearts of all of them he raised desire of lamentation ; and while they were yet mourning, to them appeared rose-fingered dawn about the piteous corpse."

There is surely nothing more thrilling in its pathos throughout the whole range of poetry than this scene, in which the iron-hearted conqueror of Hector holds ineffectual communing in dreams with his dear, lost, never-to-be-forgotten friend. But now the pyre is ready to be heaped, and the obsequies of Patroclus are on the point of being celebrated. Thereupon Achilles cuts his tawny curls, which he wore clustering for Spercheius, and places them in the hand of dead Patroclus. At the sight of this token that Achilles will return no more to Hellas, but that he must die and lie beside his friend, all the people fall to lamentation. Agamemnon has to arouse them to prepare the pyre. A hundred feet each way is it built up ; oxen and sheep are slaughtered and placed upon the wood, with jars of honey and olive oil. Horses, too, and dogs are slain to serve the dead man on his journey ; and twelve sons of the great-souled Trojans are sacrificed to the disconsolate ghost. Then Achilles cast fire upon the wood, and wailed, and called on his loved friend by name :—

"Hail, Patroclus ! I greet thee even in the tomb : for now I am performing all that erst I promised. Twelve valiant sons of the great-souled Trojans with thee the fire devours ; but Hector, son of Priam, I will give to no fire to feed on, but to dogs."

Meanwhile the pyre of Patroclus refused to burn, and Achilles summoned the two winds, Boreas and Zephyrus, to help him. They at this time were feasting in the house of Zephyrus, and Iris had to fetch them from their cups. They rose and drove the clouds before them, and furrowed up the sea, and passed to fertile Troy, and fell upon the pyre, and the great flame crackled, hugely blazing :—

"All night they around the pyre together cast a flame, blowing with shrill breath, and all night swift Achilles, from a golden bowl, holding a double goblet, drew wine, and poured it on the ground, and soaked the earth, calling upon the soul of poor Patroclus. As when a father wails who burns the bones of his son unwed, so wailed Achilles, burning his friend's bones, pacing slowly round the fire, and uttering groan on groan.

"But when the star of dawn came to herald light upon the earth, whom following morn, with saffron robe, spread across the sea, then the pyre languished and the flame was stayed.

"The winds again went homeward, back across the Thracian deep. It groaned beneath them, raging with the billow's swell. But the son of Peleus turned from the pyre, and lay down weary, and sweet sleep came upon him."

After this manner was the burning of Patroclus. And here the action of the *Iliad* may be said to end. What follows in the last two books is, however, of the greatest importance in adding dignity to the character of Achilles, and in producing that sense of repose, that pacification of the more violent emotions, which we require in the highest works of tragic art. First come the games around the barrow of Patroclus. Presiding over them is Achilles, who opens his treasure-house to the combatants with royal generosity, for ever mindful that in honouring them, he is paying honour to the great sad ghost of his dear friend. The bitterness of his sorrow is past; his thirst for vengeance is assuaged. Radiant and tranquil he appears among the chiefs of the Achaians; and to Agamemnon he displays marked courtesy.

But it is not enough to show us Achilles serene in the accomplishment of his last service to Patroclus. As the crowning scene in the whole *Iliad*, Homer has contrived to make us feel that, after all, Achilles is a man. The wrathful and revengeful hero, who bearded Agamemnon on his throne, and who slew the unarmed suppliant Lycaon, relents in pity at a father's prayer. Priam, in the tent of Achilles, presents one of the most touching pictures to be found in poetry. We know the leonine fierceness of Achilles; we know how he has cherished the thought of insult to dead Hector as a final tribute to his friend: even now he is brooding in his lair over the Trojan corpse. Into this lion's den the old king ventures. Instead of springing on him, as we might have feared, Achilles is found sublime in generosity of soul. Begging Patroclus to forgive him for robbing his ghost of this last satisfaction, he relinquishes to Priam the body of his son. Yet herein there is nothing sentimental. Achilles is still the same—swift to anger and haughty—but human withal, and tender-hearted to the tears of an enemy at his mercy.

This is the last mention made of Achilles in the *Iliad*. The hero, whom we have seen so noble in his interview with Priam, was destined within a few days to die before the walls of Troy, slain by the arrow of Paris.¹ His ashes were mingled with those of Patroclus. In their death they were not divided.

Once again in the Homeric poems does Achilles appear. But this time he is a ghost among the pale shadows of Elysium (*Od.* xi. 466):—

“Thereupon came the soul of Achilles, son of Peleus, and of Patroclus, and of brave Antilochus, and of Ajax, who was first in form and stature among the Achaians after great Peleides. The soul of fleet Æacides knew me, and wailing, he thus spake:—

“Zeus-born son of Laertes, wily Ulysses, why in thy heart, unhappy man, dost thou design a deed too great for mortals? How darest thou descend to Hades, where dwell the thoughtless dead, the phantoms of men whose life is done?

“So he spake; but I in turn addressed him:—

“Achilles, son of Peleus, greatest by far of Achaians, I am come to learn of

¹ That the poet of the *Iliad* in its present form had this legend before him is clear from Books xxi. 297, xxii. 355-360.

Teiresias concerning my return to Ithaca. But none of men in elder days or of those to be, is more blessed than thou art, Achilles; for in life the Argives-honoured thee like a god, and now again in thy greatness thou rulest the dead here where thou art. Therefore be not grieved at death, Achilles.

“So spake I, and he straightway made answer:—

“Console not me in death, noble Odysseus! Would rather that I were a bondsman of the glebe, the servant of a master, of some poor man, whose living were but scanty, than thus to be the king of all the nations of the dead.”

Some apology may be needed for these numerous quotations from a poem which is hardly less widely known and read than Shakespeare or the Bible. By no other method, however, would it have been possible to bring out into prominence the chief features of the hero whom Homer thought sufficient for the subject of the greatest epic of the world. For us Achilles has yet another interest. He, more than any character of fiction, reflects the qualities of the Greek race in its heroic age. His vices of passion and ungovernable pride, his virtue of splendid human heroism, his free individuality asserted in the scorn of fate, are representative of that Hellas which afterwards, at Marathon and Salamis, was destined to inaugurate a new era of spiritual freedom for mankind. It is impossible for us to sympathise with him wholly, or to admire him otherwise than as we admire a supreme work of art; so far is he removed from our so-called proprieties of moral taste and feeling. But we can study in him the type of a bygone, infinitely valuable period of the world's life, of that age in which the human spirit was emerging from the confused passions and sordid needs of barbarism into the higher emotions and more refined aspirations of civilisation. Of this dawn, this boyhood of humanity, Achilles is the fierce and fiery hero. He is the ideal of a race not essentially moral or political, of a nation which subordinated morals to art, and politics to personality; and even of that race he idealises the youth rather than the manhood. In some respects Odysseus is a truer representative of the delicate and subtle spirit which survived all changes in the Greeks. But Achilles, far more than Odysseus, is an impersonation of the Hellenic genius, superb in its youthfulness, doomed to immature decay, yet brilliant at every stage of its brief career.

To exaggerate the importance of Achilles in the education of the Greeks, who used the *Iliad* as their Bible, and were keenly sensitive to all artistic influences, would be difficult. He was the incarnation of the chivalry, the fountain of their sense of honour. The full development of this subject would require more space than I can here give to it. It will be enough to touch upon the friendship of Achilles for Patroclus as the central point of Hellenic chivalry; and to advert to the reappearance of his type of character in Alexander at the very moment when the force of Hellas seemed to be exhausted.

Nearly all the historians of Greece have failed to insist upon the fact that fraternity in arms played for the Greek race the same part as the idealisation of women for the knighthood of feudal Europe. Greek mythology and history are full of tales of friendship, which can

only be paralleled by the story of David and Jonathan in our Bible. The legends of Herakles and Hylas, of Theseus and Peirithous, of Apollo and Hyacinth, of Orestes and Pylades, occur immediately to the mind. Among the noblest patriots, tyrannicides, lawgivers, and self-devoted heroes in the early times of Greece, we always find the names of friends and comrades recorded with peculiar honour. Harmodius and Aristogeiton, who slew the despot Hipparchus at Athens; Diocles and Philolaus, who gave laws to Thebes; Chariton and Melanippus, who resisted the sway of Phalaris in Sicily; Cratinus and Aristodemus, who devoted their lives to propitiate offended deities when a plague had fallen upon Athens; these comrades, staunch to each other in their love, and elevated by friendship to the pitch of noblest enthusiasm, were among the favourite saints of Greek legendary history. In a word, the chivalry of Hellas found its motive force in friendship rather than in the love of women; and the motive force of all chivalry is a generous, soul-exalting, unselfish passion. The fruit which friendship bore among the Greeks was courage in the face of danger, indifference to life when honour was at stake, patriotic ardour, the love of liberty, and lion-hearted rivalry in battle. "Tyrants," said Plato, "stand in awe of friends."

It may seem at first sight paradoxical to speak at all of Greek chivalry, since this word, by its very etymology, is appropriated to a mediæval institution. Yet when we inquire what chivalry means, we find that it implies a permanent state of personal emotion, which raises human life above the realities of everyday experience, and inspires men with unselfish impulses. Furthermore, this passionate condition of the soul in chivalry is connected with a powerful military enthusiasm, severing the knight from all vile things, impelling him to the achievement of great deeds, and breeding in his soul a self-regardless temper. Both the ancient and the mediæval forms of chivalry included love and arms. The heroes and the knights alike were lovers and warriors. The passion, which Plato called *Mania* in the *Phædrus*, and which the Provençal Troubadours knew by the name of *Joie*, was excited in the heroes by their friends, and in the knights by their ladies. But the emotion was substantially the same; nor, with the tale of Patroclus and with the whole of Greek history before us, can we allow our modern inaptitude for devoted friendship to blind us to the seriousness of this passion among the Greeks. Beside war and love, chivalry implies a third enthusiasm. In the case of the Greek heroes this was patriotic. In the case of the mediæval knights it was religious. Thus, antique chivalry may be described as a compound of military, amatory, and patriotic passions meeting in one enthusiastic habit of the soul; mediæval chivalry as a compound of military, amatory, and religious passions meeting in a similar enthusiastic habit of soul. It is hardly necessary to point out the differences between Hellenic heroism and Teutonic knighthood, or to show how far the former failed to influence society as favourably as the latter. The Christian chivalry of mercy,

forgiveness, gentleness, and long-suffering, which claims the title of charity in armour, was a post-Hellenic ideal. Greeks could not have comprehended the oath which Arthur imposed upon his knights, and which ran in the following words: "He charged them never to do outrage nor murder, and alway to flee treason, also by no means to be cruel, but to give mercy unto him that asked mercy, and alway to do ladies, damosels, and gentlewomen succour upon pain of death." The murder of Lycaon by Achilles, the butchery of Dolon by Diomedes, and the treachery practised upon Philoctetes by Odysseus are sufficiently at variance with the spirit of this oath; nor do any of the heroic legends tell a tale of courtesy towards women. Thus much about the unchivalrous aspects of Greek heroism I have thought it right to say, before returning to the view which I first stated, that military friendship among the Greeks played for Hellenic civilisation a part not wholly dissimilar to that of chivalrous love among the nations of mediæval Europe. Regarded as an institution, with ethics of its own, and with peculiar social and political regulations, this Greek chivalry was specially Dorian.¹ Yet it spread through all the states of Hellas. In Athens it allied itself with philosophy, as afterwards at Florence did the chivalry of knighthood; and in Thebes, during the last struggle for Hellenic freedom, it blazed forth in the heroism of the Three Hundred, who fell together face-forward to the Macedonian lances at Chæronea.² Meanwhile, Achilles remained for all Greece the eponym of passionate friendship; and even in the later periods of Greek poetry the most appropriate title for a pair of noble comrades was "Achilleian." Concerning the abuse and debasement of such passion among the historic Greeks this is not the place to speak. Achilles and Patroclus cannot be charged with having sanctioned by example any vice, however much posterity may have read its own moods of thought and feeling into Homer.

Æschylus wrote a tragedy entitled the *Myrmidones*, in commemoration of the love of Achilles; and, perhaps, few things among the lost treasures of Greek literature are so much to be regretted as this play, which would have cast clear light upon the most romantic of Greek legends. It may also be mentioned in passing that we possess fragments of a play of Sophocles which bears the name Ἀχιλλέως ἔρασται, or *Lovers of Achilles*; but what its subject was, and whether the drama was Satyric, as seems probable, or not, we do not know. The beautiful passage in which love is compared to a piece of glittering ice held in the hand of children, has been preserved from it by Stobæus.

Enough, fortunately, has survived the ruin of time to enable us to conjecture how Æschylus, in the *Myrmidones*, handled the materials afforded him by Homer. The play, as was frequent, took its name from the Chorus, who represented the contingent of Thessalian warriors led

¹ See Müller's *Dorians*, vol. ii. pp. 306-313.

² Sections 18 and 19 of Plutarch's *Life of Pelopidas* contain the best account of the Sacred Band, and place the Greek chivalrous sentiment in the clearest light.

by Peleus' son against Troy. It opened, if we may trust the scholiast to the *Frogs* of Aristophanes, with a reproach uttered by the Chorus against Achilles for his inactivity :—

τάδε μὲν λεύσσεις, φαίδιμ' Ἀχιλλεῦ,
δοριλυμάντους Δαναῶν μύχθους
ὄς * * εἶσω κλισίας.

“Seest thou these things, glorious Achilles—the sufferings of the Danaans beneath victorious spears? Whom thou within thy tent —” here the fragment breaks off; but enough has been said to strike the keynote of the tragedy. The next fragment, according to Dindorf's arrangement, formed, probably, part of Achilles' defence.¹ It is written in iambics and contains the famous simile of the eagle stricken to death by an arrow fledged with his own feather. Like that eagle, argues the hero, have we Greeks been smitten by our own ill-counsel. After the drama has thus been opened, the first great incident seems to have been the arrival of the embassy of Phoenix at Achilles' tent. One corrupt, but precious fragment, put by Aristophanes as a quotation into the mouth of Euripides in the *Frogs*, indicates the line of argument taken by the ambassadors :—

Φθιῶτ' Ἀχιλλεῦ, τί ποτ' ἀνδροδάϊκτον ἀκούων
ιήκοπον οὐ πελάθεις ἐπ' ἀρωγάν;

Though the Greek as it stands is untranslatable, the meaning is pretty clearly this: Achilles of Phthia, how can you bear to hear of these woes nor lend a helping hand? The next fragment must be received with caution. It occurs in the *Frogs* as a quotation :—

Βέβληκ' Ἀχιλλεὺς δύο κύβω καὶ τέτταρα.

“Achilles has cast two dice, and four :”

On which the scholiast makes the following remark: “This is from the *Myrmidones*; for the poet feigned them playing dice; and it is the custom of gamblers to cry thus: two, four, three, five. Dionysus says this to show that Æschylus has won.” Another scholiast puts it in doubt whether the verse be taken from the *Telephus* of Euripides or some other source. The foundation is, therefore, too slender to build upon securely; else we might imagine that, after the departure of the ambassadors, and perhaps after the equipment of Patroclus for the war, Achilles was represented by Æschylus as whiling away the time with his companions at a game of hazard. Then enters Antilochus, the messenger of bad news. He recites the death of Patroclus, and lifts up his voice in lamentation. Our next fragment brings the whole scene vividly before us :—

Ἄντιλοχ', ἀποίμωξόν με τοῦ τεθνηκότος
τὸν ζῶντα μάλλον.

¹ It may be questioned whether this fragment ought not to be referred to the scene with the embassy later on in the play.

The words are spoken undoubtedly by Achilles: "Antilochus, wail thou for me rather than for the dead—for me who live." It is again from a comedy of Aristophanes, the *Ecclesiazusa*, that this exclamation comes; and in passing we may remark, that such frequent citations from this single play of Æschylus by a comic poet prove its popularity at Athens. Between the narration of Antilochus and the bringing in of the dead body of Patroclus there must have been a solemn pause in the dramatic action, which Æschylus, no doubt, filled up with one of his great choric passages. Then followed the crowning scene in the tragedy. Achilles, front to front with the corpse of his friend, uttered a lamentation, which the ancients seem to have regarded as the very ecstasy of grief and love and passionate remembrance. Lucian, quoting one of the lines of this lament, introduces it with words that prove the strong impression it produced:—"Achilles, when he bemoaned Patroclus' death, in his unhusbanded passion burst forth into the very truth." It would be impossible to quote and comment upon the three lines which have been preserved from this unique Threnos without violating modern taste. To understand them at all is difficult, and to recompose from them the hero's speech is beyond our power. The value of the meagre and conflicting citations given by Plutarch, Athenæus, and Lucian, lies in the impression they convey of the deep effect wrought upon Greek sympathy by the passion of the soliloquy. When we call to mind the lamentation uttered by Teucer over the corpse of Ajax in the tragedy of Sophocles, we may imagine how the genius of Æschylus rose to the height of this occasion in his *Myrmidones*. In what way the drama ended is not known. We may, however, hazard a conjecture that the poet did not leave the hero without some outlook into the future, and that the solemn note of reconciliation upon which the tragedy closed responded to the first querulous interrogation of the Chorus at its commencement. The situation was a grand one for working out that purification of the passions which Greek tragedy required. The sullen and selfish wrath of Achilles had brought its bitter consequence of suffering and sorrow for the hero, as well as of disaster for the host. Out of that deadly suffering of Achilles—out of the paroxysm of grief beside the body of his friend—has grown a nobler form of anger, which will bring salvation to his country at the certain loss of his own life. Can we doubt that Æschylus availed himself of this so solemn and sublime a cadence? The dead march and the funeral lamentations for Patroclus mingle with the neighing of war-horses and the braying of the trumpets that shall lead the Myrmidons to war. And over and above all sounds of the grief that is past and of the triumph that is to follow, is heard the voice of fate pronouncing the death-doom of the hero, on whose *ἀμαρτία* (fault, proceeding from some quality of character) the tragic movement has depended.

Thus, in the prime of Athens, the poet-warrior of Marathon, the prophet of the highest Hellenic inspiration, handled a legend which

was dear to his people, and which to them spoke more, perhaps, than it can do to us. Plato, discussing the *Myrmidones* of Æschylus, remarks in the *Symposium* that the tragic poet was wrong to make Achilles the lover of Patroclus, seeing that Patroclus was the elder of the two, and that Achilles was the youngest and most beautiful of all the Greeks. The fact, however, is that Homer himself raises no question in our minds about the relations of lover and beloved. Achilles and Patroclus are comrades. Their friendship is equal. It was only the reflective activity of the Greek mind, working upon the Homeric legend by the light of subsequent custom, which introduced these distinctions. The humanity of Homer was purer, larger, and more sane than that of his posterity among the Hellenes. Still, it may be worth while suggesting that Homer, perhaps, intended in Hector and Achilles to contrast domestic love with the love of comrades. The tenderness of Hector for Andromache, side by side with the fierce passion of Achilles, seems to account, at least in some measure, for the preference felt for Hector in the Middle Ages. Achilles controlled the Greek imagination. Hector attracted the sympathies of mediæval chivalry, and took his place upon the list of knightly worthies.¹ Masculine love was Hellenic. The love of idealised womanhood was romantic. Homer, the sovereign poet, understood both passions of the human heart, delineating the one in Achilles without effeminacy, the other in Hector without sickly sentiment. At the same time, Hector's connection with the destinies of Rome and his appearance in the *Æneid*, if only as a ghost, must not be forgotten when we estimate the reasons why he eclipsed Achilles in the Middle Ages.

It is not till we reach Alexander the Great that we find how truly Achilles was the type of the Greek people, and to what extent he had controlled their growth. Alexander expressed in real life that ideal which in Homer's poetry had been displayed by Achilles. Alexander set himself to imitate Achilles. His tutor, Lysimachus, found favour in the eyes of the royal family of Macedon, by comparing Philip to Peleus, his son to Achilles, and himself to Phœnix. On all his expeditions Alexander carried with him a copy of the *Iliad*, calling it "a perfect portable treasure of military virtue." It was in the spirit of the Homeric age that he went forth to conquer Asia. And when he reached the plain of Troy, it was to the tomb of Achilles that he paid special homage. There he poured libations to the mighty ghost, anointed his grave, and, as Plutarch says, "ran naked about his tomb, and crowned it with garlands, declaring how happy he esteemed him in having, while he lived, so faithful a friend, and, when he was dead, so famous a poet to proclaim his actions." We have seen that the two chief passions of Achilles were his anger and his love. In both of these Alexander followed him. The passage just quoted from Plutarch hints at the envy with which Alexander regarded the friendship of Achilles and Patroclus. In his own life he entertained for Hephæstion a like

¹ See Caxton's Preface to the *Morte d'Arthur*.

passion. When Hephæstion died of fever at Ecbatana, Alexander exaggerated the fury and the anguish of the son of Peleus. He went forth and slew a whole tribe—the Cosseans—as a sacrifice to the soul of his comrade. He threw down the battlements of neighbouring cities, and forbade all signs of merry-making in his camp. Meanwhile he refused food and comfort, till an oracle from Ammon ordained that divine honours should be paid Hephæstion. Then Alexander raised a pyre, like that of Patroclus in the *Iliad*, except that the pyre of Hephæstion cost 10,000 talents, and was adorned with all the splendour of Greek art in its prime. Here the Homeric ceremonies were performed. Games and races took place; then, like Achilles, having paid this homage to his friend, of bloodshed, costly gifts, and obsequies, Alexander at last rested from his grief. In this extravagance of love for a friend we see the direct working of the *Iliad* on the mind of the Macedonian king. But the realities of life fall far short of the poet's dream. Neither the love nor the sorrow of Alexander for Hephæstion is so touching as the love and sorrow of Achilles for Patroclus.

In his wrath, again, Alexander imitated and went beyond his model. When he slew Clitus in a drunken brawl, there was no Athene at his side to stay his arm and put the sword back in the scabbard. Yet his remorse was some atonement for his violence. "All that night," says Plutarch, "and the next day he wept bitterly, till, being quite spent with lamenting and exclaiming, he lay, as it were, speechless, only fetching deep sighs." It is noticeable that Alexander, here also like Achilles, conqueror and hero though he was, scorned not to show his tears, and to grovel on the ground in anguish. His fiery temper added indomitable energy to all he did or felt. In a few years he swept Asia, destroying kingdoms, and founding cities that still bear his name; and though his rage betrayed him now and then into insane acts, he, like Achilles, was not wholly without the guidance of Athene. In both we have the spectacle of a gigantic nature moved by passions; yet both are controlled by reason, not so much by the reflective understanding, as by an innate sense of what is great and noble. Alexander was Aristotle's pupil. In his best moments, in his fairest and most solid actions, the spirit of Aristotle's teaching ruled him and attended him, as Achilles was ruled and attended by Pallas. Again, in generosity, Alexander recalls Achilles. His treatment of the wife and daughters of Darius reminds us of the reception of Priam by the son of Peleus. Grote, indeed, points out that good policy prompted him to spare the life of the Persian queen. That may be true; but it would have been quite consistent with the Greek standard of honour to treat her with indignity while he preserved her life. This Alexander refrained from doing. His entertainment of Stateira was not unworthy of a queen; and if he did not exhibit the refined courtesy of the Black Prince, he came as near to this ideal of modern chivalry as a Greek could do. In the last place Alexander, like Achilles, was always young. Like Achilles, he died young, and exists for us as an immortal youth.

This youthfulness is one of the peculiar attributes of a Greek hero, one of the distinguishing features of Greek sculpture—in a word, the special mark of the Greek race. “O Solon! Solon!” said the priest of Egypt, “you Greeks are always boys!” Achilles and Alexander, as Hegel has most eloquently demonstrated, are for ever adolescent. Yet, after all is said, Alexander fell far below his prototype in beauty and sublimity. He was nothing more than a heroic man. Achilles was the creature of a poet’s brain, of a nation’s mythology. The one was the ideal in its freshness and its freedom. The other was the real, dragged in the mire of the world, and enthralled by the necessities of human life.

It is very difficult, by any process of criticism, to define the impression of greatness and of glory which the character of Achilles leaves upon the mind. There is in him a kind of magnetic fascination, something incommensurable and indescribable, a quality like that which Goethe defined as *dæmonic*. They are not always the most noble or the most admirable natures which exert this influence over their fellow-creatures. The Emperor Napoleon and our own Byron had each, perhaps, a portion of this Achilleian personality. Men of their stamp sway the soul by their prestige, by their personal beauty and grandeur, by the concentrated intensity of their character, and by the fatality which seems to follow them. To Achilles, to Alexander, to Napoleon, we cannot apply the rules of our morality. It is, therefore, impossible for us, who must aim first at being good citizens, careful in our generation, and subordinate to the laws of society around us, to admire them without a reservation. Yet, after all is said, a great and terrible glory does rest upon their heads; and though our sentiments of propriety may be offended by some of their actions, our sense of what is awful and sublime is satisfied by the contemplation of them. No one should delude us into thinking that true culture does not come from the impassioned study of everything, however eccentric and at variance with our own mode of life, that is truly great. Greatness, of whatever species it may be, is always elevating and spirit-stirring. When we listen to the *Eroica* Symphony, and remember that that master-work of music was produced by the genius of Beethoven, brooding over the thoughts of Achilles in the *Iliad*, and of Napoleon upon the battle-fields of Lombardy, we may feel how abyss cries to abyss, and how all forms of human majesty meet and sustain each other.

CHAPTER IV

THE WOMEN OF HOMER

Helen of Troy—Her Eternal Youth—Variety of Legends connected with her—Stesichorus—Helen in the *Iliad*—Helen in the *Odyssey*—The Treatment of Helen by Æschylus—Euripidean Handling of her Romance—Helen in Greek Art—Quintus Smyrnæus—Apollonius of Tyana and the Ghost of Achilles—Helen in the Faust Legend—Marlowe and Goethe—Penelope—Her Home-love—Calypso and the Isle of Ogygia—Circe—The Homeric and the Modern Circe—Nausicaa—Her Perfect Girlishness—Briseis and Andromache—The Sense of Proportion and of Relative Distance in Homer's Pictures—Andromache and Astyanax—The Cult of Heroes and Heroines in Greece—Artistic Presentation of Homeric Persons—Philostratus.

“For first of all the spherèd signs whereby
Love severs light from darkness, and most high
In the white front of January there glows
The rose-red sign of Helen like a rose.”

Prelude to *Tristram and Iseult*, lines 91-94.

HELEN OF TROY is one of those ideal creatures of the fancy over which time, space, and circumstance, and moral probability, exert no sway. It would be impossible to conceive of her except as inviolably beautiful and young, in spite of all her wanderings and all she suffered at the hands of Aphrodite and of men. She moves through Greek heroic legend as the desired of all men and the possessed of many. Theseus bore her away while yet a girl from Sparta. Her brethren, Castor and Pólydeukes, recovered her from Athens by force, and gave to her Æthra, the mother of Theseus, for bondwoman. Then all the youths of Hellas wooed her in the young world's prime. She was at last assigned in wedlock to Menelaus, by whom she conceived her only earthly child, Hermione. Paris, by aid of Aphrodite, won her love and fled with her to Egypt and to Troy. In Troy she abode more than twenty years, and was the mate of Deiphobus after the death of Paris. When the strife raised for her sake was ended, Menelaus restored her with honour to his home in Lacedæmon. There she received Telemachus and saw her daughter mated to Neoptolemus. But even after death she rested

not from the service of love. The great Achilles, who in life had loved her by hearsay, but had never seen her, clasped her among the shades upon the island Leuké and begat Euphorion. Through all these adventures Helen maintains an ideal freshness, a mysterious virginity of soul. She is not touched by the passion she inspires, or by the wreck of empires ruined in her cause. Fate deflowers her not, nor do years impair the magic of her charm. Like beauty, she belongs alike to all and none. She is not judged as wives or mothers are, though she is both; to her belong soul-wounding blossoms of inexorable love, as well as pain-healing poppy-heads of oblivion; all eyes are blinded by the adorable, incomparable grace which Aphrodite sheds around her form.¹

Whether Helen was the slave or the beloved of Aphrodite, or whether, as Herodotus hinted, she was herself a kind of Aphrodite, we are hardly told. At one time she appears the willing servant of the goddess; at another she groans beneath her bondage. But always and on all occasions she owes everything to the Cyprian queen. Her very body-gear preserved the powerful charm with which she was invested at her birth. When the Phocians robbed the Delphian treasure-house, the wife of one of their captains took and wore Helen's necklace, whereupon she doted on a young Epirot soldier and eloped with him.

Whose daughter was Helen? The oldest legend calls her the child of Leda and of Zeus. We have all read the tale of the swan who was her father amid the rushes of Eurotas—the tale which Leonardo and Sodoma and Buonarroti and Correggio thought worthy of their loveliest illustration. Another story gives her for the offspring of Oceanus and Tethys, as though, in fact, she were an Aphrodite risen from the waves. In yet a third, Zeus is her sire and Nemesis her mother: and thus the lesson of the tale of Troy was allegorised in Helen's pedigree. She is always god-begotten and divinely fair. Was it possible that anything so exquisite should have endured rough ravishment and borne the travail of the siege of Troy? This doubt possessed the later poets of the legendary age. They spun a myth according to which Helen reached the shore of Egypt on the ship of Paris; but Paris had to leave her there in cedar-scented chambers by the stream of Nile, when he went forth to plough the foam, uncomfited save by her phantom. And for a phantom the Greeks strove with the Trojans on the windy plains of Ilium. For a phantom's sake brave Hector died, and the leonine swiftness of Achilles was tamed, and Zeus bewailed Sarpedon, and Priam's towers were levelled with the ground. Helen, meanwhile the beautiful, the inviolable—sat all day long among the palm-groves, twining lotus-flowers for her hair, and learning how to weave rare Eastern patterns in the loom. This legend hides a delicate satire upon human strife. For what do men disquiet themselves in warfare to the

¹ I take this occasion of calling attention to the essay on Helen considered as an allegory of Greek Beauty, by Paul de St. Victor in his *Hommes et Dieux*.

death, and tossing on sea-waves? Even for a phantom—for the shadow of their desire, the which remains secluded in some unapproachable, far, sacred land. A wide application may thus be given to Augustine's passionate outcry: "Quo vobis adhuc et adhuc ambulare vias difficiles et laboriosas? Non est requies ubi quæritis eam. Quærite quod quæritis; sed ibi non est ubi quæritis. Beatam vitam quæritis in regione mortis; non est illic."¹ Those who spake ill of Helen suffered. Stesichorus ventured in the Ἰλίου Πέρις (Fall of Troy) to lay upon her shoulders all the guilt and suffering of Hellas and of Troy. Whereupon he was smitten with blindness, nor could he recover his sight till he had written the palinode which begins—

οὐκ ἔστ' ἔτυμος λόγος οὖτος,
οὐδ' ἔβας ἐν ναυσὶν ἐυσέλμοις,
οὐδ' ἴκεο πέργαμα Τροίας.²

Even Homer, as Plato hints, knew not that blindness had fallen on him for like reason. To assail Helen with reproach was not less dangerous than to touch the Ark of the Covenant, for with the Greeks beauty was a holy thing. How perfectly beautiful she was, we know from the legend of the cups modelled upon her breasts suspended in the shrine of Aphrodite. When Troy was taken, and the hungry soldiers of Odysseus roamed through the burning palaces of Priam and his sons, their sword-points dropped before the vision of her loveliness. She had wrought all the ruin; yet Menelaus could not clasp her, when she sailed forth, swanlike, fluttering white raiment, with the imperturbable sweet smile of a goddess on her lips. It remained for a Roman poet, Virgil, to describe her vile and shrinking—

"Illa sibi infestos eversa ob Pergama Teucros,
Et pœnas Danaûm et deserti conjugis iras
Permetuens, Troiæ et patriæ communis Erinnyis,
Abdiderat sese atque aris invisâ sedebat."³

The morality of these lines belongs to a later age of reflection upon Greek romance. In Homer we discover no such epigrams. Between the Helen of the *Iliad*, revered by the elders in the Scæan gate, and the Helen of the *Odyssey*, queen-like among her Spartan maidens, there has passed no agony of fear. The shame which she has truly felt has

¹ "To what end do ye travel hither and thither upon paths of toil and difficulty? There is no repose where you are seeking it. Seek what you are seeking, but know it is not there where you are seeking it. A life of blessedness you look for in the realm of death. It is not there."

² "Not true is that tale; nor didst thou journey in benched ships, or come to towers of Troy."

³ "She, shrinking from the Trojans' hate,
Made frantic by their city's fate,
Nor dreading less the Danaan sword,
The vengeance of her injured lord:
She, Troy's and Argos' common fiend,
Sat cowering, by the altar screened."—*Conington*.

been tempered to a silent sorrow, and she has poured her grief forth beside Andromache over the corpse of Hector.¹

If we would fain see the ideal beauty of the early Greek imagination in a form of flesh-and-blood reality, we must follow Helen through the Homeric poems. She first appears when Iris summons her to watch the duel of Paris and Menelaus. Husband and lover are to fight beneath the walls of Troy. She, meanwhile, is weaving a purple peplus with the deeds of war done and the woes endured for her sake far and wide :—

“She in a moment round her shoulders flings
Robe of white lawn, and from the threshold springs,
Yearning and pale, with many a tender tear.
Also two women in her train she brings,
The large-eyed Clymené and Æthra fair,
And at the western gates right speedily they were.”²

English eyes know in some slight measure how Helen looked when she left her chamber and hastened to the gate ; for has not Leighton painted her with just so much of far-off sorrow in her gaze as may become a daughter of the gods ? In the gate sat Priam and his elders ; and as they looked at Helen no angry curses rose to their lips, but reverential admiration filled them, together with an awful sense of the dread fate attending her :—

“These, seeing Helen at the tower arrive,
One to another wingéd words addressed :
‘ Well may the Trojans and Achæans strive,
And a long time bear sorrow and unrest,
For such a woman, in her cause and quest,
Who like immortal goddesses in face
Appareath ; yet ’twere even thus far best
In ships to send her back to her own place,
Lest a long curse she leave to us and all our race.’ ”

It is thus simply, and by no mythological suggestion of Aphrodite’s influence, that Homer describes the spirit of beauty which protected Helen among the people she had brought to such sore straits.

Priam accosts her tenderly ; not hers the blame that high gods scourge him in his hoary age with war. Then he bids her sit beside him and name the Greek heroes while they march beneath. She obeys, and points out Agamemnon, Odysseus, and Ajax, describing each as she knew them of old. But for her twin brothers she looks in vain ; and the thought of them touches her with the sorrow of her isolation and dishonour. In the same book, after Paris has been withdrawn, not without discredit, from the duel by Aphrodite, Helen is summoned by her liege-mistress to his bed. Helen was standing

¹ We may add that Virgil’s treatment of Helen was necessitated by the Roman’s point of view. She had brought disaster upon Troy, and had driven forth Æneas, the progenitor of Roman kings, into exile.

² Worsley’s *Iliad*, iii. 17. The other quotations are from the same version.

on the walls, and the goddess, disguised as an old spinning-woman, took her by the skirt, bidding her hie back to her lover, whom she would find in his bedchamber, not as one arrayed for war, but as a fair youth resting haply from the dance. Homer gives no hint that Aphrodite is here the personified wish of Helen's own heart going forth to Paris. On the contrary, the Cyprian queen appears in the interests of the Phrygian youth, whom she would fain see comforted. Under her disguise Helen recognised Aphrodite, the terrible queen, whose bondwoman she was forced to be. For a moment she struggled against her fate. "Art thou come again," she cried, "to bear me to some son of earth beloved of thee, that I may serve his pleasure to my own shame? Nay, rather, put off divinity, and be thyself his odalisque."

"With *him* remain,
Him sit with, and from heaven thy feet refrain;
 Weep, till his wife he make thee, or fond slave.
 I go to him no more, to win new stain,
 And scorn of Trojan women again outbrave,
 Whelmed even now with grief's illimitable wave."

But go she must. Aphrodite is a hard taskmistress, and the mysterious bond of beauty which chains Helen to her service cannot be broken. It is in vain, too, that Helen taunts Paris: he reminds her of the first fruition of their love in the island Cranaë; and at the last she has to lay her down at his side, not uncomplying, conquered as it were by the reflex of the passion she herself excites. It is in the chamber of Paris that Hector finds her. She has vainly striven to send Paris forth to battle; and the sense of her own degradation, condemned to love a man love-worthy only for the beauty of his limbs, overcomes her when she sees the noble Hector clothed in panoply for war. Her passionate outbreak of self-pity and self-reproach is, perhaps, the strongest indication given in the *Iliad* of a moral estimate of Helen's crime. The most consummate art is shown by the poet in thus quickening the conscience of Helen by contact with the nobility of Hector. Like Guinevere, she for a moment seems to say: "Thou art the highest, and most human too!" casting from her as worthless the allurements of the baser love for whose sake she had left her home. In like manner, it was not without the most exquisite artistic intention that Homer made the parting scene between Andromache and Hector follow immediately upon this meeting. For Andromache in the future there remained only sorrow and servitude. Helen was destined to be tossed from man to man, always desirable and always delicate, like the sea-foam that floats upon the crests of waves. But there is no woman who, reading the *Iliad*, would not choose to weep with Andromache in Hector's arms, rather than to smile like Helen in the laps of lovers for whom she little cared. Helen and Andromache meet together before Hector's corpse, and it is here that we learn to love best what is womanly in Leda's daughter. The mother and the wife have bewailed

him in high thrilling threni. Then Helen advances to the bier and cries :—

“ Hector, of brethren dearest to my heart,
 For I in sooth am Alexander’s bride,
 Who brought me hither : would I first had died !
 For ’tis the twentieth year of doom deferred
 Since Troyward from my fatherland I hied ;
 Yet never in those years mine ear hath heard
 From thy most gracious lips one sharp accusing word ;
 Nay, if by other I haply were reviled,
 Brother, or sister fair, or brother’s bride,
 Or mother (for the king was alway mild),
 Thou with kind words the same hast pacified,
 With gentle words, and mien like summer-tide.
 Wherefore I mourn for thee and mine own ill,
 Grieving at heart : for in Troy town so wide
 Friend have I none, nor harbourer of goodwill,
 But from my touch all shrink with deadly shuddering chill.”

It would have been impossible to enhance more worthily than thus the spirit of courtesy and knightly kindness which was in Hector—qualities, in truth, which, together with his loyalty to Andromache, endeared the champion of the Trojans to chivalry, and placed Hector, not Achilles, upon the list of worthies beside King Arthur and Godfrey of Boulogne.¹

The character of Helen loses much of its charm and becomes more conventional in the *Odyssey*. It is difficult to believe that the poet who put into her lips the last lines of that threnos could have ventured to display the same woman calm and innocent and queenlike in the home of Menelaus :—

“ While in his mind he sat revolving this,
 Forth from her fragrant bower came Helen fair,
 Bright as the golden-spindled Artemis.
 Adraste set the couch ; Alcippe there
 The fine-spun carpet spread ; and Phylo bare
 The silver basket which Alcandra gave,
 Consort of Polybus, who dwelt whilere
 In Thebes of Egypt, whose great houses save
 Wealth in their walls, large store, and pomp of treasure brave.”

Helen shows her prudence and insight by at once declaring the stranger guest to be Telemachus ; busy with housewifely kindness, she prepares for him a comfortable couch at night ; nor does she shrink from telling again the tales of Troy, and the craft which helped Odysseus in the Wooden Horse. The blame of her elopement with Paris she throws on Aphrodite, who had carried her across the sea :—

“ Leaving my child an orphan far away,
 And couch, and husband who had known no peer,
 First in all grace of soul and beauty shining clear.”

¹ Hector was reckoned among the worthies because he belonged to the race which founded the Roman empire. He was a link in that long chain of causation summed up in Virgil’s line :

“Tantæ molis erat Romanam condere gentem.”

Such words, no doubt, fell with honey-sweet flattery from the lips of Helen on the ears of Menelaus. Yet how could he forget the grief of his bereavement, the taunts of Achilles and Thersites, and the ten years' toil at Troy endured for her? Perhaps he remembered the promise of Proteus, who had said, "Thee will the immortals send to the Elysian plains and furthest verge of earth; where dwells yellow-haired Rhadamanthus, and where the ways of life are easiest for men; snow falls not there, nor storm, nor any rain, but Ocean ever breathes forth delicate zephyr breezes to gladden men; since thou hast Helen for thine own, and art the son-in-law of Zeus." Such future was full recompense for sorrow in the past. Besides, Helen, as Homer tells, had charms to soothe the soul and drown the memory of the saddest things. Even at this time, when thought is troublesome, she mixes Egyptian nepenthé with the wine—nepenthé "which, whoso drinks thereof when it is mingled in the bowl, begets for him oblivion of all woe; through a whole day he drops no tear adown his cheek, not even should his sire or mother die, nay, should they slay his brother or dear son before his face, and he behold it with his eyes. Such virtuous juices had the child of Zeus, of potent charm, which Polydamna, wife of Thon, gave to her, the Egyptian woman, where earth yields many medicines, some of weal and some of bane." This nepenthé—the material drug that lulls the soul in dreams, used by the spiritual power of beauty which snares souls through the eyes—was Helen's secret. In the fifteenth book of the *Odyssey* we have yet another glimpse of Helen in the palace of Menelaus. She interprets an omen in favour of Odysseus, which had puzzled Menelaus, and gives to Telemachus a costly mantle, star-bright, the web of her own loom, produced from the very bottom of the chest in which she stored her treasures. The only shadow cast upon Helen in the *Odyssey* is to be found lurking in the ominous name of Megapenthes, Menelaus' son by a slave-woman, who was destined after his sire's death to expel her from fair Lacedæmon. We may remember that it was on the occasion of the spousal of this son to Alector's daughter, and of the sending of Hermione to be the bride of Neoptolemus, that Telemachus first appeared before the eyes of Helen.

The charm of Helen in the Homeric poems is due in a great measure to the divine limpidity of the poet's art. The situations in which she appears are never strained, nor is the ethical feeling, though indicated, suffered to disturb the calm influence of her beauty. This is not the case with Æschylus. Already, as before hinted, Stesichorus in his lyric interludes had ventured to assail the character of Helen, applying to her conduct the moral standard which Homer kept carefully out of sight. Æschylus goes further. His object was to use Hellenic romance as the subject-matter for a series of dramatic studies which should set forth his conception of the divine government of the world. A genius for tragedy which has never been surpassed, was subordinated by him to a sublime philosophy of human life. It was no longer

possible for Helen to escape judgment. Her very name supplied the key-note of reproach. Rightly was she called Helen—*ἑλέναυς, ἑλανδρος, ἑλέππολις*—"a hell of ships, hell of men, hell of cities," she sailed forth to Troy, and the heedless Trojans sang marriage songs in her praise, which soon were turned to songs of mourning for her sake. She, whom they welcomed as "a spirit of unruffled calm, a gentle ornament of wealth, a darter of soft glances, a soul-wounding love-blossom," was found to be no less a source of mischief than is a young lion nurtured in the palace for the ruin of its heirs. Soon had the Trojans reason to revile her as a "Fury bringing woe on wives." The choruses of the *Agamemnon* are weighted with the burden of her sin. "Ah, ah! misguided Helen!" it breaks forth: "thine is the blood-guilt of those many many souls slain beneath Troy walls!" She is incarnate Até, the soul-seducing, crime-engendering, woe-begetting curse of two great nations. Zeus, through her sin, wrought ruin for the house of Priam, wanton in its wealth. In the dark came blinded Paris and stole her, forth, and she went lightly through her husband's doors, and dared a hateful deed. Menelaus, meanwhile, gazed on the desecrated marriage-bed, and seemed to see her floating through his halls; and the sight of beauteous statues grew distasteful to his eyes, and he yearned for her across the sea in dreams. Nought was left, when morning came, but vain forth-stretchings of eager hands after the shapes that follow on the paths of sleep. Then war awoke, and Ares, who barter the bodies of men for gold, kept sending home to Hellas from Troy a little white dust stored in brazen urns. It is thus that Æschylus places in the foreground, not the witchery of Helen and the charms of Aphrodite, but her lightness and her sin, the woe it wrought for her husband, and the heavy griefs that through her fell on Troy and Hellas. It would be impossible to accentuate the consequences of the woman's crime with sterner emphasis.

Unfortunately we have no means of stating how Sophocles dealt with the romance of Helen. Judging by analogy, however, we may feel sure that in this, as in other instances, he advanced beyond the ethical standpoint of Æschylus, by treating the child of Leda, no longer as an incarnation of dæmonic Até, but as a woman whose character deserved the most profound analysis. Euripides, as usual, went a step further. The bloom of unconscious innocence had been brushed by Æschylus from the flower of Greek romance. Subsequent dramatists were compelled in some way or another to moralise the character of Helen. The way selected by Euripides was to bring her down to the level of common life. The scene in the *Troades* in which Helen stands up to plead for her life against Hecuba before the angry Menelaus is one of the most complete instances of the Euripidean sophistry. The tragic circumstances of Troy in ruins and of injured husband face to face with guilty wife are all forgotten, while Helen develops a very clever defence of her conduct in a long rhetorical oration. The theatre is turned into a law-court, and forensic eloquence

is substituted for dramatic poetry. Hecuba replies with an elaborate description of the lewdness, vanity, and guile of Helen, which we may take to be a fair statement of the poet's own conception of her character, since in the *Orestes* he puts similar charges into the mouth of Agamemnon's daughter. There is no doubt that Hecuba has the best of the argument. She paints the beauty of her son Paris and the barbaric pomp which he displayed at Sparta. Then turning to Helen—

ὁ σὸς δ' ἰδὼν νιν νοῦς ἐποιήθη κύπρις·
τὰ μῶρα γὰρ πάντ' ἐστὶν Ἀφροδίτη βροτοῖς,
καὶ τοῦνομ' ὀρθῶς ἀφροσύνης ἀρχει θεᾶς.¹

Sententious epigrams like this, by which the myths were philosophised to suit the occasions of daily life, exactly suited the temper of the Athenian audience in the age of Euripides. But Hecuba proceeds: "You played your husband off against your lover, and your lover against your husband, hoping always to keep the one or the other by your artifice; and when Troy fell, no one found you tying the halter or sharpening the knife against your own throat, as any decent woman in your position would have done." At the end of her speech she seems to have convinced Menelaus, who orders the attendants to carry off Helen to the ships in order that she may be taken to Argos and killed there. Hecuba begs him not to embark her on the same boat with himself. "Why?" he asks. "Is she heavier than she used to be?" The answer is significant:—

οὐκ ἔστ' ἐραστῆς ὅστις οὐκ ἀεὶ φιλεῖ.

"Once a lover, always a lover." And so it turns out; for, at the opening of the *Orestes*, Helen arrives in comfort at the side of Menelaus. He now is afraid lest she should be seized and stoned by the Argives, whose children had been slain for her sake in Troy. Nor is the fear vain. Orestes and Pylades lay hold of her, and already the knife is at her throat, when Phœbus descends and declares that Helen has been caught up to heaven to reign with her brothers Castor and Polydeukes. A more unethical termination to her adventures can hardly be imagined; for Euripides, following hitherto upon the lines of the Homeric story, has been at great pains to analyse her legend into a common tale of adultery and female fascination. He now suddenly shifts his ground and deifies the woman he has sedulously vilified before. His true feeling about Helen is expressed in the lines spoken by Electra to Clytemnestra (*Electra*, 1062):—

τὸ μὲν γὰρ εἶδος αἶνον ἀξιον φέρει
Ἑλένης τε καὶ σοῦ, δύο δ' ἔφυτε συγγόνω,
ἀμφω ματαίω Καστορός τ' οὐκ ἀξίω.
ἢ μὲν γὰρ ἀρπασθεῖσ' ἐκοῦσ' ἀπώλετο,
σὺ δ' ἀνδρ' ἀριστον Ἑλλάδος διώλεσας.

¹ "Thy own soul, gazing at him, became Kypris: for Aphrodite, as her name denotes, is all the folly of mortals."

"You and your sister are a proper pair, and your beauty has brought you the credit you deserve; both are light women and unworthy of Castor; for Helen allowed herself to be ravished and undone, while you killed the best man in Greece." Further illustrations of the Euripidean conception of Helen as a worthless woman, who had the art to reconquer a weak husband's affection, might be drawn from the tirade of Peleus against Menelaus in the *Andromache* (590, etc.).¹

This Euripidean reading of the character of Helen was natural to a sceptical and sophistical age, when the dimly moralised myths of ancient Hellas had become the raw material for a poet's casuistry. Yet, in the heart of the Greek people, Homer had still a deeper, firmer place than even Euripides; and the thought of Helen, ever beautiful and ever young, survived the rude analysis of the Athenian drama. Her romance recovered from the prosaic rationalism to which it had been subjected—thanks, no doubt, to the many sculptors and painters who immortalised her beauty, without suggesting the woes that she had brought upon the world. Those very woes, perhaps, may have added pathos to her charm: for had not she too suffered in the strife of men? How the artists dealt with the myth of Helen, we only know by scattered hints and fragments. One bas-relief, engraved by Millingen, reveals her standing calm beneath the sword of Menelaus. That sword is lifted, but it will not fall. Beauty, breathed around her like a spell, creates a magic atmosphere through which no steel can pierce. In another bas-relief, from the Campana Museum, she is entering Sparta on a chariot, side by side with Menelaus, not like a captive, but with head erect and haughty mien, and proud hand placed upon the horse's reins. Philostratus, in his *Lives of the Sophists*, describes an exceedingly beautiful young philosopher, whose mother bore a close resemblance to the picture of Helen by Eumelus. If the lineaments of the mother were repeated in the youth, the eyes of Helen in her picture must have been large and voluptuous, her hair curled in clusters, and her teeth of dazzling whiteness. It is probable that the later artists, in their illustrations of the romance of Helen, used the poems of Lesches and Arctinus, now lost, but of which the *Posthomerica* of Quintus Smyrnæus preserve to us a feeble reflection. This poet of the fourth century after Christ does all in his power to rehabilitate the character of Helen by laying the fault of her crime on Paris, and by describing at length the charm which Venus shed around her sacred person. It was only by thus insisting upon the dæmonic influence which controlled the fate of Helen, that the conclusions reached by the rationalising process of the dramatists could be

¹ Quite another view of Helen's character is developed in the *Helena*, where Euripides has followed the Stesichorean version of her legend with singular disregard for consistency. Much might be said on this point about the licence in handling mythical material the Attic dramatists allowed themselves.

avoided. The Cyclic poems thus preserved the heroic character of Helen and her husband at the expense of Aphrodite, while Euripides had said plainly: "What you call Aphrodite is your own lust." Menelaus, in the *Posthomerica*, finds Helen hidden in the palace of Deiphobus; astonishment takes possession of his soul before the shining of her beauty, so that he stands immovable, like a dead tree, which neither north nor south wind shakes. When the Greek heroes leave Troy town, Agamemnon leads Cassandra captive, Neoptolemus is followed by Andromache, and Hecuba weeps torrents of tears in the strong grasp of Odysseus. A crowd of Trojan women fill the air with shrill laments, tearing their tresses and strewing dust upon their heads. Meanwhile, Helen is delayed by no desire to wail or weep; but a comely shame sits on her black eyes and glowing cheeks. Her heart leaps, and her whole form is as lovely as Aphrodite was when the gods discovered her with Ares in the net of Hephæstus. Down to the ships she comes with Menelaus hand in hand; and the people, "gazing on the glory and the winning grace of the faultless woman, were astonished; nor could they dare by whispers or aloud to humble her with insults; but gladly they saw in her a goddess, for she seemed to all what each desired." This is the apotheosis of Helen; and this reading of her romance is far more true to the general current of Greek feeling than that suggested by Euripides. Theocritus, in his exquisite marriage-song of Helen, has not a word to say by hint or innuendo that she will bring a curse upon her husband. Like dawn is the beauty of her face; like the moon in the heaven of night, or the spring when winter is ended, or like a cypress in the meadow, so is Helen among Spartan maids. When Apollonius of Tyana, the most famous *medium* of antiquity, evoked the spirit of Achilles by the pillar on his barrow in the Troad, the great ghost consented to answer five questions. One of these concerned Helen: Did she really go to Troy? Achilles indignantly repudiated the notion. She remained in Egypt; and this the heroes of Achaia soon knew well; "but we fought for fame and Priam's wealth."

It is curious at the point of transition in the Roman world from Paganism to Christianity to find the name of Helen prominent. Helena, the mother of Constantine, was famous with the early Church as a pilgrim to Jerusalem, where she discovered the true cross, and destroyed the Temple of Venus. For one Helen, East and West had warred together on the plains of Troy. Following the steps of another Helen, West and East now disputed the possession of the Holy Sepulchre. Such historical parallels are, however, little better than puns. It is far more to the purpose to notice how the romance of Helen of Troy, after lying dormant during the Middle Ages, shone forth again in the pregnant myth of Faustus. The final achievement of Faust's magic was to evoke Helen from the dead and hold her as his paramour. To the beauty of Greek art the mediæval spirit stretched forth with yearning and begot the modern world. Marlowe, than whom no poet of

the North throbb'd more mightily with the passion of the Renaissance, makes his Faust exclaim :—

“ Was this the face that launched a thousand ships
 And burnt the topless towers of Ilium ?
 Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss !
 Her lips suck forth my soul : see where it flies !
 Come, Helen, come, give me my soul again.
 Here will I dwell, for heaven is in these lips,
 And all is dross that is not Helena.
 I will be Paris, and, for love of thee,
 Instead of Troy shall Wertenberg be sacked ;
 And I will combat with weak Menelaus,
 And wear thy colours on my plumèd crest ;
 Yea, I will wound Achilles in the heel,
 And then return to Helen for a kiss.
 Oh, thou art fairer than the evening air
 Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars ;
 Brighter art thou than flaming Jupiter
 When he appeared to hapless Semele ;
 More lovely than the monarch of the sky
 In wanton Arethusa's azured arms ;
 And none but thou shalt be my paramour.”

Marlowe, as was natural, contented himself with an external handling of the Faust legend. Goethe allegorised the whole, and turned the episode of Helen into a parable of modern poetry. When Lynkeus, the warder, is reprimanded for not having duly asked Helen into the feudal castle, he defends himself thus :—

“ Harrend auf des Morgens Wonne,
 Oestlich spähend ihren Lauf,
 Ging auf einmal mir die Sonne
 Wunderbar im Süden auf.

“ Zog den Blick nach jener Seite,
 Statt der Schluchten, statt der Höh'n,
 Statt der Erd und Himmelsweite,
 Sie, die Einzige, zu spähn.”¹

The new light that rose upon the Middle Ages came not from the East, but from the South ; no longer from Galilee, but from Greece. The fruit of her union with Faust is Euphorion, the genius of romantic art.

Thus, after living her long life in Hellas as the ideal of beauty, unqualified by moral attributes, Helen passed into modern mythology as the ideal of the beauty of the Pagan world. True to her old character, she arrives to us across the waters of oblivion with the cestus of the goddess round her waist, and the divine smile upon her lips. Age

¹ “ Eastward was my glance directed,
 Watching for the sun's first rays ;
 In the south—oh, sight of wonder !
 Rose the bright orb's sudden blaze.

“ Thither was my eye attracted ;
 Vanished bay and mountain height,
 Earth and heaven unseen and all things,
 All but that enchanted light.”—*Anster*.

has not impaired her charm, nor has she learned the lesson of the Fall. Ever virginal and ever fair, she is still the slave of Aphrodite. In Helen we welcome the indestructible Hellenic spirit.

PENELOPE is the exact opposite to Helen. The central point in her character is intense love of her home, an almost cat-like attachment to the house where she first enjoyed her husband's love, and which is still full of all the things that make her life worth having. Therefore, when at last she thinks that she will have to yield to the suitors and leave it, these words are always on her lips :—

δῶμα
 κουρίδιον μάλα καλὸν ἐνίπλειον βιότοιον,
 τοῦ ποτε μεμνήσσεσθαι ὄτομαι ἔνπερ ὄνειρφ.¹

We can scarcely think of Penelope except in the palace of Ithaca, so firmly has this home-loving instinct been embedded in her by her maker. Were it not that the passion for her home is controlled and determined by a higher and more sacred feeling, this Haushälterischness of Penelope would be prosaic. Not only, however, has Homer made it evident in the *Odyssey* that the love of Ithaca is subordinate in her soul to the love of Odysseus; but a beautiful Greek legend teaches how in girlhood she sacrificed the dearest ties that can bind a woman to her love for the hero who had wooed and won her. Pausanias says that when Odysseus was carrying her upon his chariot forth to his own land, her father Icarus followed in their path and besought her to stay with him. The young man was ready, busked for the long journey. The old man pointed to the hearth she had known from childhood. Penelope between them answered not a word, but covered her face with her veil; this action Odysseus interpreted rightly, and led his bride away, willing to go where he would go, yet unwilling to abandon what she dearly loved. No second Odysseus could cross the woman's path. Among the suitors there was not one like him. Therefore she clung to her house-tree in Ithaca, the olive round which Odysseus had built the nuptial chamber; and none, till he appeared, by force or guile might win her thence. It is precisely this tenacity in the character of Penelope which distinguishes her from Helen, the daughter of adventure and the child of change, to whom migration was no less natural than to the swan that gave her life. Another characteristic of Penelope is her prudence. Having to deal with the uproarious suitors camped in her son's halls, she deceives them with fair words, and promises to choose a husband from their number when she has woven a winding-sheet for Laertes. Three years pass, and the work is still not finished. At last a maiden tells the suitors that every night Penelope undoes by lamplight what she had woven in the daytime. This ruse of the defenceless woman has passed into a proverb, and has become so familiar that we forget, perhaps, how true a parable it is

¹ "The home of my wedded years, exceeding fair, filled with all the goods of life, which even in dreams methinks I shall remember."

of those who in their weakness do and undo daily what they would fain never do at all, trifling and procrastinating with tyrannous passions which they are unable to expel from the palace of their souls. The prudence of Penelope sometimes assumes a form which reminds us of the heroines of Hebrew story; as when, for example, she spoils the suitors of rich gifts by subtle promises and engagements carefully guarded. Odysseus, seated in disguise near the hall-door, watches her success and secretly approves. The same quality of mind makes her cautious in the reception of the husband she has waited for in widowhood through twenty years. The dog Argus has no doubt. He sees his master through the beggar's rags, and dies of joy. The handmaid Eurycleia is convinced as soon as she has touched the wound upon the hero's foot and felt the well-remembered scar. Not so Penelope. Though the great bow has been bent and the suitors have been slain, and though Eurycleia comes to tell her the whole truth, the queen has yet the heart to seat herself opposite Odysseus by the fire, and to prove him with cunningly-devised tests. There is something provocative of anger against Penelope in this cross-questioning. But our anger is dissolved in tears, when at last, feeling sure that her husband and none other is there verily before her eyes, she flings her arms around him in that long and close embrace. Homer even in this supreme moment has sustained her character by a trait, which, however delicate, can hardly escape notice. Her lord is weary, and would fain seek the solace of his couch. But he has dropped a hint that still more labours are in store for him. Then Penelope replies that his couch is ready at all times and whensoever he may need; no hurry about that; meanwhile she would like to hear the prophecy of Teiresias. Helen, the bondwoman of Dame Aphrodite, would not have waited thus upon the verge of love's delight, long looked for with strained widow's eyes. Yet it would be unfair to Penelope to dwell only on this prudent and somewhat frigid aspect of her character. She is, perhaps, most amiable when she descends among the suitors and prays Phemius to cease from singing of the heroes who returned from Troy. It is more than she can bear to sit weaving in the silent chamber mid her damsels, listening to the shrill sound of the lyre and hearing how other men have reached their homes, while on the waves Odysseus still wanders, and none knows whether he be alive or dead. It may be noticed that just as Helen is a mate meet for easily-persuaded Menelaus and luxurious Paris, so Penelope matches the temper of the astute, enduring, persevering Odysseus. As a creature of the fancy she is far less fascinating than Helen; and this the poet seems to have felt, for side by side with Penelope in the *Odyssey* he has placed the attractive forms of Circe, Calypso, and Nausicaa. The gain is double; not only are the hearers of the romance gladdened by the contrast of these graceful women with the somewhat elegiac figure of Penelope, but the character of Odysseus for constancy is greatly enhanced. How fervent must the love of home have been in the man who could quit Calypso, after

seven years' sojourn, for the sake of a wife grown gray with twenty widowed years! Odysseus tells Calypso to her face that she is far fairer than his wife: ¹—

οἶδα καὶ αὐτὸς
πάντα μάλ', οὐνεκα σείῳ περιφρῶν Πηνελόπεια
εἶδος ἀκιδνοτέρη, μέγεθος τ', εἰς ὄμμα ἰδέσθαι.

“As far as looks go, Penelope is nothing beside thee.” But what Odysseus leaves unsaid—the grace of the first woman who possessed his soul—constrains him with a deeper, tenderer power than any of Calypso's charms. Penelope, meanwhile, is pleading that her beauty in the absence of her lord has perished: ²—

ξείν' ἦτοι μὲν ἐμὴν ἀρετὴν εἶδος τε δέμας τε
ᾤλεσαν ἀθάνατοι ὅτε Ἴλιον εἰσανέβαινον
Ἄργεῖοι.

These two meet at last together, he after his long wanderings, and she having suffered the insistence of the suitors in her palace; and this is the pathos of the *Odyssey*. The woman, in spite of her withered youth and tearful years of widowhood, is still expectant of her lord. He, unconquered by the pleasures cast across his path, unterrified by all the dangers he endures, clings in thought to the bride whom he led forth, a blushing maiden, from her father's halls. O just, subtle, and mighty Homer! There is nothing of Greek here more than of Hebrew, or of Latin, or of German. It is pure humanity.

Calypso is not a woman, but a goddess. She feeds upon ambrosia and nectar, while her maidens spread before Odysseus the food of mortals. Between her and Hermes there is recognition at first sight; for god knows god, however far apart their paths may lie. Yet the love that Calypso bears Odysseus brings this daughter of Atlas down to earth; and we may reckon her among the women of Homer. How mysterious, as the Greek genius apprehended mystery, is her cavern, hidden far away in the isle Ogygia, with the grove of forest-trees before it and the thick vine flourishing around its mouth. Meadows of snowflake and close-flowering selinus gird it round; and on the branches brood all kinds of birds. It is an island such as the Italian painters bring before us in their rarest moments of artistic divination, where the blue-green of the twilight mingles with the green-blue sea, and the overarching verdure of deep empurpled forest-shade. Under those trees, gazing across the ocean, in the still light of the evening star, Odysseus wept for his far-distant home. Then, heavy at heart, he gathered up his raiment, and clomb into Calypso's bed at night: ³—

ἐπεὶ οὐκέτι ἦν δανε νύμφη.
ἄλλ' ἦτοι νύκτας μὲν ἰαύεσκεν καὶ ἀνάγκη
ἐν σπέσσι γλαφυροῖσι παρ' οὐκ ἐθέλων ἐθελοῦση.

¹ “I know well that Penelope is inferior to thee, in form and stature, to the eyes of men.”

² “Of a truth my goodness and beauty of person the gods destroyed what time the Argives went up into Troy town.”

³ “For the nymph pleased him no longer. Nathless, as need was, he slept the night in hollow caverns, beside her loving him who loved her not.”

To him the message of Hermes recalling him to labour on the waves was joy. But to the nymph herself it brought mere bitterness: "Hard are ye, gods, and envious above all, who grudge that goddesses should couch thus openly with mortal men, if one should make a dear bedfellow for herself. For so the rosy-fingered morning chose Orion, till ye gods that lead an easy life grew jealous, and in Ogygia him the golden-throned maid Artemis slew with her kind arrows." This wail of the immortal nymph Calypso for her roving spouse of seven short years has a strange pathos in it. It seems to pass across the sea like a sigh of winds awakened, none knows how, in summer midnight, that swells and dies far off upon moon-silvered waves. The clear human activity of Odysseus cuts the everlasting calm of Calypso like a knife, shredding the veil that hides her from the eyes of mortals; then he fares onward to resume the toils of real existence in a land whereof she nothing knows. There is a fragment of his last speech to Penelope, which sounds like an echo of Calypso's lamentation. "Death," he says, "shall some day rise for me, tranquil from the tranquil deep, and I shall die in delicate old age." We seem to feel that in his last trance Odysseus might have heard the far-off divine sweet voice of Calypso, like the voice of waves and waters, calling him and have hastened to her cry.

Circe is by no means so mysterious as Calypso. Yet she belongs to one of the most interesting families in Greek romance: her mother was Perse, daughter of Oceanus; her father was Helios; she is own sister, therefore, to the Colchian Æetes, and aunt of the redoubtable Medea. She lives in the isle of Ææa, not, like Calypso, deep embowered in groves, but in a fair open valley sweeping downward to the sea, whence her hearth-smoke may be clearly descried. Nor is her home an ivy-curtained cavern of the rocks, but a house well built of polished stone, protected from the sea-winds by oak-woods. Here she dwells in grand style, with nymphs of the streams and forests to attend upon her, and herds of wild beasts, human-hearted, roaming through her park. Odysseus always speaks of her with respect as *πότνια Κίρκη*. . . . *διὰ θεάων*. . . . *Κίρκη εὐπλόκαμος δευῆ θεὸς αὐδήεσσα* (august Circe divine among goddesses Circe of the fair tresses, dread goddess, using the speech of mortals). Like Calypso, she has a fair shrill voice that goes across the waters, and as her fingers ply the shuttle, she keeps singing through the summer air. By virtue of her birthright, as a daughter of the sun, she understands the properties of plant and drug. Poppy and henbane and mandragora, all herbs of subtle juice that draw soul-quelling poison from the fat earth and the burning sun, are hers to use as she thinks fit. And the use she makes of them is malicious; for, fairy-like and wanton, she will have the men who visit her across the seas, submit their reason to her lure. Therefore she turns them to swine; and the lions and wolves of the mountain she tames in like manner, so that they fawn

and curl their long tails and have no heart to ravin any more. This is how she treats the comrades of Odysseus: "She drew them in and set them on benches and on chairs, and put before them cheese and meat and yellow honey, mixing therewith Pramnian wine; but with the food she mingled baleful drugs, to make them quite forget their fatherland. But when she had given them thereof and they had drunk, straightway she smote them with a rod and shut them up in styes. Of swine they had the head, the voice, the form, the bristles; but their mind stayed firm as it had been before. So they then were penned up, weeping bitter tears; but Circe threw before them acorns of the oak and ilex and cornel-berries, food that the forest-ranging swine are wont to eat." What is admirable in this description is its gravity. Circe is not made out particularly wicked or malignant. She is acting only, after her kind, like some beautiful but baleful plant—a wreath, for instance, of red briony berries, whereof if children eat, they perish. Nor, again, is there a touch of the burlesque in the narration. Therefore, in the charming picture which Rivière has painted of Circe, we trace a vein of modern feeling. Claspings her knees with girlish glee, she sits upon the ground beneath a tangle of wild vine, and watches the clumsy hogs that tumble with half-comic, half-pathetic humanity expressed in their pink eyes and grunting snouts before her. So, too, the solemn picture by Burne-Jones, a masterpiece of colouring, adds something mediæval to the Homeric Circe. The tall sunflowers that remind us of her father, the cringing panthers, black and lithe, the bending figure of the saffron-vested witch, the jars of potent juices, and the distant glimpse of sea and shore, suggest more of malignant intention than belongs to the *πότνια Κίρκη* (august Circe), the *Κίρκη πολυφάρμακος* (Circe of many charming drugs) of Homer's tale. It was inevitable that modern art should infuse a deeper meaning into the allegory. The world has lived long and suffered much and grown greatly since the age of Homer. We cannot be so limpid and so childlike any longer. Yet the true charm of Circe in the *Odyssey*, the spirit that distinguishes her from Tannhäuser's Venus and Orlando's Fata Morgana and Ruggiero's Alcina and Tancred's Armida, lies just in this, that the poet has passed lightly over all the dark and perilous places of his subject. This delicacy of touch can never be regained by art. It belonged to the conditions of the first Hellenic bloom of fancy, to suggest without insistence and to realise without emphasis. Impatient readers may complain of want of depth and character; they would fain see the Circe of the *Odyssey* as strongly moralised as the Medea of Euripides. But in Homer only what is human attains to real intensity. The marvellous falls off and shades away into soft air-tints and delightful dreams. Still, it requires the interposition of the gods to save Odysseus from the charms of the malicious maid. As Hermes came to Priam on the path

between Troy town and the Achaian ships, so now he meets the hero :¹—

νεηνίη ἀνδρὶ ἐοικώς
πρῶτον ὑπηγήθη· τοῦπερ χαριεστάρη ἦβη.

A plant of moly is in his hand ; and this will be the antidote to Circe's philtre. Odysseus' sword and strong will must do the rest. When Circe has once found her match, we are astonished at the *bonhomie* which she displays. The game is over : there remains nothing but graceful hospitality on her part—elegant banquets, delicious baths, soft beds, the restoration of the ship's crew to their proper shape, and a store of useful advice for the future. "There all the days, for a whole year, we sat feasting and drinking honeyed wine ; but when the year was full, and the seasons had gone round, moon waning after moon, and the long days were finished, my dear comrades called on me by name, and spake once more of home."

One more female figure from the *Odyssey* remains as yet untouched ; and this is the most beautiful of all. Nausicaa has no legendary charm ; she is neither mystic goddess nor weird woman, nor is hers the dignity of wifehood. She is simply the most perfect maiden, the purest, freshest, lightest-hearted girl of Greek romance. Odysseus passes straight from the solitary island of Ogygia, where elm and poplar and cypress overshadow Calypso's cavern, into the company of this real woman. It is like coming from a land of dreams into a dewy garden when the sun has risen ; the waves through which he has fared upon his raft have wrought for him, as it were, a rough re-incarnation into the realities of human life. For the sea-brine is the source of vigour ; and into the deep he has cast, together with Calypso's raiment, all memory of her.

Nausicaa was asleep in her Phæacian chamber when Athene, mindful of Odysseus' need, came down and warned her in a dream that she should bestir herself, and wash her clothes against her marriage day. When the damsel woke, she went straight to her father, Alcinous, and begged him to provide a horse and mules. Like a prudent girl, she said nothing of her marriage, but spoke of the cares of the household. Her five brothers, she said, the two wedded and the other three in the bloom of youth, want shining raiment for the dance, and her duty it is to see that the clothes are always ready. Alcinous knew in his heart what she really meant, but he answered her with no unseemly jest. Only he promised a cart and a pair of mules ; and her mother gave her food to eat, and wine in a skin, and a golden cruse of oil, that she and her maidens might spend a pleasant morning by the sea-beach, and bathe and anoint themselves when their clothes-washing was finished.

¹ "Like to a young man when his beard has just begun to grow, whose bloom is then most full of charm." This beautiful description of Hermes, which occurs twice over in the Homeric poems, has received a perfect plastic illustration in the statue recently discovered at Olympia.

A prettier picture cannot be conceived than that drawn by Homer of Nausicaa, with her handmaidens thronging together in the cart, which jogs downward through the olive-gardens to the sea. The princess holds the whip and drives ; and when she reaches the stream's mouth by the beach, she loosens the mules from the shafts, and turns them out to graze in the deep meadow. Then the clothes are washed, and the luncheon is taken from the basket, and the game of ball begins. How the ball flew aside and fell into the water, and how the shrill cries of the damsels woke Odysseus from his sleep, every one remembers. The girls are fluttered by the sight of the great naked man, rugged with brine and bruised with shipwreck. Nausicaa alone, as becomes a princess, stands her ground and questions him. The simple delicacy with which this situation is treated, makes the whole episode one of the most charming in Homer. Very natural and not less noble is the change from pity to admiration, expressed by the damsel, when Odysseus has bathed in running water and rubbed himself with oil and put on goodly raiment given him by the girls. Pallas sheds treble grace upon his form, and makes his hair to fall in clusters like hyacinth-blossoms, so that an artist who moulds figures of gilt silver could not shape a comelier statue. The princess, with yesternight's dream still in her soul, wishes he would stay and be her husband. The girlish simplicity of Nausicaa is all the more attractive because the Phæacians are the most luxurious race described by Homer. The palace in which she dwells with her father is all of bronze and silver and gold ; it shines like the sun, and a blue line marks the brazen cornice of the walls. Dogs of silver and gold, Hephæstus' work, which never can grow old through length of days, protect the entrance. Richly-woven robes are cast upon the couches in the hall, and light is shed upon the banquet-tables from blazing torches in the hands of golden boys. Outside the palace grows the garden, with well-divided orchard-rows, where pears and figs and pomegranates and burnished apples and olives flourish all year long. The seasons change not in Phæacian land for winter or for summer. The west wind is always blowing. Pear follows after pear, and apple after apple, and grape bunch after grape bunch, in a never-ending autumn dance. Vintage, too, is there ; and there are the trim flower-beds ; and through the garden flow two fountains. The whole pleasure-ground seems to have been laid out with geometrical Greek taste. It is a Paradise of neatness, sun-bright, clear to take in at a glance. In this delightful palace dwells Alcinous, a kind old man, among his sons ; and much delight they take in dance and song and games of strength. The young men, whose beards are but just growing, leap in rhythmic movement to the flute ; the elder and more muscular run or wrestle, and much contempt do these goodly fellows, like English lads, reserve for men who are not athletes. Odysseus has to rebuke one of them, Euryalus, by reminding him that faultlessly fair bodies are not always the temples of a godlike soul. Zeus gives not all of his good gifts to all ; for some men owe grace and

favour to eloquence, others to beauty, and a man may be like to the immortals in face and form, and yet a fool. Alcinous well describes the temper of his people when he says: "We are not faultless boxers, nor yet wrestlers; but with our feet we race swiftly, and none can beat us in rowing; and we aye love the banquet, and the lyre, and dancing, and gay raiment, and warm baths, and joys of love." It is therefore not without propriety that Demodocus, their blind bard, "whom the Muse loved much, and gave him good and evil; for she reft him of his sight and gave him honeyed song," sings of Aphrodite tangled with Ares in the net of Hephæstus. From this soft, luxurious, comely, pleasure-loving folk Nausicaa springs up like a pure blossom—anemone or lily of the mountains. She has all the sweetness of temper which distinguishes Alcinous; but the voluptuous living of his people cannot spoil her. The maidenly reserve which she displays in her first reception of Odysseus, her prudent avoidance of being seen with him in the streets of the town while he is yet a stranger, and the care she takes that he shall suffer nothing by not coming with her to the palace, complete the portrait of a girl who is as free from coquetry as she is from prudishness. Perhaps she strikes our fancy with most clearness when, after bathing and dressing, Odysseus passes her on his way through the hall to the banquet. She leaned against the pillar of the roof and gazed upon Odysseus, and said: "Hail, guest, and be thou mindful of me when perchance thou art in thine own land again, for to me the first thou dost owe the price of life." This is the last word spoken by Nausicaa in the *Odyssey*. She is not mentioned among the Phæacians who took leave of the hero the day he passed to Ithaca.

Before quitting the women of Homer, we must return to the *Iliad*; for without Briseis and Andromache their company would be incomplete. As the figures in a bas-relief are variously wrought, some projecting like independent statues in sharp light and shadow, while others are but half detached, and a third sort offer mere outlined profiles scarcely embossed upon the marble background; even so the poet has obeyed a law of relative proportion in his treatment of character. The subordinate heroes, for example, in the *Iliad* fall away from the central figure of Achilles into more or less of slightness. This does not mean that we can trace the least indecision in Homer's touch, or that he has slurred his work by haste or incapacity. On the contrary, there is no poet from whom deeper lessons in the art of subordinating accessories to the main subject without impairing their real value can be learned. A sculptor like Pheidias knows how to give significance to the least indication of a form which he has placed upon the second plane in his bas-relief. Just so Homer inspires his minor characters with personality. To detach this personality in each case is the task of the critic; yet his labour is no light one; for the Homeric characters draw their life from incidents, motives, action. To the singer's fancy they appeared, not as products of the self-conscious

imagination, but as living creatures ; and to separate them from their environment of circumstance is almost to destroy them. This is the specific beauty of the art of Homer. In its origin it must have been the outcome, not of reflection, but of inspired instinct ; for in the Homeric age psychological analysis was unknown, and the very nomenclature of criticism had yet to be invented. We can draw inexhaustible lessons in practical wisdom from the Homeric poems ; but we cannot with impunity subject those delicate creations to the critical crucible. They delight both intellect and senses with a many-toned harmony of exquisitely modulated parts ; but the instant we begin to dissect and theorise, we run a risk of attributing far more method and deliberation than was natural to a poet in the early age of Hellas. It is almost impossible to set forth the persons of Homer except in his own way, and in close connection with the incidents through which they are revealed ; whereas the characters of a more self-conscious artist—the Medea, for example, or the Phædra of Euripides—can be described without much repetition of their speeches or reconstruction of the dramas in which they play their parts.

Andromache offers a not inapt illustration to these remarks. She is beautiful, as all heroic women are ; and Homer tells us she is “ white-armed.” We know no more about her person than this ; and her character is exhibited only in the famous parting scene and in the two lamentations which she pours forth for her husband. Yet who has read the *Iliad* without carrying away a distinct conception of this, the most lovable among the women of Homer ? She owes her character far less to what she does and what she says, than to how she looks in that ideal picture painted on our memory by Homer’s verse. The affection of Hector for his wife, no less distinguished than the passion of Achilles for his friend, has made the Trojan prince rather than his Greek rival the hero of modern romance. When he leaves Ilium to enter on the long combat which ends in the death of Patroclus, the last thought of Hector is for Andromache. He finds her, not in their home, but on the wall, attended by her nurse, who carries in her arms his only son :¹—

Ἐκτορίδην ἀγαπητὸν ἀλγικιον ἀστέρι καλῶ.

Her first words, after she has wept and clasped him, are : “ Love, thy stout heart will be thy death ; nor hast thou pity of thy child or me, who soon shall be a widow. My father and my mother and my brothers are all slain : but, Hector, thou art father to me and mother and brother, and thou too art the husband of my youth. Have pity, then, and stay here in the tower, lest thy son be orphaned and thy wife a widow.” The answer is worthy of the hero. “ Full well,” he says, “ know I that Troy will fall, and I foresee the sorrow of my brethren and the king : but for these I grieve not : to think of thee, a slave in Argos, unmans me almost : yet even so I will not flinch

¹ “ Hector’s only son, like unto a fair star.”

or shirk the fight. My duty calls, and I must away." He stretches out his mailed arms to Astyanax; but the child is frightened by his nodding plumes. So he lays aside his helmet, and takes the baby to his breast, and prays for him. Andromache smiles through her tears, and down the clanging causeway strides the prince. Poor Andromache has nothing left to do but to return home and raise the dirge for a husband as good as dead. When we see her again in the 22nd *Iliad*, she is weaving, and her damsels are heating a bath against Hector's return from the fight. Then suddenly the cry of Hecuba's anguish thrills her ears. Shuttle and thread drop from her hands; she gathers up her skirts, and like a Mænad flies forth to the wall. She arrives in time to see her husband's body dragged through dust at Achilles' chariot-wheels away from Troy. She faints, and when she wakes, it is to utter the most piteous lament in Homer—not, however, for Hector so much, or for herself, as for Astyanax. He who was reared upon a father's knees and fed with marrow and the fat of lambs, and when play tired him, slept in soft beds among nursing-women, will now roam, an orphan, wronged and unbefriended, hunted from the company of happier men, or fed by charity with scanty scraps. The picture of an orphan's misery among cold friends and hard oppressors is wrought with the pathos of exquisite simplicity. And to the same theme Andromache returns in the coronach which she pours forth over the body of Hector.¹ "I shall be a widow and a slave, and Astyanax will either be slaughtered by Greek soldiers or set to base service in like bondage." Then the sight of the corpse reminds her that the last words of her sorrow must be paid to Hector himself. What touches her most deeply is the thought of death in battle: ²—

οὐ γάρ μοι θνήσκων λεχέων ἐκ χεῖρας ὄρεξας·
οὐδέ τί μοι εἶπες πυκινὸν ἔπος, οὐδέ κεν αἰεὶ
μεινήμεν νύκτας τε καὶ ἡμέματα δακρυχέουσα.

As far as studied delineation of character goes, Briseis is still more a silhouette than Andromache. We know her as the fair-cheeked damsel who was fain to stay with Achilles, and who loved Patroclus because he kept for her a soothing word. In her threnos for Patroclus she exclaims, "How one woe after another takes me! I saw my husband slain before our city, and my three brethren; but you, Patroclus, then comforted me, and said I should be Achilles' wife: you were ever gentle." This is really all we know about her. Yet Briseis lives in our memory by virtue of the great passions gathered round her, and the weighty actions in which she plays her part.

In course of years the heroes of the Homeric romances came to be worshipped, not exactly like gods with *θυσίαι* (sacrifices), but like the more than mortal dead with *ἐναγίσματα* (offerings). They had

¹ What the Greeks called a *threnos*, exactly corresponds to the Celtic *coronach* and Corsican *vocero*; a funeral wail improvised by women over the corpse of a dead relative or friend.

² "For, dying, thou didst not reach to me thy hand from the bed, nor say to me words of wisdom, the which I might have aye remembered night and day with tears."

their chapels and their hearths, distinct from the temples and the altars of the deities. These were generally raised upon the supposed spot of their sepulture, or in places which owed them special reverence as *œkists* or as ancestors. In the case of *Œdipus*, the translation of the hero to the company of gods secured for him a cultus in *Colonus*. It was supposed that heroes exercised a kindly influence over the people among whom they dwelt; haunting the neighbourhood in semi-corporeal visitations, conferring benefits upon the folk, and exhibiting signs of anger when neglected. Thus *Philostratus* remarks that *Protesilaus* had a fane in *Thessaly*, "and many humane and favourable dealings doth he show the men of *Thessaly*; yea, and angrily also if he be neglected."¹ The same *Philostratus*, whose works are a treasure-house of information respecting the latest forms of *Hellenic Paganism*, reports the actual form of prayer used by *Apollonius* of *Tyana* at the tomb of *Palamedes*,² and makes the ghost of *Achilles* complain: "The *Thessalians* for a long time have remitted my offerings; still I am not yet minded to display my wrath against them." *Achilles*, who has been evoked above his tomb in the *Troad* by the prayers of *Apollonius*, proceeds to remark that even the *Trojans* revere him more than his own people, but that he cannot restore the town of *Troy* to its old prosperity. He hints, however, pretty broadly, that if the *Thessalians* do not pay him more attention, he will reduce them to the same state of misery as the *Trojans*. The *dæmon*, it may be said in passing, vanishes, like a mediæval ghost, at cockcrow.³

This cultus of the *Homeric heroes* was, of course, inseparable from a corresponding growth of artistic associations; and here it is not a little curious to compare our own indefinite conceptions of the outward form of the heroic personages with the very concrete incarnation they received from *Greek sculptors and painters*. The first memorable attempt to express the heroes of *Homer* in marble was upon the pediment at *Ægina*; the first elaborate pictorial representation was that of *Polygnotus* on the walls of the *Lesche* at *Delphi*. A *Greek Lesche* was not unlike an *Italian or Oriental café*, extended to suffice for the requirements of a whole city. What has been discovered at *Pompeii*, in addition to the full description of the *Delphian Lesche* by *Pausanias*, inclines us to believe that the walls of these public places of resort were not unfrequently decorated with *Homeric pictures*. The beautiful frescoes of *Achilles* among the daughters of *Lycomedes*, of *Achilles* bathed by *Thetis* in the *Styx*, of *Briseis* led forth by *Patroclus* into the company of the *Achaian chiefs*, and of *Penelope* questioning the disguised *Odysseus* about her husband, which have been unearthed in various parts of *Pompeii*, sufficiently illustrate to modern minds the style of this wall-painting. The treatise surnamed *Εἰκόνες*, or *Images*, by *Philostratus* is an elaborate critical catalogue of a picture-gallery of this sort; and from many indications contained in it we learn how thoroughly the heroes of *Homer* had acquired a

¹ *Ἡρωϊκός*, 680.

² *Life of Apollonius*, 150.

³ *Ibid.* 153, 154.

fixed corporeal personality. In describing, for example, a picture of the lamentation for Antilochus, he says: "These things are Homer's paintings, but the painter's action." Then he goes on to point out the chief persons: "You can distinguish Odysseus at once by his severe and wideawake appearance, Menelaus by his gentleness, Agamemnon by his inspired look; while Tydeus is indicated by his freedom, the Telamonian Ajax by his grimness, and the Locrian by his activity."¹ In another place he tells us that Patroclus was of a honey-pale complexion (*μελίχλωρος*), with black eyes and rather thick eyebrows; his head was erect upon the neck, like that of a man who excels in athletic exercises, his nose straight, with wide nostrils, like an eager horse. These descriptions occur in the *Heroic Dialogue*. They are supposed to have been communicated by the dæmon, Protesilaus, to a vine-dresser who frequented his tomb. Achilles, on the other hand, had abundant hair, more pleasant to the sight in hue than gold, with a nose inclining to the aquiline, angry brows, and eyes so bright and lively that the soul seemed leaping from them in fire. Hector, again, had a terrible look about him, and scorned to dress his hair; and his ears were crushed, not indeed by wrestling, for barbarians do not wrestle, but by the habit of struggling for mastery with wild bulls.²

Some of the women of Homeric story, Helen for example, and Iphigenia, received divine honours, together with suitable artistic personification. But women were not closely connected with the genealogical and gentile foundations of the Greek cultus; only a few, therefore, were thus distinguished. What has here been said about the superstition that gave form and distinctness to the creatures of Homeric fancy, may be taken as applying in general to the attitude assumed by ancient art. The persons of a poem or a mythus were not subjected to critical analysis as we dissect the characters of Hamlet or of Faust. But they were not on that account the less vividly apprehended. They tended more and more to become external realities—beings with a definite form and a fixed character. In a word, through sculpture, painting, and superstition, they underwent the same personifying process as the saints of mediæval Italy. To what extent the Attic drama exercised a disturbing influence and interrupted this process has been touched upon with reference to the Euripidean Helen.

¹ *Εἰκόνας*, 820. (By Kayser, Zurich, 2nd ed.)

² *Ἡρωϊκός*, 736, 733, 722. For the curious detail about Hector's ears, compare Theocr. 22, 45, where athletes are described *τεθλαγμένοι οὐατα πυγμαῖς* (crushed about the ears by fisticuffs). Statues of Hercules show this.

CHAPTER V

HESIOD

The Difference between the Homeric and the Hesiodic Spirit—The Personality of Hesiod more Distinct than that of Homer—What we know about his Life—Perses—The Hesiodic Rhapsodes—*Theogony* and *Works and Days*—Didactic Poetry—The Story of Prometheus—Greek and Hebrew Myths of the Fall—The Allegorical Element in the Promethean Legend—The Titans—The Canto of the Four Ages—Hesiodic Ethics—The Golden Age—Flaxman's Illustrations—Justice and Virtue—Labour—Bourgeois Tone of Hesiod—Marriage and Women—The Gnostic Importance of Hesiod for the Early Greeks.

HESIOD, though he belongs to the first age of Greek literature, and ranks among the earliest of Hellenic poets, marks the transition from the Heroic period to that of the Despots, when ethical inquiry began in Greece. Like Homer, Hesiod is inspired by the Muses; alone, upon Mount Helicon, he received from them the gift of inspiration. But the message which he communicates to men does not concern the deeds of demigods and warriors. It offers no material for tragedies upon the theme of

“Thebes or Pelops' line,
Or the tale of Troy divine.”

On the contrary, Hesiod introduces us to the domestic life of shepherds, husbandmen, and merchants. Homely precepts for the conduct of affairs and proverbs on the utility of virtue replace the glittering pictures of human passions and heroic strife which the Homeric poems present. A new element is introduced into literature, the element of man reflecting on himself, questioning the divine laws under which he is obliged to live, and determining the balance of good and evil which the days of youth and age bring with them in his earthly course. The individual is now occupied with his own cares and sorrows and brief joys. Living in the present, and perforce accommodating his imagination to the prose of human existence, he has forgotten to dream any longer of the past, or to reconstruct in fancy the poetic charm of visionary heroism. It was just this difference between Homer and

Hesiod which led the aristocratic Greeks of a later age to despise the poet of Ascra. Cleomenes, the king of Sparta, chief of that proud military oligarchy which had controlled the destinies of decaying Hellas, is reported by Plutarch to have said that, while Homer was the bard of warriors and noble men, Hesiod was the singer of the Helots. In this saying the contempt of the martial class for the peaceable workers of the world is forcibly expressed. It is an epigram which endears Hesiod to democratic critics of the modern age. They can trace in its brief utterance the contempt which has been felt in all periods—especially among the historic Greeks, who regarded labour as ignoble, and among the feudal races, with whom martial prowess was the mainstay of society—for the unrecorded and unhonoured earners of the bread whereby the brilliant and the well-born live.

Hesiod, therefore, may be taken as the type and first expression of a spirit in Greek literature alien from that which Homer represents. The wrath and love of Achilles, the charm of Helen and the constancy of Penelope, the councils of the gods, the pathos of the death of Hector, the sorrows of King Priam and the labours of Odysseus, are exchanged for dim and doleful ponderings upon the destiny of man, for the shadowy mythus of Prometheus and the vision of the ages ever growing worse as they advance in time. All the rich and manifold arras-work of suffering and action which the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* display, yield to such sombre meditation as a sad soul in the childhood of the world may pour forth, brooding on its own wrongs and on the woes of men around. The climax of the whole, after the justice of God has been querulously arraigned, and the violence of princes has been appealed against with pitiful vain iteration, is a series of practical rules for daily conduct, and a calendar of simple ethics.

Very little is known about Hesiod himself ; nor can the date at which the poems ascribed to him were composed be fixed with any certainty. Something of the same semi-mythical obscurity which surrounds Homer envelops Hesiod. Just as Homer was the eponymous hero of the school of epic poets in Asia Minor and the islands, so Hesiod may be regarded as the titular president of a rival school of poets localised near Mount Helicon in Bœotia. That is to say, it is probable that the Hesiodic, like the Homeric, poems did not emanate from their supposed author, as we read them now ; but we may assume that they underwent changes and received additions from followers who imbibed his spirit and attempted to preserve his style. And, further, the poems ascribed to Hesiod became, as years went by, a receptacle for gnomic verses dear to the Greeks. Like the elegies of Theognis, the ethical hexameters of Hesiod were, practically, an anthology of anonymous compositions. Still Hesiod has a more distinct historic personality than Homer. In the first place, the majority of ancient critics regarded him as later in date and more removed from the heroic age. Then again, he speaks in his own person, recording many details of his life, and mentioning his father and his brother. Homer remains for ever

lost, like Shakespeare, in the creatures of his own imagination. Instead of the man Homer, we have the Achilles and Odysseus whom he made immortal. Hesiod tells us much about himself. A vein of personal reflection, a certain tone of peevish melancholy peculiar to the individual, runs through his poems. He is far less the mouthpiece of the heavenly Muse than a man like ourselves, touching his lyre at times with a divine grace, and then again sweeping the chords with a fretfulness that draws some jarring notes.

We learn from the hexameters of Hesiod that he was born at Ascra in Bœotia (*Works and Days*, 640). His father was an emigrant from Æolian Kumé, whence he came to Ascra in search of better fortune, "forsaking not plenty nor yet wealth and happiness, but evil poverty which Zeus gives to men: near Helicon he dwelt in a sorry village, Ascra, bad in winter, rigorous in summer heat, at no time genial." From the exordium of the *Theogony* (line 23) it appears that Hesiod kept sheep upon the slopes of Helicon; for it was there that the Muse descended to visit him, and, after rebuking the shepherds for their idleness and grossness, gave him her sacred laurel-branch and taught him song. On this spot, as he tells us in the *Works and Days* (line 656), he offered the first prize of victory which he obtained at Chalkis. It would seem clear from these passages that poetry had been recognised as an inspiration, cultivated as an art, and encouraged by public contests, long before the date of Hesiod.

Husbandry was despised in Bœotia, and the pastoral poet led a monotonous and depressing life. The great event which changed its even tenor was a lawsuit between himself and his brother Perses concerning the division of their inheritance.¹ Perses, who was an idle fellow, after spending his own patrimony, tried to get that of Hesiod into his hands, and took his cause before judges whom he bribed. Hesiod was forced to relinquish his property, whereupon he retired from Ascra to Orchomenos. At Orchomenos he probably passed the remainder of his days. This incident explains why Hesiod dwelt so much upon the subject of justice in his poem of the *Works and Days*, addressed to Perses. Μέγα νήπιε Πέρση (most foolish Perses) he always calls this brother, as though, while heaping the coals of good counsel upon his head, he wished to humble his oppressor by the parade of moral and intellectual superiority. Some of Hesiod's finest passages, his most intense and passionate utterances, are wrung from him by the injustice he had suffered; so true is the famous saying that poets

"Learn in suffering what they teach in song."

One parable will for the moment serve as a specimen of the poetry which the wrong-dealing of Perses drew from him. "Thus spake the hawk to the nightingale of changeful throat, as he bore her far aloft among the clouds, the prey of his talons: she, poor wretch, wailed piteously

¹ *Works and Days*, 219, 261, 637.

in the grip of his crooked claws ; but he insultingly addressed her : ' Wretch, why criest thou ? Thou art now the prey of one that is the stronger : and thou shalt go whither I choose to take thee, song-bird as thou art. Yea, if I see fit, I will make my supper of thee, or else let thee go. A fool is he who kicks against his betters : of victory is he robbed, and suffers injury as well as insult.' " Hesiod himself is, of course, meant by the nightingale, and the hawk stands for violence triumphing over justice.

In verse and dialect the Hesiodic poems are not dissimilar from the Homeric, which, supposing their date to have been later, proves that the *Iliad* had determined the style and standard of Epic composition, or, supposing a contemporary origin, would show that the Greeks of the so-called heroic age had agreed upon a common literary language. We may refer the *Theogony* and the *Works and Days*, after the deduction of numerous interpolations, to Hesiod, but only in the same sense and with the same reservation as we assign the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* to Homer.¹ Unlike the heroic epos, they were recited, not to the accompaniment of the cithara, but by the poet standing with a laurel staff, called *ῥάβδος* or *σκῆπτρον* (rod or sceptre), in his hand. Hesiod, at the opening of the *Theogony*, tells us how he had received a staff of this kind from the Muse upon Mount Helicon. Either, then, the laurel rod had already been recognised in that part of Greece as the symbol of the poet's office, or else, from the respect which the followers of Hesiod paid to the details of his poem, they adopted it as their badge.

Of the two poems ascribed to Hesiod, the *Theogony* and the *Works and Days*, the former—though its genuineness as a Hesiodic production seems to have been disputed from a very early period—was perhaps, on the whole, of greater value than the latter to the Greeks. It contained an authorised version of the genealogy of their gods and heroes, an inspired dictionary of mythology, from which to deviate was hazardous. Just as families in England try to prove their Norman descent by an appeal to the Roll of Battle Abbey, so the canon of the *Theogony* decided the claims of god or demigod to rank among celestials. In this sense, Herodotus should be interpreted, when he says that Hesiod joined with Homer in making their Theogonia for the Greeks. But though this poem had thus an unique value for the ancients, it is hardly so interesting in the light of modern criticism as the *Works and Days*. The *Works and Days*, while for all practical purposes we may regard it as contemporaneous with the *Iliad*, marks the transition from the heroic epic to the moral poetry of the succeeding age, and forms the basis of direct ethical philosophy in Hellas. Hesiod is thus not only the mouthpiece of obscure handworkers in the earliest centuries of Greek history, the poet of their daily labours, sufferings, and wrongs,

¹ There are probably few scholars who would now venture to maintain confidently that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were composed by one and the same poet. The name Homer must be used like the x of algebra for an unknown power.

the singer of their doubts and infantine reflections on the world in which they had to toil; he is also the immediate parent of gnomic verse, and the ancestor of those deep thinkers who speculated in the Attic age upon the mysteries of human life.

The first ten verses of the *Works and Days* are spurious—borrowed, probably, from some Orphic hymn to Zeus, and recognised as not the work of Hesiod by critics as ancient as Pausanias. The poem begins with these words: “Not, as I thought, is there only one kind of strife; but on the earth there are two, the one praiseworthy, the other to be blamed.” It has been conjectured that Hesiod is referring to that passage of the *Theogony*¹ in which Eris, daughter of Night, is said to have had no sister. We are, therefore, justified in assuming that much of his mythology is consciously etymological; and this should be borne in mind while dealing with the legend of Prometheus. The nobler strife whereof he speaks in his exordium is what we should now call competition. It rouses the idle man to labour; it stirs up envy in the heart of the poor man, making him eager to possess the advantages of wealth; it sets neighbour against neighbour, craftsman against craftsman, in commendable emulation. Very different, says the poet, is this sort of strife from that which sways the law-courts; and at this point he begins to address his brother Perses, who had litigiously deprived him of his heritage. The form of didactic poetry, as it has since been practised by the followers of Hesiod, was fixed by the appeal to Perses. Empedocles, it will be remembered, addressed his poem on Nature to the physician Pausanias; Lucretius invoked the attention of Memmius, and Virgil that of Mæcenas; the gnomes of Theognis were uttered to the Megarian Cynus; Poliziano dedicated his *Silva* to Lorenzo de’ Medici, Vida his *Poetics* to the Dauphin, Fracastorio his medical poem to Bembo, and Pope the *Essay on Man* to Bolingbroke. After this preface on competition as the inducement to labour, and on strife as the basis of injustice, the poet proceeds to the mythus of Prometheus, which is so artificially introduced as to justify the opinion that it may be an interpolation by some later craftsman of the Hesiodic school. Work, he says, is necessary for men, because Zeus has concealed and hidden far away our means of livelihood; so that we are forced to toil and suffer in the search for sustenance. This grudge Zeus owed mankind because of the sin of Prometheus. In the *Works and Days* the account given of the trick played upon Zeus is brief: Hesiod only says, “seeing that Prometheus of crooked counsel deceived him.” We may, however, supplement the story from the *Theogony*.² In old days the human race had fire, and offered burned sacrifice to heaven; but Prometheus by his craft deceived the gods of their just portion of the victims, making Zeus take the bones and fat for his share. Whereupon Zeus deprived men of the use of fire. Prometheus then stole fire from heaven, and gave it back to men. “Then,” says Hesiod, “was cloud-gathering Zeus full wroth of heart, and he devised a great woe

¹ Line 225.

² Line 535.

for all mankind." He determined to punish the whole race by giving them Pandora. He bade Hephæstus mix earth and water, and infuse into the plastic form a human voice and human powers, and liken it in all points to a heavenly goddess. Athene was told to teach the woman, thus made, household work and skill in weaving. Aphrodite poured upon her head the charm of beauty, with terrible desire, and flesh-consuming thoughts of love. But Zeus commanded Hermes to give to her the mind of a dog and wily temper. After this fashion was the making of Pandora. And when she had been shaped, Athene girded and adorned her; the Graces and divine Persuasion hung golden chains about her flesh, and the Hours crowned her with spring blossoms. Zeus called her Pandora, because each dweller on Olympus had bestowed on her a gift. Then Pandora was sent under the charge of Hermes to Epimetheus, who remembered not his brother's words, how he had said: "Receive no gift from Zeus, but send it back again, lest evil should befall the race of men." But as soon as Epimetheus had housed her, he recognised his error. Before this time men had lived upon the earth apart from evils, apart from painful toil, and weariful diseases which bring death on mortals. The woman with her hands lifted the lid of the great jar where all these bad things were shut up, and let them loose into the air. Hope alone remained behind—for the lot of humanity is hopeless; but a hundred thousand woes abode at large to plague the race of men. Earth is full of them; the sea is full; and sickness roams abroad by night and day, where it listeth, bearing ills to mortals in silence, for Zeus in his deep craft took away its voice that men might have no warning. Thus not in any way is it possible to avoid the will of God.

Such is the mythus of the Fall, as imagined by the early Greeks. Man in rebellion against heaven, pitted in his weakness at a game of mutual deception against almighty force, is beaten and is punished. Woman, the instrument of his chastisement, is thrust upon him by offended and malignant deity; the folly of man receives her, and repents too late. Both his wisdom and his foolishness conspire to man's undoing—wisdom which he cannot use aright, and foolishness which makes him fall into the trap prepared for him. We are irresistibly led to compare this legend with the Hebrew tradition of the Fall. In both there is an act of transgression on the part of man. Woman in both brings woe into the world. That is to say, the conscience of the Greeks and Jews, intent on solving the mystery of pain and death, convicted them alike of sin; while the social prejudices of both races made them throw the blame upon the weaker but more fascinating sex, by whom they felt their sterner nature softened and their passions quickened to work foolishness. So far the two myths have strong points of agreement. But in that of the Greeks there is no Manicheism. The sin of Prometheus is not, like the sin of Adam, the error of weak human beings tempted by the machinations of an evil spirit to transgress the law of good. It is rather a knavish trick played off upon the sire of gods

and men by a wily gamester; and herein it seems to symbolise that tendency to overreach, which formed a marked characteristic of the Hellenes in all ages. The Greek of Hesiod's time conceived of the relations between man and god as involving mutual mistrust and guile; his ideal of intellectual superiority both in Prometheus and in Zeus implied capacity for getting the upper hand by craft. Again, the Greek god takes a diabolical revenge, punishing the whole human race, with laughter on his lips and self-congratulation for superior cunning in his heart. We lack the solemn moment when God calls Adam at the close of day, and tells him of the curse, but also promises a Saviour. The legend of Prometheus has, for its part also, the prophecy of a redeemer; but the redeemer of men from the anger of God does not proceed from the mercy of the deity himself, who has been wronged, but from the iron will of Fate, who stands above both god and man, and from the invincible fortitude of the soul which first had sinned, now stiffening itself against the might of Zeus, refusing his promises, rejecting his offers of reconciliation, biding in pain and patience till Herakles appears and cuts the Gordian knot. This is the spectacle presented by Æschylus in his *Prometheus Bound*. To deny its grandeur would be ridiculous; to contend that it offers some features of sublimity superior to anything contained in the Hebrew legend, would be no difficult task. In the person of Prometheus, chained on Caucasus, pierced by fiery arrows in the noonday and by frosty arrows in the night, humanity wavers not, but endures with scorn and patience and stoical acceptance. Unfortunately the outlines of this great tragic allegory have been blurred by time and travestied by feeble copyists. What we know about the tale of Prometheus is but a faint echo of the mythus apprehended by the Greeks anterior to Hesiod, and handled afterwards by Æschylus. Enough, however, remains to make it certain that it was the creation of a race profoundly convinced of present injustice in the divine government of the world. If the soul of man is raised by the attribution of stern heroism, God is lowered to the infamy of a tyrant. But neither is the Hebrew legend on its side theologically flawless. Greek and Jew fail alike to offer a satisfactory solution of the origin of evil. While in the Greek mythus Zeus plays with mankind like a cat with a mouse, the Hebrew story does not explain the justice of that omnipotent Being who created man with capacity for error, and exposed him to temptation. The true critique of the second and third chapters of Genesis has been admirably expressed by Omar Khayyam in the following stanzas:—

“ O Thou, who didst with pitfall and with gin
Beset the road I was to wander in,
Thou wilt not with predestination round
Enmesh me, and impute my fall to sin ?

“ O Thou, who man of baser earth didst make,
And who with Eden didst devise the snake,
For all the sin wherewith the face of man
Is blackened, man's forgiveness give—and take ! ”

Both tales are but crude and early attempts to set forth the primitive mystery of conscience, and to account for the prevalence of pain and death. The æsthetic superiority of the Hebrew conception lies in its idealisation of the deity at all costs. God is at least grand and consistent, justified by His own august counsels; and at the very moment of punishing His creatures, He promises deliverance through their own seed. Moreover, a vast antagonistic agency of evil is brought into the field to account for the fall of man; and we are not precluded from even extending our compassion to the deity, who has been thwarted in His schemes for good.

Before quitting the discussion of this ancient tale of human suffering and sin, it would be well to notice that Hesiod identifies Prometheus with the human race. His hero is the son of the Titan Iapetus by Clymene, daughter of the Titan Oceanus; and his brethren are Atlas, Menoitios, and Epimetheus. These names are significant. Just as Prometheus signifies the forecasting reason of humanity,¹ so Epimetheus indicates the overhasty judgment foredoomed to be wise too late. These are intellectual qualities. Atlas, in like manner, typifies the endurance of man, who bears all to the very end, and holds upon his back the bulk of heaven. In Menoitios is shadowed forth the insolence and rebellious spirit for which a penalty of pain and death is meted. These, then, are moral qualities. In the children of Iapetus and Clymene we consequently trace the first rude attempt at psychological analysis. The scientific import of the mythus was never wholly forgotten by the Greeks. Pindar calls Prophasis, or excuse, the daughter of Epimetheus, or backthought as opposed to forethought. Plato makes the folly of Epimetheus to have consisted in his giving away the natural powers of self-preservation to the beasts; whereupon Prometheus was driven to supplement with fire the unprotected impotence of man. Lucian, again, says of Epimetheus that repentance is his business; while Synesius adds that he provides not for the future, but deplures the past. The Titans, it should further be remarked, are demiurgic powers—elemental forces of air, fire, earth, water—conditions of existence implied by space and time—distributors of darkness and of light—parents, lastly, of the human race. Though some later Greek authors identified Prometheus with the Titans, and made him the benefactor of humanity, this was not the conception of Hesiod. Prometheus is stated, both in the *Theogony* and the *Works and Days*, to have been the son of Titans, the protagonist of men, who strove in vain to cope with Zeus. Zeus himself belongs in like manner to a secondary order of existences. Begotten by the Titan Cronos, he seems to typify the reason as distinguished from the brute powers of the universe, mind emergent from matter, and overcoming it by contest. Prometheus is connected, by his parentage, with the old material order of the world; but he represents that portion of it which is human, and which, *quod* human,

¹ That Prometheus was *Pramanthas*, the fire-lighting stick, has been assumed by modern philology, but was not known by Hesiod.

has affinity to Zeus. Herein we trace the mystery of the divine in man, though man has been placed in antagonism to the deity. The same notion is further symbolised by the theft of fire, and by the fiction of Prometheus breathing a particle of the divine spirit into the clay figures whereof he made men. In the decaying age of Greek mythology this aspect of the legend absorbed attention to the exclusion of the elder Hesiodic romance, as students of Horace will remember, and as appears abundantly from Græco-Roman bas-reliefs. To reconcile man and Zeus, cognate in their origin, yet hostile owing to their ancient feud, it was needful that a deliverer, Herakles, should be born of god and woman, of Zeus and Alcmene, who sets free the elementary principle of humanity typified in Prometheus, and for the first time establishes a harmony between the children of earth and the dwellers on Olympus. So far I have remained within the limits of the Hesiodic legend, only hinting at such divergences as were adopted by the later handlers of the tale. The new aspect given to the whole myth by Æschylus deserves separate consideration in connection with the tragedy of *Prometheus*. It is to be regretted that we only possess so important a relique of Greek religious speculation in fragments; and these fragments are so tantalisingly incomplete that it is impossible to say exactly how much may be the *débris* of original tradition, or where the free fancy of later poets has been remoulding and recasting the material of the antique myth to suit more modern allegory.

The tale of Prometheus may be called the first canto of the *Works and Days*. The second consists of the vision of the four ages of man. Hesiod, in common with all early poets, imagined a state of primæval bliss, which he called the Age of Gold. Then Cronos reigned upon the earth, and men lived without care or pain or old age. Their death was like the coming on of sleep, and the soil bore them fruits untilled. When this race came to an end, Zeus made them genii of goodwill, haunting the world and protecting mortals. Theirs it is to watch the decrees of justice, and to mark wrong-doing, wrapped around with mist, going up and down upon the earth, the givers of wealth; such is the royal honour which is theirs. The next age he calls the silver, for it was inferior to the first; and Zeus speedily swept it away, seeing that the men of this generation waxed insolent, and paid no honour to the gods. The third age is the brazen. A terrible and mighty brood of men possessed the land, who delighted in nought but violence and warfare. They first ate flesh. Their houses and their armour and their mattocks were of brass. In strife they slew themselves, and perished without a name. After them came the heroes of romance, whom Zeus made most just and worthy. They fell fighting before seven-gated Thebes and Troy; but after death Father Zeus transferred them to the utmost limits of the world, where they live without care in islands of the blest, by ocean waves, blest heroes, for whom thrice yearly the soil bears blooming fruitage honey-sweet. Then cries Hesiod, and the cry is wrenched from him with agony, Would that I

had never been born in the fifth generation of men, but rather that I had died before or had lived afterwards ; for now the age is of iron ! On the face of the world there is nought but violence and wrong ; division is set between father and son, brother and brother, friend and friend ; there is no fear of God, no sense of justice, no fidelity, no truth ; the better man is subject to the worse, and jealousy corrupts the world. Soon, very soon, will wing their way to heaven again—leaving the earth with her broad ways, robed in white raiment, joining the immortal choir, deserting men—both modest shame and righteous indignation. But dismal woes will stay and harbour here, and against evil there shall be no aid. This ends the second canto of the *Works and Days*, and brings us down to the two hundredth line of the poem. The remainder consists for the most part of precepts adapted to the doleful state in which mortals of the present have to suffer.

What may be called the third canto is occupied with justice, the advantages of which, from a purely utilitarian point of view, as well as æsthetically conceived, are urged in verse. It begins with the apologue of the hawk and nightingale already quoted. Then the condition of a city where justice is honoured, where the people multiply in peace, and there is fulness and prosperity, where pestilence and calamity keep far away, is contrasted with the plagues, wars, famines, wasting away of population, and perpetual discomforts that beset the unjust nation. For the innocent and righteous folk, says the poet, the earth bears plenty, and in the mountains the oak-tree at the top yields acorns, and in the middle bees, and the woolly sheep are weighed down with their fleeces. The women give birth to children like their fathers. With blessings do men always flourish, nor need they tempt the sea in ships, but earth abundantly supplies their wants.

It is worth while to pause for a moment and contemplate the pastoral ideal of perfect happiness and pure simplicity which, first set forth by Hesiod in these passages, found afterwards an echo in Plato, in Empedocles, in Lucretius, in Virgil, in Poliziano, and in Tasso ; all of whom have lingered lovingly upon the *bell' età dell' oro*. The Hesiodic conception of felicity is neither stirring nor heroic. Like the early Christian notion of heaven, expressed by the pathetic iteration of *in pace* on the sepulchral tablets of the Catacombs, it owes its beauty to a sense of contrast between tranquillity imagined and woe and warfare actually experienced. We comprehend why the Spartan king called Hesiod the poet of the Helots, when, in the age that idealised Achilles and Odysseus, the all-daring, all-affronting heroes of a radiant romance, we find that his sole aspiration was to live in peace, decorously fulfilling social duties, and growing old in the routine of moderate labour. It is a commonplace, and what the French would call a *bourgeois*, aspiration. Just this lot in life Achilles rejected with disdain, in exchange for the dazzling prospect of victory and death, that fascinated the noblest of the Greeks, and produced their Alexander. Still we must remember

that Hesiod was not, like Homer, singing in the halls of fiery and high-fed chieftains, who stood above the laws. His plaintive note was uttered to the watchers of the seasons and the tillers of the soil, whose very livelihood depended on the will and pleasure of *δαροφάγοι βασιλείς* (gift-devouring chieftains). In the semi-barbarous state of society which Homer and Hesiod represent from different points of view, when violence prevails, and when life and property alike are insecure, justice may well be selected as the prime of virtues, and peace be idealised as heaven on earth. In one sense, as the Greek philosophers argued, justice does include all the excellences of a social being. The man who is perfectly just will be unimpeachable in all his conduct; and the simpler the state of society, the more outrageous the wrongs inflicted by one man on another, the more apparent will this be.

Putting aside, however, for further consideration, the ethical aspect of Hesiod's ideal, we find in it an exquisite and permanently attractive æsthetic beauty. Compared with the fierce heroism of Achilles, the calm happiness of Hesiod's pastoral folk soothes our fancy, like the rising of the moon in twilight above harvest sheaves at the end of a long intolerable day. Therefore great poets and artists, through all the resonant and gorgeous ages of the world, have turned their eyes with sympathy and yearning to these lines; and the best that either Virgil or Poliziano could achieve, was to catch an echo of Hesiod's melody, to reproduce a portion of his charm. Perhaps the most complete homage to the poetry of Hesiod on this point has been rendered by Flaxman. Nature, so prodigal to the English race in men of genius untutored, singular, and solitary, has given us but few seers who, in the quality of prolific invention, can be compared with Flaxman. For pure conceptive faculty, controlled by unerring sense of beauty, we have to think of Pheidias or Raphael before we find his equal. His powers were often employed on uncongenial subjects; nor had he, perhaps, a true notion of the limitations of his art; else he would not have attempted to give sculpturesque form even in outline to many scenes from the *Divine Comedy*. The conditions, again, of modern life were adverse to his working out his thought in marble, and precluded him from gaining a complete mastery over the material of sculpture. It may also be conceded that, to a large extent, his imagination, like a parasite flower, was obliged to bloom upon the branches of Greek art. What Flaxman would have been without the bas-reliefs, the vases, and the hand-mirrors of the ancients, it is difficult to conceive. Herein, however, he did no more than obey the law which has constrained the greatest modern minds by indissoluble bondage to the service of the Greek spirit. Allowing for all this, the fact remains that within a certain circle, the radius of which exceeds the farthest reach of many far more frequently belauded artists, Flaxman was supreme. Whatever could be expressed according to the laws of bas-relief, embossed in metal, or hewn out of stone, or indicated in pure outline, he conveyed with a truth to nature, a grace of feeling, and an

originality of conception, absolutely incomparable. Moreover, in this kind his genius was inexhaustible. Nowhere are the fruits of this creative skill so charming as in the illustrations of the *Works and Days*. The ninth plate, in which the Age of Gold is symbolised by a mother stretching out her infant to receive his father's kiss, might be selected as a perfect idyll, conveyed within the strictest and severest bounds of sculptural relief. The man and his girl-wife are beautiful and young: age, we feel, will never touch them by whitening her forehead or spoiling his smooth chin with hair. Both are naked, seated on the ground; their outstretched arms enfold as in a living cradle the robust and laughing boy. On one side shoots a heavy sheaf of barley; on the other stands an altar, smoking with bloodless offerings to heaven; above, the strong vine hangs its clusters and its wealth of lusty leaves. More elaborate, but scarcely more beautiful—like a double rose beside a wilding blossom from the hedge of June—is the seventeenth plate, which sets forth the felicity of god-fearing folk who honour justice. These, too, are seated on the ground, young men and girls, with comely children, pledges of their joy: one child is suckled at her mother's breast; another lies folded in his father's arms; a girl and boy are kissing on their parents' knees; while a beardless youth pipes ditties on the double reed. Above the group vine-branches flourish, and the veiled Hours, givers of all goodly things, weave choric dance with song, scattering from their immortal fingers flowers upon the men beneath. In order to comprehend the purity of Flaxman's inspiration, the deep and inborn sympathy that made him in this nineteenth century a Greek, we ought to compare these illustrations with the picture of the Golden Age by Ingres. For perfection of scientific drawing from the nude, this masterpiece of the great French painter has never been excelled. It is a treasure-house of varied attitude and rhythmically studied line. Yet the whole resembles a theatrical *tableau vivant*, which an enlightened choreograph, in combination with an enterprising manager, might design to represent the Garden of Eden on a grand scale. The power displayed by Flaxman is of a very different order. There is no effort, no *mise en scène*, no parade of science, no suggestion of voluptuousness. His outlines are as simple and as pure as Hesiod's verse. We see that, whereas Ingres is using the old vision as a schema for the exhibition of his skill, Flaxman has felt its poetry and given form to its imagination. This is not the occasion to linger over these illustrations; yet, before closing the volume that contains them, I cannot forbear from turning a page, and pointing to the pictures of the Pleiads. Seven beautiful interwoven female shapes are rising in the one plate, like a wreath of light or vapour moulded into human form, above the reapers; in the other are descending, with equal grace of now inverted movement, over the ploughman at his toil. By no other artist's hand have the constellations elsewhere been converted, with so much feeling for their form, into the melodies of rhythmically moving human shapes. Flaxman's outlines of the Pleiads might be

described as a new celestial imagery, a hitherto unapprehended astronomical mythology.

Continuing what I have called the third canto of the *Works and Days*, Hesiod addresses himself in the next place to the Basileis, or judges of the people: "Kings in judgment, do ye also ponder this divine justice; for the immortals, dwelling near and among men, behold who waste their fellows by wrong judgment, scorning the wrath of God. Verily, upon earth are thrice ten thousand immortals of the host of Zeus, guardians of mortal man. They watch both justice and injustice, robed in mist, roaming abroad upon the earth." Again he reminds them that Justice, virgin child of Zeus, is ever ready with ear open to observe the injury to right and fair dealing done against her honour. She complains of the wrongful judge; but it is the people who suffer for his sin. Therefore let the princes so greedy of bribes take heed, forgo their crooked sentences, and bear in mind that the man who works evil for another, works it for himself, that bad intentions harm those who have conceived them, and that Zeus sees all and knows all. This period is concluded with a bitterly ironical repudiation of the poet's own precepts—May neither I nor my son be just; for now the wrongful man has by far the best of it upon the earth! It will be observed that Zeus throughout this tirade on justice is a different being from the Zeus in the mythus of Prometheus. The dramatic personage of the legend, whose guile inflicts so much misery on men, has been supplanted by a moral idea personified. It is not that a new mythology has been superinduced upon the old one, or that we are now in the track of esoteric religious teaching; the poet is only expressing his internal certainty that, though fraud and violence prevail on earth, yet somewhere in the eternal and ideal world justice still abides. It is not a little singular, considering his querulous and hopeless tone in other passages, that Hesiod should here assert the cognisance which Zeus takes of unfair dealing, and the continued action of protective and retributive dæmons. We could scarcely find stronger faith in the superiority of justice among the moral writings of the Jews. Furthermore, Hesiod reminds Perses that justice is human, violence bestial, and that in the long run honesty will be found to be the best policy. Then follows the sublimest passage of the whole poem—one of great celebrity among the Greeks, who quoted it, and worked it up in poems, parables, and essays: "Behold, thou mayest choose badness easily, even in heaps; for the path is plain, and she dwells very near. But before excellence the immortal gods have placed toil and labour: afar and steep is the road that leads to her, and rough it is at first; but when you reach the height, then truly is it easy, though so hard before."¹

The subject of Justice being now exhausted, Hesiod passes, in the fourth canto of the *Works and Days*, to the eulogy of labour, regarded as the source of all good. The unheroic nature of his life-philosophy

¹ *Works and Days*, 286.

is very apparent in this section. He thinks and speaks like a peasant, whose one idea it is to add pence to pence, and to cut a good figure in his parish. A man must work, in order to avoid hunger and grow rich : gods and men hate the idle, who are like drones in the hive : if you work, you will get flocks and herds, and folk will envy you : to grow rich from dishonest gains brings no profit, for they are unlucky : the great aim for a good man is to live a respectable life, to work soberly, to fulfil righteousness, to be punctual in paying homage to the gods—to go to church, in fact—with this end in view, that he may buy the estates of his neighbour, instead of having to sell his own. Such is the bathos of Hesiod's ethical ideal : Do right and abstain from wrong, in order that you may be richer than the tenant of the adjacent farm. Many other precepts of like tenor might be quoted : Call your friend to your banquet, and leave your enemy alone ; invite him most who lives nearest, for he will be most useful in time of need ; love him who loves you, and cleave to him who cleaves to you ; give to him who gives, and give not to him who gives not, for to a giver gifts are given, but to him who gives not no man hath given. Of such sort are the Hesiodic rules of conduct. They reveal the spirit of a prudent clown, the practical and calculating selfishness which the doleful conditions of the early age of Hellenic civilisation intensified. The social life of great political centres, and the patriotism of the Persian war, helped at a later period to raise the Greeks above these low and sordid aims in life. It was only in a century when justice could be bought, and penury meant starving, unheeded or derided, by the roadside, that a poet of Hesiod's temper could write,¹ Money is a man's soul :—

χρήματα γὰρ ψυχὴ πέλεται δειλοῖσι βρότοισι.

“For money is the soul of miserable mortals.”

In criticising the Solonian reforms at Athens, we should never forget the dismal picture of Hellenic misery revealed to us by Hesiod.

Thus ends the first part of the *Works and Days*. The second half of the poem consists of rules for husbandry. Hesiod goes through the seasons of the year, detailing the operations of the several months, and adorning his homely subject with sober but graceful poetry. It is an elegant farmer's calendar, upon which Virgil founded his *Georgics*, translating into Augustan Latin the rude phrases of the bard of Ascrea, and turning all he touched to gold. Scattered among precepts relating to the proper seasons and successions of agricultural labour, are descriptive passages and moral reflections. One picture of winter is so long and elaborate as to justify the notion that it is a separate interpolated poem. The episode upon procrastination (line 408), and the rules for the choice of a wife (line 693), might be selected as offering special topics for comment. The latter passage deserves particular attention ;

¹ *Works and Days*, 686. It must here again be repeated that, though it is convenient to talk of Hesiod as a poet and a person, the miscellaneous ethical precepts of the *Works and Days* are derived from a variety of sources.

since, if the condition of the working man was wretched in this early age of Greece, far more miserable, may we argue, was that of his help-mate. A man, according to Hesiod, ought to be about thirty when he marries, and his wife about nineteen. He should be very careful, in choosing her, to insure that she will not bring him into contempt among his neighbours; and he must remember that if a good wife be a prize, it is not possible to get a worse plague than a bad one. What his general notion about women was, we gather from the long invective against the female sex in the *Theogony*.¹ Pandora was the greatest curse imaginable to the human race, for from her sprang women; and now, if a man refrains from marriage, he must endure a wretched old age, and leave his money to indifferent kindred; or if he marries and gets a good wife, curses and blessings are mingled in his lot; if his wife be of the bad sort, his whole life is ruined. So utterly impossible is it to avoid the misery devised for the human race by Zeus.

The whole argument of Hesiod in this passage, taken in connection with his few lines on the choice of a wife in the *Works and Days*, and with his grim silence upon the subject of women as the companions of men, proves that he regarded them as a necessary deduction from the happiness of life—the rift within the lute that spoils its music—the plague invented by the malice of an all-wise god in vengeance for a man's deceit. This appreciation of women is substantially consistent with the curious poem by Simonides of Amorgos; with the treatment of the female sex at Athens; with the opinion of Pindar and Plato that to be a woman-lover as compared with a boy-lover was sensual and vile; with the disdainful silence of Thucydides; with the caricatures of society presented by the comic poets; with the famous epigram of Pericles; with the portrait of Xanthippe; and with the remarkable description of female habits in Lucian's *Amores*. Thus, running through the whole literature of the Greeks, we can trace a vein of contempt for women, which may fairly be indicated as the greatest social blot upon their brilliant but imperfect civilisation. Exceptions can, of course, be found. In the age of the despots women rose into far more importance than they afterwards enjoyed in democratic Athens. At Sparta their right to engross property (severely criticised by Aristotle) gave them a social status which they had in no other Greek state. At Lesbos, during the brief blooming period of Æolian culture, in freedom of action and in mental training they were at least the equals of the male sex. The fact, however, remains that in Athens, the real centre of Hellenic life, women occupied a distinctly inferior rank. It is significant that in the *Lives of Plutarch*, whereas we read of many noble Lacedæmonian ladies, comparatively little account is taken of the wives or mothers of Athenian worthies.

Some scattered proverbs about the conduct of the tongue and the choice of friends, followed by an enumeration of lucky and unlucky

¹ *Theogony*, 587-612.

days, and by a list of truly rustic rules of personal behaviour, conclude the poem of the *Works and Days*. How far these saws and maxims belong to the original work of Hesiod it is quite impossible to say. The book became popular in education, and consequently suffered, like the gnomes of Theognis and Phocylides, from frequent interpolations at a later period. As it stands, the whole is chiefly valuable for the concrete picture which it offers of early peasant life in Hellas. As the Epics of Homer present us with the ideal toward which the princes and great nobles raised their souls amid the plenty and the splendour of their palaces, so, in the lines of Hesiod, we learn how the Thetes, whom Achilles envied in Elysium, toiled and suffered in their struggle for their only source of comfort, gold.

CHAPTER VI

PARMENIDES

Greek Philosophical Poetry—The Emergence of Philosophy from Mythology—The Ionian Sages—The Pythagoreans—Anaxagoras—Democritus—The Eleatics—Heraclitus—Xenophanes of Colophon—His Critique of the Myths—Assertion of Monotheism—Fragments of his Poem on Nature—Parmenides of Elea—His Political Importance—Parmenides in the Dialogues of Plato—His Metaphysic of Being—His Natural Philosophy—The Logic deduced from him by Zeno and Melissus—Translation of the Fragments of his Poem—The Dualism of Truth and Opinion—Impossibility of obtaining Absolute Knowledge.

It might well be questioned whether the founders of the Eleatic School deserve to rank among Greek poets; for though they wrote hexameters, composing what the Greeks call *ἔπη*, yet it is clear that they did this with no artistic impulse, but only because in the dawn of thought it was easier, or perhaps more consistent with traditional custom, to use verse than prose for fixed and meditated exposition. The moment in the development of human thought when abstractions were being wrung for the first time with toil from language, and when as yet the vehicle of rhythmic utterance seemed indispensable, is so interesting that a point in favour of Xenophanes and Parmenides may be fairly stretched, and a place may be given them between Hesiod, the creator of didactic poetry, and Empedocles, the inspired predecessor of Lucretius.

The problem which lay before the earliest philosophers of Greece was how to emerge from mythological conceptions concerning the origin and nature of the world into a region of exact and abstract thought. They had their list of demiurgic agencies, Titans and deities, some of them dramatically personified in the poems of Homer and the legends of Olympus, others but vaguely indicated by the names of Earth and Ocean, Heaven and Time. The polytheistic and mythologising instincts of the race at large tended to individualise these primal powers with more and more distinctness, collecting legends around the popular among them, and attributing moral sympathies and passions

to those who were supposed to have relations with humanity. But there remained a background of dimly-described and cloudy forces upon which the mythopœic imagination had taken little hold; and these supplied a starting-point for scientific speculation. It was in this field that the logical faculty of the Greek mind, no less powerful and active than its poetic fancy, came first into play. Thus we find Thales brooding in thought upon the mythus of Oceanus, and arriving at the conception of water as the elementary principle of the universe; while Gaia, or earth, in like manner is said to have stimulated Pherecydes. Anaximenes is reported to have chosen air as the groundwork of his cosmogony, and Heraclitus developed the material world from fire.

It must not be supposed that any of these early speculators invented a complete hypothesis for deducing phenomena from earth, air, fire, or water, as apprehended by the senses. Their elements or ἀρχαί are rather to be regarded in the light of symbols—metaphors adopted from experience for shadowing forth an extremely subtle and pervasive substance, a material of supersensible fluidity and elasticity, capable of infinite modification by rarefaction and condensation. At the same time they were seeking after intellectual abstractions; but the problems of philosophy as yet presented themselves in crude and concrete form to their intellects.

A further step in the direction of the abstract was taken by Anaximander, the Milesian astronomer, who is reported to have made a sundial, to have calculated the recurrence of the equinoxes and the solstices, and to have projected geographical charts for the first time in Greece. This practical mathematician derived the universe from the unlimited (τὸ ἄπειρον) hurling thought thus at a venture, as it were, into the realm of metaphysical conceptions. It would appear from the dim and hazy tradition which we have received about Anaximander, that he instituted a polemic against the so-called physicists, arguing that to the elements of fire or water there can be attributed a beginning and an ending, but that the abstract indefinite, as uncreate and indestructible, takes precedence of all else. His thought, however, though fruitful of future consequences, was in itself barren; nor have we any reason to conclude that by the *unlimited* he meant more than a primordial substance, or *Grund*, without quality and without limitation—a void and hollow form containing in itself potentialities of all things. It is characteristic of this early age of Greek speculation that Simplicius found it necessary to criticise even Anaximander for using poetic phraseology (ποιητικώτεροις ὀνόμασιν). In his polemic, however, he started one of the great puzzles, the contrast between birth and death, and the difficulty of discovering an element subject to neither, which agitated the schools of Greece throughout their long activity.

While the thinkers of Ionia were endeavouring to discover terms of infinite subtlety, through which to symbolise the uniform and unchangeable substance underlying the multiplicity of phenomena, the Pytha-

goreans in Italy turned their attention to the abstract relations of which numbers are the simplest expression. Numbers, they saw, are both thoughts and also at the same time universally applicable to things of sense. There is nothing tangible which can escape the formulæ of arithmetic. Mistaking a power of the mind for a power inherent in the universe, they imagined that the figures of the multiplication table were the essential realities of things, the authentic inner essence of the sensible world; and to number they attributed a mystic potency. Speculation was still so immature that they failed to observe the sterility of the conception. This much, however, they effected:—by resting upon the essentially mental conception of quantity, and by apprehending the universe as number, they took the first important step in the direction of pure metaphysic. They initiated the study of things in their relation to one another and to the cosmic whole by suggesting the possibility of a common term of measurement.

Anaxagoras of Clazomenæ, following another path, pronounced that the really efficient agency in the universe is Mind. For this utterance he has been justly eulogised by the metaphysicians of all succeeding centuries. It was, in fact, the starting-point of what in German phraseology is called *Begriffsphilosophie*. Anaxagoras insisted on a point which had been neglected by his contemporaries—the form-giving activity of mind, as known to us immediately in the human reason—and asserted the impossibility of leaving this out of the account of the universe. But, as Socrates complained, he stopped here, and diverged into material explanations, talking about attraction and repulsion and homogeneous particles, without attempting to connect them with the action of his *Nous*.

Democritus of Abdera, a little later in time than the thinkers who have hitherto been mentioned, was so attracted by the indefinite divisibility of matter that he explained the universe by the theory of a Void in which an infinity of Atoms moved and met in varied combination. It is well known that this hypothesis, the parent of the Epicurean and the Lucretian systems, has been the mainstay of materialism in all ages, and that something like it has lately been received into favour by the most advanced physicists. Yet it must not be imagined that the Atomism of Democritus was in any true sense scientific according to our acceptation of the term. Like the Infinite of Anaximander, the Mind of Anaxagoras, the Numbers of Pythagoras, the fire of Heraclitus, his Plenum and Vacuum was a conjectural hypothesis founded upon no experiment or observation properly so called. All these early systems were freaks of fancy, shrewd guesses, poetic thoughts, in which abstractions from language, elementary refinements upon mythology, together with crude speculations about natural objects, were made the groundwork of dogmatism. At the same time thought at this period was both active and creative; nearly all the permanent problems which occur to human ignorance—the antitheses of a beginning and an ending, of being and not being, of rest and motion, of the

continuous and the discrete, of the one and the many—the criterion of knowledge and opinion, the antagonism of the senses and the reason, the relation of the vital principle to inanimate existence—were posed in the course of animated controversy. Logic had not been formulated as a method. Philosophical terminology had not as yet been settled. But the logical faculty was working in full vigour, and language was being made to express general ideas hitherto unapprehended.

This brief survey of the origin of Greek philosophy will enable us to understand the position of the Eleatics. Regarded collectively, and as a school developing a body of doctrine, they advanced in abstraction beyond any of their predecessors or contemporaries. Whereas other philosophers had sought for the abstract in phenomenal elements, the Eleatics went straight through language to the notion of pure being; even the numbers of Pythagoras were not sufficient for the exigencies of their logic. The unity of being, as the one reality, and the absolute impossibility of not-being, revealed by the consciousness and demonstrated by language in the copula *ἐστί* ("is"), forms the groundwork of their dogmatism.¹ How important was the principle thus introduced into the fabric of European thought, is evident to every student of the history of philosophy. It is enough in this place to point out to what extent it has influenced our language through such words as entity, existence, essence. The Eleatics may claim as their own coinage the title of all metaphysics—Ontology, or the Science of Being.

In order to make the attitude of these earliest Greek thinkers still more clear, we must return for a moment to Heraclitus, who instituted a polemic against the Eleatic doctrine of Being. He asserted that Being is no more than not-Being. Regarded in itself as an abstraction, a void and hollow concept, sublimated from language and robbed of the phenomena which give it reality to our percipient intellect, Being turns out to be identical with nothing. The relation of Being to not-Being in Becoming formed the central point of his metaphysic, and was enunciated in the axiom, All is flowing, *πάντα ῥεῖ*. In other words, Heraclitus fixed his mind upon the universe considered as a process, upon the biological and dynamical changes of the natural world, rejecting bare ontology as a sterile ground for speculation. He had in him the stuff of Bruno and of Hegel. Though the Heraclitean polemic was directed against the school at large, it would be in the last degree inaccurate to treat the Eleatic doctrine, as maintained by Xenophanes, Parmenides, Zeno, and Melissus, from the point of view of one consistent system. By so doing not only would the truth of history be violated, but one of the most valuable examples of the growth of thought in Greece would be lost.

Xenophanes, who is regarded as the founder of the school, was a

¹ The word *ἐστί* is the third person singular of the present tense of the verb "to be." It predicates, by the force inherent in its simple affirmation, the existence and objective actuality of those things to which we apply it. The mind, by continually using this term, is continually asserting to itself a belief in reality.

native of Colophon. He left his fatherland, and spent the greater portion of his life in Sicily and Magna Græcia. We hear of him first at Messana, then at Catana; and there is good reason to believe that he visited the Phocæan colony of Elea (afterwards Velia) on the western coast of Calabria, a little to the south of Pæstum. At all events antiquity spoke of him as the father of philosophy at Elea, and Diogenes Laertius mentions a poem of two thousand hexameters which he composed in joint praise of this city and Colophon. Xenophanes lived to a great age. In a couplet preserved from one of his elegies he speaks of having wandered, absorbed in thought and contemplation, for sixty-seven years through Hellas, and fixes twenty-five years as the age at which he began his travels. He was celebrated, like his fellow-countryman, Mimnermus, for his elegiac poetry, some fragments of which are among the most valuable relics we possess of that species of composition. About 538 B.C. is the date usually assigned to him.

The starting-point of philosophy for Xenophanes was found in theology. "Looking up to universal heaven," says Aristotle, "he proclaimed that unity is God." The largest fragment of his metaphysical poem consists of a polemic against Polytheism, both as regards the anthropomorphic conception of deity prevalent in Greece, and also as regards the immorality attributed by Homer and Hesiod to the gods. His own God is a sublime abstraction of mind, one and indivisible, without motion, without beginning or ending, in no way like to man. To the divine unity he attributed senses, thought, and volition; but he does not appear to have attempted to connect God with the universe. Like the other speculators of his age and nation, he theoretically deduced the world from simple elements, choosing earth and water, as we gather from some fragments of his poem, for the primordial constituents. At the same time he held a doctrine which afterwards became the central point of Eleatic science. This was a disbelief in the evidence of the senses, a despair of empirical knowledge, which contrasts singularly with his own vehement dogmatism upon the nature of the Divine Being. Thus the originality of Xenophanes consisted in his pronouncing, without proof, that the universe must be regarded as an unity, and that this unity is the Divine Existence, all human mythology being but dreams and delusions. Of his philosophical poem only inconsiderable portions have been preserved. These, however, are sufficient to make clear the line he took, both in his assertion of monotheism and his polemic against the anthropomorphic theology of the Greeks. Such as they are, I have translated them as follows: ¹—

¹ In my translations of the fragments of Xenophanes and Parmenides I have followed the text of their most recent editor, W. A. Mullach, not without reference, however, to that of Karsten, some of whose emendations seem almost necessary to the sense. The meaning of many Parmenidean sentences may, however, be fairly said to be now irrecoverable, owing to the uncertainty of readings and the lack of context.

“ One god there is, among gods and men the greatest, neither in body like to mortals, nor in mind.

“ With the whole of him he sees, with the whole of him he thinks, with the whole of him he hears.

“ Without exertion, by energy of mind he sways the universe of things.

“ That he abides for ever in the same state, without movement, or change from place to place, is evident.

“ But mortals fancy that gods come into being like themselves, and have their senses, voice, and body. But, of a truth, if oxen or lions had hands, and could draw with their hands, and make what men make, then horses like unto horses, and oxen like unto oxen, would both paint the images of gods, and shape their bodies also after the similitude of their own limbs.

“ Homer and Hesiod attributed to gods everything that is disgraceful and blameworthy among men, and very many lawless deeds of gods they recorded—theft, adultery, and mutual deceit.”

Another set of scattered fragments, small in number and meagre in their information, from the poem by Xenophanes on *φύσις* (or the natural scheme of things), show that he held the views afterwards developed by Parmenides concerning the uncertainty of human opinion, and that the elemental substances which he favoured in his cosmogonical theory were earth and water. These also I have translated:—

“ For all of us from earth and water sprang.

“ Earth and water are all things that come into being and have birth.

“ The spring of water is the sea.

“ This upper surface of the earth beneath our feet is open to the sight, and borders on the air; but the lower parts reach down into infinity.

“ What we call Iris, that also is a cloud, purple-dark, scarlet-bright, yellow-pale to look upon.

“ The very truth itself no man who hath been or will be can know concerning gods and all whereof I speak; for though he publish the most absolute, yet even so he does not know: opinion is supreme o'er all things.

“ These things are matters of opinion, shadows of the truth.

“ Not from the beginning did gods reveal all things to mortals; but in course of time by seeking they make progress in discovery.”

The essential weakness of the Eleatic way of thinking was not glaringly apparent, though implicit, in the utterance of Xenophanes. This consisted in the unreconciled antithesis between the world of unity, of true being, of rational thought, and the world of multiplicity, of phenomenal appearance, of opinion. By pushing the tenets of his master to their logical conclusions, and by exchanging theological for metaphysical phraseology, Parmenides, the greatest teacher of the school, exposed the fatal insufficiency of Eleatic dualism. At the same time he achieved an ever-memorable triumph in philosophy by forcing the problem of essential reality upon the earliest Greek speculators, and by defining the battle-ground of future ontological controversy.

Parmenides, a native of Elea, who flourished about the year 503, enjoyed a reputation in his native city scarcely inferior to that of Pythagoras at Crotona, of Empedocles at Acragas, or of Solon at Athens. Speusippus, quoted by Diogenes Laertius, asserts that the

magistrates of Elea were yearly sworn to observe the laws enacted by Parmenides. Cebes talks about a "Pythagorean or Parmenidean mode of life," as if the austere ascesis of the Samian philosopher had been adopted or imitated by the Eleatic. Indeed, there is good reason to suppose that Parmenides held intercourse with members of the Pythagorean sect, his neighbours in the south of Italy. Diogenes Laertius relates that he was united in the bonds of closest friendship to Ameinias and Diochætes, two Pythagoreans. Of these the latter was a poor man, but excellent in breeding and in character; Parmenides so loved him and respected him that, when he died, he dedicated a hero's chapel to his memory. The philosophers of this period in Greece, as might be proved abundantly, were no mere students, but men of action and political importance. Their reputation for superior wisdom caused them to be consulted in affairs of state, and to be deferred to in matters of constitutional legislation. Some of them, like Thales, Anaximander, and Empedocles, were employed on works of public utility. Others, like Pythagoras, remodelled the society of cities, or, like Anaxagoras, through their influence with public men and rulers, raised the tone of politics around them. All of them devoted a large portion of their time and attention to the study of public questions. It was this kind of prestige, we may conjecture, which, in the next phase of Greek thought, threw so much power into the hands of sophists, and which finally encouraged Plato in his theory that those states would be best governed where the sages were the rulers.

Of Parmenides himself some precious notices have been preserved by Plato. It appears that the great Eleatic teacher visited Athens in his old age. Socrates was a young man at the period of this visit; and Plato, whether inventing an occasion for their meeting or relying on actual tradition, brings them into conversation. In the prelude to the dialogue *Parmenides* we read: ¹—

"He told us that Pythodorus had described to him the appearance of Parmenides and Zeno; they came to Athens, he said, at the great Panathenæa; the former was, at the time of his visit, about sixty-five years old, very white with age, but well-favoured. Zeno was nearly forty years of age, of a noble figure and fair aspect; and in the days of his youth he was reported to have been beloved of Parmenides. He said that they lodged with Pythodorus in the Ceramicus, outside the wall, whither Socrates and others came to see them; they wanted to hear some writings of Zeno, which had been brought to Athens by them for the first time. He said that Socrates was then very young, and that Zeno read them to him in the absence of Parmenides, and had nearly finished when Pythodorus entered, and with him Parmenides and Aristoteles, who was afterwards one of the Thirty; there was not much more to hear, and Pythodorus had heard Zeno repeat them before."

The *Theætetus* contains another allusion to Parmenides, which proves in what reverence the old philosopher was held by Socrates:—

"My reason is that I have a kind of reverence, not so much for Melissus and the others, who say that 'all is one and at rest,' as for the great leader himself, Par-

¹ This and the two following translations from Plato are Professor Jowett's.

menides, venerable and awful, as in Homeric language he may be called—him I should be ashamed to approach in a spirit unworthy of him. I met him when he was an old man and I was a mere youth, and he appeared to me to have a glorious depth of mind. And I am afraid that we may not understand his language, and may fall short even more of his meaning.”

Finally, in the *Sophistes* a passing allusion to the same event is put into the mouth of Socrates: “I remember hearing Parmenides use the latter of the two methods, when I was a young man, and he was far advanced in years, in a very noble discussion.” These notices of the Eleatic sage, we feel, are not in any sense accidental. Plato has introduced them in important moments of his three most studied dialogues upon those very points which occupied the mind of Parmenides, and by the elaboration of which he made his greatest contribution to philosophy. The problems of knowledge and of the relation of the phenomenal universe to real existence were for the first time methodically treated in the school of Elea. Their solution in the theory of Ideas was the main object of Plato’s philosophical activity.

The unity asserted by Xenophanes gave its motto to the Eleatic school; *ἓν τὰ πάντα* (one is the whole complex of things) became their watchword. Parmenides, however, abstracted from this unity all theological attributes. Plain existence, obtained apparently by divesting thought of all qualifications derived from sensation and imagination, and regarding it in primitive and abstract nakedness or nothingness, was the only positive condition which he left to the principle of Being; and though he seems to have identified this Being with Thought, we must be careful not to be misled by modern analogies into fancying that his *ἀρχή* involved a purely intellectual idealism. Nor, again, can we regard it as the totality of things presented to the senses; the most earnest polemic of the philosopher is directed against this view. The Unity, the Being, of Parmenides, was in truth the barest metaphysical abstraction, deduced, we are tempted to believe, in the first instance from a simple observation of language, and yet, when formed, not wholly purged from corporeity. Being is proved by the word *ἔστι*. The singular number indicates the unity of the subject; the present tense proves its eternity, for it neither asserts a *has been* nor a *will be*, but an everlasting *is*. Its antithesis Not-Being is impossible and inconceivable; *οὐκ ἔστι* (it is *not*). Completing his conception of Being as the sole reality, and carrying out the arguments attributed by Aristotle to his master,¹ Parmenides shows that the eternal One is indivisible, immovable, continuous, homogeneous, absolutely self-identical, beyond the reach of birth, or change, or dissolution. Furthermore it is finite and spheroid. In rounding and completing his notion of the Unity of Being, Parmenides seems at this point to have passed into the region of geometrical abstractions. The sphere of mathematics requires to be circumscribed by a superficies equidistant at all points from the centre. These conditions of perfection

¹ See the treatise, *De Xenophane, Zenone, et Gorgia*.

Parmenides attributed to Being, forgetting that the finite sphere thus conceived by him implied, by a necessity of human thought, a beyond against which it should be defined. At the same time, this geometrical analogy prevents us from assuming that the further identification of Being with Thought excluded a concrete and almost material conception of the Ens.

As opposed to this unique ἀρχή (principle or element), the sole and universal reality, which can only be apprehended by the reason, and which is eternally and continuously One, Parmenides places the totality of phenomena, multiplex, diverse, subject to birth, change, division, dissolution, motion. These, he asserts, are non-existent, the illusions of the senses, mere names, the vague and unreal dream-world of impotent mortals. Not having advanced in his analysis of thought beyond the first category of Being, he felt obliged to abandon the multiplicity of things as hopeless and unthinkable. Yet he cannot deny their phenomenal existence; there they are, deceiving the sage and the simple man alike: experience asserts them; language and the opinion of humanity take them for granted as realities. Parmenides feels bound to offer an explanation of this cosmos of illusion, this many-formed and many-coloured mirage. His teaching consequently contains a paradox deeply embedded in its very substance. Having first expounded the law of absolute truth, he proceeds to render a grave and meditated account of error. Having demonstrated the sole existence of abstract Being, he turns a page and begins to discourse like any physicist of his age in Greece, concerning Light and Night, Hot and Cold, Fire and Earth, Active and Passive, Male and Female, Rare and Dense. By a singular irony of fate it was precisely for this portion of his teaching that he received the praise of Bacon in the *Novum Organum*. To connect the doctrine of Being, τὰ πρὸς ἀλήθειαν (things that tend toward truth, the philosophy of truth), and the doctrine of Appearance, τὰ πρὸς δόξαν (things that lead toward opinion, the philosophy of opinion), was beyond his power. It was what Plato afterwards attempted in his theory of ideas, and Aristotle in the theory of forms and matter (εἶδη and ὕλη). Parmenides himself seems to have regarded man as a part of the cosmos, subject to its phantasmagoric changes and illusions, yet capable of comprehending that, while the substratum of Being is alone immutable, real, and one, all else is shifting, non-existent, and many. Neglect, he says, the object of sense, the plurality of things obedient to change, and you will arrive at the object of reason, the unity that alters not and can be only apprehended by thought. Yet, while on the one hand he did not disdain to theorise the universe of sense, so, on the other hand, as already hinted, he had not arrived at the point of abstracting corporeity from Being. To do this from his point of view was indeed impossible. Having posited pure being as the sole reality, he was obliged to form a figurative presentation of it to his mind. A new stage had to be accomplished by human thought before the intellect could fairly

grapple with the problems nakedly and paradoxically propounded by the sage of Elea.

From the immense importance attached by Parmenides to the verb *ἔστι*, and from his assertion that men deal with names and not with realities, it followed that to his metaphysical teaching a logical set of corollaries had to be appended. To construct these was the task of Zeno, his beloved pupil and authorised successor. Zeno undertook to maintain the Parmenidean Unity, both against the vulgar evidence of the senses and also against philosophers who, like Heraclitus, directed their attention to the flux and multiplicity of things. His method was, not to prove the necessity of unity at rest, but to demonstrate the contradictions involved in the ideas of plurality and motion. The intellectual difficulties implied in the divisibility of time and space and matter were developed by Zeno with a force and subtlety that justified Aristotle in calling him the founder of dialectic. His logic, however, was but the expansion of positions implicit in Xenophanes and clearly indicated by Parmenides. How the Eleatic arguments, as further handled by Melissus, helped the Sophists, and influenced the school of Megara, who went so far as to refuse any but identical propositions, are matters that belong to another chapter of Greek history. So, too, is Plato's attempt to resolve the antinomies revealed in human thought by the polemic of his predecessors. Enough has now been said to serve as preface to the following version of the fragments of Parmenides.

His poem—for, strange as it must always seem, Parmenides committed the exposition of his austere abstract and argumentative doctrine to hexameters—begins with an epical allegory. He feigns to have been drawn by horses on a chariot to the house of Truth: the horses may, perhaps, be taken, as in Plato's vision of the *Phædrus*, to symbolise faculties of the soul; and the gates of Truth open upon two roads—one called the way of night, or error; the other of light, or real knowledge. The goddess who dwells here, divine Sophia, instructs him equally in the lore of truth and of opinion and makes no attempt, as will be seen from her own words, to conceal the futility of the second part of her discourse. From a literary point of view the poem has no merit. Even the exordium is stiff and tame. It begins thus:—

“The steeds which bear me, and have brought me to the bounds of my desire, since they drew and carried me into the way renowned of Her who leads the wise man to all knowledge—on that road I journeyed, on that road they bore me, those steeds of thought that whirl the car along. But maidens showed the way, sun-born maids, who left the halls of gloom and brought us to the light, withdrawing with their fingers from their brows the veils. And the axle in the socket made a whistling sound, glowing as by two round wheels on either side it ran, while the steeds drove the car swiftly on. There are the gates which open on the paths of Night and Day. A lintel shuts them in above, and a floor of stone beneath; but the airy space they close is fastened with huge doors, which Justice the avenger locks or unlocks by the key she holds. Her did the maidens sue with gentle words, and wisely won her to draw for them the bolted barrier from the gates. The gates

flew open, and the doors yawned wide, back rolling in the sockets their brazen hinges wrought with clasps and nails. Straight through the portal drove the maidens car and horses on the broad highway. And me the goddess graciously received; she took my right hand in her hand, and spoke these words, addressing me: 'Child of man, companion of immortal charioteers, that comest drawn by horses to our home, welcome! for thee no evil fate sent forth to travel on this path—far from the track of men indeed it lies—but Right and Justice were thy guides. Thy lot it is all things to learn; both the sure heart of truth that wins assent, and the vain fancies of mortals which have no real ground of faith. Yet these, too, shalt thou learn, since it behoves thee to know all opinions, testing them, and travelling every field of thought.'"

Here the exordium, as we possess it, ends, and we start upon the fragments of the lecture addressed by divine Sophia to the mortal sage. The order and the connection of these fragments are more than doubtful. So much, however, is clear, that they fall into two sections—the first treating of scientific truth, the second of popular opinion. The instrument of knowledge in the one case is the reason; in the other the senses bear confused and untrustworthy witness to phenomena.

"Come now, for I will tell, and do thou hear and keep my words, what are the only ways of inquiry that lead to knowledge. The one which certifies that being is, and that not-being is not, is the pathway of persuasion, for truth follows it. The other which declares that being is not, and that not-being must be, that I affirm is wholly unpersuasive; for neither couldst thou know not-being, since it cannot be got at, nor couldst thou utter it in words, seeing that thought and being are the same.

"To me it is indifferent where I begin, for again to the same point I shall return. It must be that speech and thought are being, for being is, and that not-being is nothing: which things I bid thee ponder. First, keep thy mind from that path of inquiry, then, too, from that on which mortals who know nothing wander in doubt; helplessness sways in their breasts the erring mind; hither and thither are they borne, deaf, yea and blind, in wonderment, confused crowds who fancy being and not-being are the same and not the same; the way of all of them leads backwards."

Some light is thrown upon these fragments by a passage in the *Sophistes* of Plato, where the Eleatic stranger is made to say: "In the days when I was a boy, the great Parmenides protested against this (*i.e.* against asserting the existence of not-being), and to the end of his life he continued to inculcate the same lesson—always repeating, both in verse and out of verse, *Keep your mind from this way of inquiry, for never will you show that not-being is.*" The fragment which immediately follows, if we are right in assuming the continuity and order of its verses, forms the longest portion of the poem extant.

"Never do thou learn to fancy that things that are not, are; but keep thy mind from this path of inquiry; nor let custom force thee to pursue that beaten way, to use blind eyes and sounding ear and tongue, but judge by reason the knotty argument which I declare. One only way of reasoning is left—that being is. Wherein are many signs that it is uncreate and indestructible, whole in itself, unique in kind, immovable and everlasting. It never was, nor will be, since it exists as a simultaneous present, a continuous unity. What origin shall we seek of it? Where and how did it grow? That it arose from not-being I will not suffer thee to say or think, for it cannot be thought or said that being is not. Then, too, what necessity could have forced it to the birth at an earlier or later moment?"

for neither birth nor beginning belongs to being. Wherefore either to be or not to be, is the unconditioned alternative. Nor will the might of proof allow us to believe that anything can spring from being but itself. Therefore the law of truth permits no birth or dissolution in it, no remission of its chains, but holds it firm. This, then, is the point for decision : it is, or it is not. Now we have settled, as necessity obliged, to leave the one path, inconceivable, unnamed, for it is not the true way ; but to affirm, as sure, that being is. How then could being have a future or a past ? If it began to be, or if it is going to be, then it is not ; wherefore birth and death are alike put aside as inconceivable. Nor is it divisible, since it is all homogeneous, in no part more itself than in another, which would prevent its coherence, nor in any part less ; but all is full of being. Wherefore it is one continuous whole, for being draws to being. Immovable within the bounds of its great chains it is, without beginning, without end, since birth and dissolution have moved far away, whom certainty repelled. Eternally the same, in the same state, for and by itself, it abides ; thus fixed and firm it stays, for strong necessity holds it in the chains of limit and clenches it around. Wherefore being cannot be infinite, seeing it lacks nothing ; and if it were, it would lack all.

“ Look now at things which, though absent, are present to the mind. For never shall being from being be sundered so as to lose its continuity by dispersion or recombination.

“ Thought and the object of thought are the same, for without being, in which is affirmation, thou wilt not find thought. For nothing is or will be besides being, since fate hath bound it to remain alone and unmoved, which is named the universe—all things that mortal men held fixed, believing in their truth—birth, and death, to be and not to be, change of place, and variety of colour.

“ Now since the extreme limit of being is defined, the whole is like a well-rounded sphere, of equal radius in all directions, for it may not be less or greater in one part or another. For neither is there not-being to prevent its attaining to equality, nor is it possible that being should in one place be more and in another less than being, since all is inviolably one. For this is certain, that it abides, an equal whole all round, within its limits.

“ Here then I conclude my true discourse and meditation upon Truth. Turn now and learn the opinions of men, listening to the deceptive order of my words.”

The divine Sophia calls the speech which she is about to utter deceptive (*ἀπατηλόν*), because it has to do no longer with the immutable and imperturbable laws of entity, but only with the delusions to which the human mind is exposed by the evidence of the senses. If Parmenides had been in any true sense of the word a poet, he would not have subjected Sophia to the ridicule of condemning her own observations, when he might have invented some other machinery for the conveyance of his physical hypothesis. Nothing, in fact, can be more artistically monstrous than to put lies into the mouth of Truth personified. The fragments of this portion of his poem may, in spite of their scientific worthlessness, be translated, if only for the sake of completeness. We must suppose, therefore, that Wisdom has resumed her parable, and is speaking as follows :—

“ Two forms have they determined by their minds to name, for those are wrong who take but one of these. Corporeally and by signs they have distinguished them, setting on the one side fire, ethereal, gentle, very subtle, everywhere identical, but different from the other element. That, too, is self-identical, diverse from fire, dark night, a thick and weighty body. Of these I will reveal to you the whole disposition, as it appears, so that no thought of mortals may ever elude you.

“ Now, seeing that all things are called by the name of light and night, and

the qualities that severally pertain to them, the universe is full of light and murky night, rivals equally balanced, since neither partakes of the other.

"For the narrower spheres have been fashioned of impure fire; those next of night, interpenetrated by a portion of flame; and in the midst of all is the goddess who controls the whole. For everywhere she is the cause of dire parturition and procreation, making female mix with male, and male with female."

At this point in the murky exposition there shines forth a single line, which, seized upon by poets and poetic souls in after years, traverses the dismal waste of false physics and imperfect metaphysics like a streak of inspiration—"fair as a star when only one is shining in the sky."

"Love, first of all the gods, she formed.

"Thou, too, shalt know the nature of ether, and in ether all the signs, and the hidden acts of the bright sun's pure lamp, and whence they sprang; and thou shalt learn the revolutions of the round-eyed moon, and whence she is; and thou shalt understand the all-surrounding heaven, whence it arose, and how fate ruling it bound it to keep the limits of the stars.

"How earth and sun and moon and ether shared by all, and the galaxy and farthest Olympus, and the hot might of stars sprang into being.

"Another light that shines in revolution round the earth by night.

"For ever gazing at the radiant sun.

"For as the elements are mixed in the jointed framework of our limbs, so are the minds of men made up. For the nature of the members is the same as that which thinks in the case of all and each; it is mind that rules.

"From the right side boys, from the left girls.

"Thus, according to opinion, were born and now are these things: and afterwards, when they have grown to the full, will perish: whereto men have affixed, unto each, a name."

It is only by a complete translation of the extant fragments of Parmenides that any notion can be formed of the hiatus between what he chose to call truth, and what he termed opinion. As a thinker, he revealed both the weakness of his metaphysical system and the sincerity of his intention by proclaiming this abrupt division between the realm of the pure reason and the field of the senses, without attempting a synthesis. No other speculator has betrayed the vanity of dogmatism about the Absolute more conclusively by the simultaneous presentation of lame guesses in the region of the Relative. The impartial student of his verse is forced to the conclusion that the titles (*τὰ πρὸς ἀλήθειαν* and *τὰ πρὸς δόξαν*) which have been given to the two departments of his exposition, are both arbitrary; for what warrant have we that his intuitions into the nature of pure Being are more certain than his guesses about the conditions of phenomenal existence? Parmenides might indeed be selected as a parable of the human mind pretending to a knowledge of the unconditioned truth, and after all arriving at nothing more cogent than opinion. The innumerable ontological assertions, which in the pride of the speculative reason have been made by men, are *δόξαι* (opinions), and the epigram pointed by Parmenides against the common folk, is equally applicable to his own sect—

Κῶφοι ὁμῶς τυφλοὶ τε, τεθηπότες, ἀκριτα φῦλα.

"Deaf, yea and blind, in wonderment, confused tribes."

As soon as men begin to dogmatise, whether the supposed truth to which they pin their faith be the barest metaphysical abstraction, or some assumed intuition into the Divine nature, they create a schism between the multiplicity of the universe and the unity which they proclaim. In other words, they distinguish, like Parmenides, between what they arbitrarily denote as truth and what they cannot account for as phenomena. To quit the sphere of our own mind is impossible ; and therefore nothing can be discovered which is not some mode of the mind. The utmost the metaphysician can do is to describe the operations of the human intellect without explaining its existence, and all systematised knowledge is but a classification of the categories of consciousness. Thus the sophistic position that man is for man the measure of all things is irrefutable. But when he attempts to hypostasise his own thoughts as realities, to argue outward from his conceptions to the universe, this is the same as taking a leap in the dark across an undefined abyss from the only ascertained standing-ground to a hypothetical beyond.

During the two-and-twenty centuries which have elapsed since the days of Parmenides, the philosophers have learned wisdom. They are now too wary to parade the distinction between two kinds of opinion, and to construct one system of truth, another of illusion. They either content themselves with omitting what they regard as the insoluble ; or they endeavour to invent an all-embracing schema, which shall supersede the cruder distinctions between subject and object, mind and nature, ego and non-ego. Yet nothing in the realm of absolute knowledge has been gained in all this space of time.

The owl of Minerva, to quote one of Hegel's most luminous epigrams, still starts upon its flight when the evening twilight, succeeding the day of work, has fallen. Metaphysic goes on shaping from the human consciousness a fabric which it calls reality. Science has magnified and multiplied phenomena until, instead of one, we have in every case a million problems to employ intelligence. Social conditions grow more complex, and more and more is ascertained about the inner life of man. But the fact remains that, while theologian, logician, physicist, and moralist, each from his own standing-point, may cry "Eureka !" we can know nothing in itself. The most complicated system, created by the Aristotle of the modern world, involves at the outset an assumption. From reflection on the laws of human thought, on the varied acquisitions of the human mind, and on the successive phases of human history, it carries over the synthetic statement of its conclusions to the account of the universe. In other words, it postulates the identity of the human and the Divine mind, and ends by asserting that thought is the only reality. Does not a fallacy lie in this, that while the mind possesses the faculty of reflecting upon itself, everything which it knows is of necessity expressed in terms of itself, and therefore in pretending to give an account of the universe it is only giving an account of its own operations ? The philosophy of the

Idea is thus a way of looking at things ; to explain them or deduce them is beyond its reach. How, for example, except by exercise of faith, by dogmatism and initial begging of the question, can we be assured that an intelligence differently constituted from the human mind should not cognise a different *κόσμος νοητός* or intelligible world, and be equally justified in claiming to have arrived at Truth ? It is comparatively easy to acquire encyclopædic knowledge, to construct a system, to call the keystone of the system the *Idea*, and to assert that the *Idea* is God. But is all this of any value except as a machine for arranging and formulating thoughts and opinions ? At the end of philosophies one feels tempted to exclaim :—

“ I heard what was said of the universe,
Heard it and heard it of several thousand years :
It is middling well as far as it goes,—But is that all ? ”

CHAPTER VII

EMPEDOCLES

The Grandeur of his Fame—His Versatility of Genius—His Self-exaltation—His Mysticism—His supposed Miracles—Legends about his Death—His Political Action—His Poems—Estimation in which the Ancients held them—Their Prophetic Fervour—Belief in Metempsychosis—Purifying Rites—Contempt for the Knowledge of the Senses—Physical Theories—The Poem on Nature—The Four Elements—The Sphærus—Love and Discord—The Eclecticism of Empedocles.

THE figure of Empedocles of Agrigentum, when seen across the twenty-three centuries which separate us from him, presents perhaps a more romantic appearance than that of any other Greek philosopher. This is owing in great measure to the fables which invest his life and death with mystery, to his reputation for magical power, and to the wild sublimity of his poetic utterances. Yet, even in his lifetime, and among contemporary Greeks, he swept the stage of the world like a great tragic actor, and left to posterity the fame of genius as poet, physician, patriot, and sage. The well-known verses of Lucretius suffice to prove that the glory of Empedocles increased with age, and bore the test of time. Reading them, we cannot but regret that poems which so stirred the reverent enthusiasm of Rome's loftiest singer have been scattered to the winds, and that what we now possess of their remains affords but a poor sample of their unimpaired magnificence.

Nothing is more remarkable about Empedocles than his versatility and comprehensiveness. Other men of his age were as nobly born, as great in philosophic power, as distinguished for the part they bore in politics, as celebrated for poetic genius, as versed in mystic lore, in medicine, and in magic arts. But Parmenides, Pythagoras, Pausanias, and Epimenides could claim honour in but one, or two at most, of these departments. Empedocles united all, and that too, if we may judge by the temper of his genius and the few legends handed down to us about his life, in no ordinary degree. He seems to have possessed a warmth and richness of nature which inclined him to mysticism and poetry, and gave a tone of peculiar solemnity to everything he did,

or thought, or said. At the same time, he was attracted by the acuteness of his intellect to the metaphysical inquiries which were agitating the western colonies of Greece, while his rare powers of observation enabled him to make discoveries in the then almost unexplored region of natural science. The age in which he lived had not yet thrown off the form of poetry in philosophical composition. Even Parmenides committed his austere theories to hexameter verse. Therefore, the sage of Agrigentum was easily led to concentrate his splendid powers on the production of one great work, and made himself a poet among philosophers, and a philosopher among poets, without thereby impairing his claims to rank highly both as a poet and also as a thinker among the most distinguished men of Greece. But Empedocles had not only deeply studied metaphysics, nature, and the arts of verse; whatever was mysterious in the world around him, in the guesses of past ages, and in the forebodings of his own heart, possessed a powerful attraction for the man who thought himself inspired of God. Having embraced the Pythagorean theories, he maintained the fallen state of men, and implored his fellow-creatures to purge away the guilt by which they had been disinherited and exiled from the joys of heaven. Thus he appeared before his countrymen not only as a poet and philosopher, but also as a priest and purifier. Born of a wealthy and illustrious house, he did not expend his substance merely on horse-racing and chariots, by which means of display his ancestors had gained a princely fame in Sicily; but, not less proud than they had been, he shod himself with golden sandals, set the laurel crown upon his head, and, trailing robes of Tyrian purple through the streets of Agrigentum, went attended by a crowd of serving-men and reverent admirers. He claimed to be a favourite of Phœbus, and rose at length to the pretension of divinity. His own words show this, gravely spoken, with no vain assumption, but with a certainty of honour well deserved:—

“Friends who dwell in the great city hard by the yellow stream of Acragas, who live on the Acropolis, intent on honourable cares, harbours revered of strangers, ignorant of what is vile; welcome: but I appear before you an immortal god, having overpassed the limits of mortality, and walk with honour among all, as is my due, crowned with long fillets and luxuriant garlands. No sooner do I enter their proud prosperous cities than men and women pay me reverence, who follow me in thousands, asking the way to profit, some desiring oracles, and others racked by long and cruel torments, hanging on my lips to hear the spells that pacify disease of every kind.”

We can hardly wonder that some of the fellow-citizens of Empedocles were jealous of his pretensions, and regarded him with suspicious envy and dislike, when we read such lines of lofty self-exaltation. Indeed, it is difficult for men of the nineteenth century to understand how a great and wise philosopher could lay claim to divine honours in his own lifetime. This arrogance we have been accustomed to associate with the names of a Caligula and a Claudius. Yet when we consider the circumstances in which Empedocles was placed, and the nature of his theories, our astonishment diminishes. The line of demarcation

between this world and the supernatural was then but vague and undetermined. Popular theology abounded in legends of gods who had held familiar intercourse with men, and of men who had been raised by prowess or wisdom to divinity. The pedigrees of all distinguished families ended in a god at no great distance. Nor was it then a mere figure of speech when bards and priests claimed special revelations from Apollo, or physicians styled themselves the children of Asclepius. Heaven lay around the first Greeks in their infancy of art and science; it was long before the vision died away and faded into the sober daylight of Aristotelian philosophy. Thus when Empedocles proclaimed himself a god, he only stretched beyond the usual limit a most common pretension of all men learned in arts and sciences. His own speculations gave him further warrant for the assumption of the style of deity. For he held the belief that all living souls had once been demons or divine spirits, who had lost their heavenly birth-right for some crime of impurity or violence, and yet were able to restore themselves to pristine splendour by the rigorous exercise of abstinence and expiatory rites. These rites he thought he had discovered; he had prayed and fasted; he had held communion with Phœbus the purifier, and received the special favour of that god, by being made a master in the arts of song, and magic, and healing, and priestcraft. Was he not therefore justified in saying that he had won again his rights divine, and transformed himself into a god on earth? His own words tell the history of his fall:—

“Woe to me that I did not fall a prey to death before I took the cursed food within my lips! . . . From what glory, from what immeasurable bliss, have I now sunk to roam with mortals on this earth?”

Again, he says—

“For I have been in bygone times a youth, a maiden, and a flowering shrub, a bird, yea, and a fish that swims in silence the deep sea.”

From this degraded state the spirit gradually emerges. Of the noblest souls he says:—

“Among beasts they become lions dwelling in caverns of the earth upon the hills, and laurels among leafy trees, . . . and at last prophets, and bards, and physicians, and chiefs among the men of earth, from whence they rise to be gods supreme in honour, . . . sitting at banquets with immortal comrades, in their feasts unvisited by human cares, beyond the reach of fate and wearing age.”

Empedocles, by dint of pondering on nature, by long penance, by the illumination of his intellect and the coercion of his senses, had been raised before the natural term of life to that high honour, and been made the fellow of immortal gods. His language upon this topic is one of the points in which we can trace an indistinct resemblance between him and some of the Indian mystics. There is, however, no reason to suppose that Asiatic thought had any marked or direct influence on Greek philosophy. It is better to refer such similarities to the working of the same tendencies in the Greek and Hindu minds.

To those who disbelieved his words he showed the mighty works which he had wrought. Empedocles, during his lifetime, was known to have achieved marvels, such as only supernatural powers could compass. More than common sagacity and ingenuity in the treatment of natural diseases, or in the removal of obstacles to national prosperity, were easily regarded by the simple people of those times as the evidence of divine authority. Empedocles had devised means for protecting the citizens of Agrigentum from the fury of destructive winds. What these means were, we do not know ; but he received in consequence the title of *κωλυσανέμας*, or "warder-off of winds." Again, he resuscitated, from the very jaws of death, a woman who lay senseless and unable to breathe, long after all physicians had despaired of curing her. This entitled him to be regarded as a master of the keys of life and death ; nor did he fail to attribute his own power to the virtue of supernatural spells. But the greatest of his achievements was the deliverance which he wrought for the people of Selinus from a grievous pestilence. It seems that some exhalations from a marsh having caused this plague, Empedocles, at his own cost, cut a channel for two rivers through the fen, and purged away the fetid vapours. A short time after the cessation of the sickness, Empedocles, attired in tragic state, appeared before the Selinuntians at a banquet. His tall and stately figure wore the priestly robe ; his brazen sandals rang upon the marble as he slowly moved with front benign and solemn eyes ; beneath the sacrificial chaplet flowed his long Phœbean locks, and in his hand he bore a branch of bay. The nobles of Selinus rose ; the banquet ceased ; all did him reverence, and hailed him as a god, deliverer of their city, friend of Phœbus, intercessor between angry Heaven and suffering men.

Closely connected with his claim to divinity was the position which Empedocles assumed as an enchanter. Gorgias, his pupil, asserts that he often saw him at the magic rites. Nor are we to suppose that this wizardry was a popular misinterpretation of his real power as a physician and philosopher. It is far more probable that Empedocles himself believed in the potency of incantations, and delighted in the ceremonies and mysterious songs by which the dead were recalled from Hades, and secrets of the other world wrung from unwilling fate. We can form to ourselves a picture of this stately and magnificent enchanter, convinced of his own supernatural ascendancy, and animated by the wild enthusiasm of his ardent nature, alone among the mountains of Girgenti, or by the seashore, invoking the elemental deities to aid his conjurations, and ascribing the forebodings of his own poetic spirit to external inspiration or the voice of gods. In solitary meditations he had wrought out a theory of the world, and had conceived the notion of a spiritual God, one and unseen, pure intellect, an everlasting omnipresent power, to whom might be referred those natural remedies that stopped the plague, or cured the sick, or found new channels for the streams. The early Greek philosophers were fond of attributing to some "common wisdom" of the world, some animating

soul or universal intellect, the arts and intuitions to which they had themselves attained. Therefore, with this belief predominating in his mind, it is not strange that he should have trusted to the divine efficacy of his own spells, and have regarded the results of observation as a kind of supernatural wisdom. To his friend Pausanias the physician he makes these lofty promises, "Thou shalt learn every kind of medicines that avert diseases and the evils of old age. Thou too shalt curb the fury of untiring winds, and when it pleases thee thou shalt reverse thy charms and loose avenging storms. Thou shalt replace black rain-clouds with the timely drought that men desire, and when the summer's arid heat prevails, thou shalt refresh the trees with showers that rustle in the thirsty corn. And thou shalt bring again from Hades the life of a departed man." Like the Pythagoreans whom he followed, he seems to have employed the fascination of music in effecting cures; it is recorded of him that he once arrested the hand of a young man about to slay his father, by chanting to the lyre a solemn soul-subduing strain. The strong belief in himself which Empedocles possessed, inspired him with immense personal influence, so that his looks, and words, and tones went farther than the force of other men. He compelled them to follow and confide in him, like Orpheus, or like those lofty natures which in every age have had the power of leading and controlling others by innate supremacy. That Empedocles tried to exhibit this superiority, and to heighten its effect by gorgeous raiment and profuse expenditure, by public ceremonies and mysterious modes of life, we need not doubt. There was much of the spirit of Paracelsus in Empedocles, and vanity impaired the simple grandeur of his genius. In every age of the world's history there have been some such men—men in whom the highest intellectual gifts are blent with weakness inclining them to superstitious juggleries. Not content with their philosophical pretensions, or with poetical renown, they seek a more mysterious fame, and mix the pure gold of their reason with the dross of idle fancy. Their very weakness adds a glow of colour, which we miss in the whiter light of more purely scientific intellects. They are men in whom two natures cross—the poet and the philosopher, the mountebank and the seer, the divine and the fortune-teller, the rigorous analyst and the retailer of old wives' tales. But none have equalled Empedocles, in whose capacious idiosyncrasy the most opposite qualities found ample room for coexistence, who sincerely claimed the supernatural faculties which Paracelsus must have only half believed, and who lived at a time when poetry and fact were indistinguishably mingled, and when the world was still absorbed in dreams of a past golden age, and in rich foreshadowings of a boundless future.

We are not, therefore, surprised to read the fantastic legends which involve his death in a mystery. Whatever ground of fact they may possess, they are wholly consistent with the picture we have formed to ourselves of the philosopher, and prove at least the superstition

which had gathered round his name. One of these legends has served all ages as a moral for the futility of human designs, and for the just reward of inordinate vanity. Every one who knows the name of Empedocles has heard that, having jumped into Etna in order to conceal the time and manner of his death, and thus to establish his divinity, fate frustrated his schemes by casting up his brazen slippers on the crater's edge. According to another legend, which resembles that of the death of Romulus, of Œdipus, and other divinised heroes, Empedocles is related to have formed one of a party of eighty men who assembled to celebrate by sacrifice his restoration of the dying woman. After their banquet they retired to sleep. But Empedocles remained in his seat at table. When morning broke, Empedocles was nowhere to be found. In reply to the question of his friends, some one asserted that he had heard a loud voice calling on Empedocles at midnight, and that, starting up, he saw a light from heaven and burning torches. Pausanias, who was present at the sacrificial feast, sent far and wide to inquire for his friend, wishing to test the truth of this report. But piety restrained his search, and he was secretly informed by heavenly messengers that Empedocles had won what he had sought, and that divine honours should be paid to him. This story rests on the authority of Heraclides Ponticus, who professed to have obtained it from Pausanias. The one legend we may regard as the coinage of his foes, the other as a myth created by the superstitious admiration of his friends.

We have hitherto regarded Empedocles more in his private and priestly character than as a citizen. Yet it was not to be expected that a man so nobly born, and so remarkable for intellectual power, should play no public part in his native state. A Greek could hardly avoid meddling with politics, even if he wished to do so, and Empedocles was not one to hide his genius in the comparative obscurity of private life. While he was still a young man, Theron, the wise tyrant of Agrigentum, died, and a powerful aristocracy endeavoured to enslave the state. Empedocles manfully resisted them, supporting the liberal cause with vehemence, and winning so much popular applause that he is even reported to have received and refused the offer of the kingly power. By these means he made himself many foes among the nobility of Agrigentum; it is also probable that suspicion attached to him for trying to establish in his native city the Pythagorean commonwealth, which had been extirpated in South Italy. That he loved spiritual dominion we have seen; and this he might have hoped to acquire more easily by taking the intellectual lead among citizens of equal rights, than by throwing in his lot with the aristocratic party, or by exposing himself to the dangers and absorbing cares of a Greek tyrant. At any rate, it is recorded that he impeached and procured the execution of the leaders of the aristocracy; thus rescuing the liberty of his nation at the expense of his own security. After a visit to Peloponnesus Empedocles returned to Agrigentum, but was soon obliged to

quit his home again by the animosity of his political enemies. Where he spent the last years of his life, and died, remains uncertain.

It remains to estimate the poetical and philosophical renown of Empedocles. That his genius was highly valued among the ancients appears manifest from the panegyric of Lucretius. Nor did he fail to exhibit the versatility of his powers in every branch of poetical composition. Diogenes Laertius affirms that forty-three tragedies bearing his name were known to Hieronymus, from whom he drew materials for the life of Empedocles. Whether these tragedies were really written by the philosopher, or by another Sicilian of the same name, admits of doubt. But there is no reason why an author, possessed of such varied and distinguished talents as Empedocles, should not have tried this species of composition. Xenophanes is said to have composed tragedies; and Plato's youthful efforts would, we fondly imagine, have afforded the world fresh proofs of his commanding genius, had they escaped the flames to which they were condemned by his maturer judgment. No fragments of the tragedies of Empedocles survive; they probably belonged to the class of semi-dithyrambic compositions, which prevailed at Athens before the days of Æschylus, and which continued to be cultivated in Sicily. Some of the lyrical plays of the Italians—such, for instance, as the *Orfeo* of Poliziano—may enable us to form an idea of these simple dramas. After the tragedies, Diogenes makes mention of political poems. These may be referred to the period of the early manhood of Empedocles, when he was engaged in combat with the domineering aristocracy, and when he might have sought to spread his liberal principles through the medium of gnomic elegies, like those of Solon or Theognis. The fragments of the *καθαρμοί*, or poem on lustral rites, sufficiently display his style of earnest and imperious exhortation to make us believe that at a time of political contention he would not spare this powerful instrument of persuasion and attack. In the next place, we hear of an epic poem on the invasion of Greece by Xerxes, which Empedocles is said to have left unfinished, and which his sister or his daughter burned with other papers at his death. The great defeat of the Medes took place while Empedocles was still a youth. All Hellas had hung with breathless expectation on the event of Marathon and Salamis. The fall of Xerxes brought freedom and relief from terrible anxiety, not only to the towns of Attica and the Peloponnesus, but also to the shores of Sicily and Italy. It is not, therefore, unlikely that the triumph which excited Simonides and Æschylus to the production of masterpieces may have stirred the spirit of the youthful patriot of Agrigentum. Another composition of Empedocles which perished under his sister's hands was a Proemium to Apollo. The loss of this poem is deeply to be regretted. Empedocles regarded himself as specially protected by the god of song and medicine and prophetic insight. His genius would therefore naturally take its highest flight in singing praises to this mighty patron. The hymn to Zeus, which

has been ascribed to Cleanthes, and some of the pseudo-Orphic declamations, may give us an idea of the gravity and enthusiasm which Empedocles would have displayed in treating so stirring a theme. Of his remaining works we possess fragments. The great poem on Nature, the Lustral Precepts, and the Discourse on Medicine, were all celebrated among the ancients. Fortunately, the inductions to the first and second of these have been preserved, and some lines addressed to Pausanias may be regarded as forming the commencement of the third. It is from these fragments, amounting in all to about 470 lines, that we must form our judgment of Empedocles, the poet and the sage.

That Empedocles was a poet of the didactic order is clear from the nature of his subjects. Even as early as the time of Aristotle, critics disputed as to whether poems written for the purpose of scientific instruction deserved the name of poetry. In the *Poetics*, Aristotle says,—*οὐδέν δὲ κοινόν ἐστιν Ὀμήρω καὶ Ἐμπεδοκλεῖ πλὴν τὸ μέτρον· διὸ τὸν μὲν ποιητὴν δίκαιον καλεῖν, τὸν δὲ φυσιόλογον μᾶλλον ἢ ποιητὴν*.¹ The title *φυσιόλογος*, or philosopher of nature, was of course generic, and might have been claimed by Heraclitus, on the strength of his prose writings, no less than by Empedocles. Lucretius, in the exordium to his poem, argues for the utility of disguising scientific precepts under the more attractive form of art; as we sweeten the lips of the vessel that contains bitter medicine, in order to induce the child to take it readily. And not only had Empedocles this reason in his favour for the use of verse, but also, at the age in which he lived, it was still a novelty to write prose at all; nor would it have been consistent with his theories of inspiration, and with the mysticism he professed, to abandon the poetic form of utterance. He therefore thought and wrote hexameters as naturally as the scientific men of the present day think and write their sentences and paragraphs, until the discourse is formed into a perfect whole. Allowing, then, for the subject of his poem, Empedocles was regarded by antiquity as first among the Greek didactic singers, though he competed with Parmenides for this distinction, and was placed upon a level with Lucretius. Lactantius mentions them both together, in his definition of this kind of poetry. And Aristotle, in another treatise, now lost, but quoted by Diogenes, praises the artistic genius of the philosopher in these words: *Καὶ Ὀμηρικὸς ὁ Ἐμπεδοκλῆς καὶ δεινὸς περὶ τὴν φράσιν γέγονε μεταφορικὸς τε ὢν καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις περὶ τὴν ποιητικὴν ἐπιτεύγμασι χρώμενος*.² The epithet *Ὀμηρικὸς* is very just; for not only is it clear that Empedocles had studied the poems of Homer with care, and had imbibed their phraseology, but he also possessed a genius akin to that of Homer in love of sim-

¹ "Between Homer and Empedocles there is nothing in common except their metre: therefore it is right to call the former a poet, the latter a natural philosopher rather than a poet."

² "Empedocles again was Homeric in style, and clever in his use of phrase, for he inclined to metaphor, and employed the other admirable instruments of the poetic art."

plicity, in fidelity to nature, in unimpeded onward flow of energetic verse.

The simile of the girl playing with a water-clock, whereby Empedocles illustrates his theory of respiration, and that of the lantern, which serves to explain his notion of the structure of the eye, are both of them Homeric in their unadorned simplicity and vigour. Again, such epithets as these, *πολυαίματον* (full-blooded) for the liver, *ιλάειρα* (gentle) for the moon, *ὄξυβελής* (quick-darting) for the sun, *πολυστέφανος* (crowned) for majesty, *θεμερῶπις* (grave-visaged) for harmony, and the constant repetition of *θεοὶ δολιχαίωνες τιμῆσι φέριστοι* (the long-aged gods in honour foremost), have the true Homeric ring. Like Homer, he often chooses an epithet specific of the object which he wishes to describe, but not especially suited to the matter of his argument. Thus *πολυκλαύτων γυναικῶν* (women given to tears) occurs when there is no particular reason to fix the mind upon the tearfulness of women. But the poetic value of the passage is increased by the mind being thus carried away from the logical order of ideas to a generality on which it can repose. At other times, when this is necessary, the epithets are as accurately descriptive as those of a botanist or zoologist: *ἐν κόγχαισι θαλασσονόμοις βαρυνώτοις* (in whelks that inhabit the sea with heavy backs) . . . *λιθορῥίνων τε χελωνῶν* (stony-coated tortoises), for example. Again, Empedocles gives rein to his imagination by creating bold metaphors; he calls the flesh *σαρκῶν χιτῶν* (a robe of flesh), and birds *πτεροβάμονας κύμβας* (boats that move with wings). Referring to his four elements, he thus personifies their attributes: "Fiery Zeus, and Herè, source of vital breath, and Aidoneus, and Nestis, with her tears." At another time he speaks of "earth, and ocean with his countless waves, and liquid air, the sun-god and ether girdling round the universe in its embrace."

The passage, too, in which he describes the misery of earth rises to a sublime height. It may well have served as the original of Virgil's celebrated lines in the sixth *Æneid* :—

"I lifted up my voice, I wept and wailed, when I beheld the unfamiliar shore. A hideous shore, on which dwell murder, envy, and the troop of baleful destinies, wasting corruption, and disease. Through Até's meadow they go wandering up and down in gloom. There was the queen of darkness, and Heliopé with her far-searching eyes, and bloody strife, and mild-eyed peace, beauty and ugliness, swiftness and sloth, and lovely truth, and insincerity with darkling brows. Birth too and death, slumber and wakefulness, motion and immobility, crowned majesty and squalid filth, discordant clamour and the voice of gods."

We can understand by these passages how Empedocles not only was compared with Homer by Aristotle, but also with Thucydides and *Æschylus* by Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who speaks of his "austere harmony" (*αὐστηρὰν ἁρμονίαν*). The conciseness of his argumentative passages, the breadth of his treatment, and the dryness of his colouring, to quote the terms of painting, resemble the style of

Thucydides, while his bold figures and gloomy grandeur are like those of Æschylus. Plutarch, in the treatise on the genius of Socrates, speaks of the style of Empedocles at large, both as regards his poems and his theories, as "inspired with dithyrambic ecstasy" (*μᾶλα βεβακχευμένη*). This seems a contradiction to the "austere harmony" of Dionysius. But there are passages which justify the title. This exordium, for instance, savours of prophetic fury :—

"It stands decreed by fate, an ancient ordinance of the immortal gods, established from everlasting, ratified by ample oaths, that, when a spirit of that race, which has inherited the length of years divine, sinfully stains his limbs with blood, he must go forth to wander thrice ten thousand years from heaven, passing from birth to birth through every form of mortal mutability, changing the toilsome paths of life without repose, even as I now roam, exiled from God, an outcast on this world, the bondman of insensate strife.

"Alas, ill-fated race of mortals, thrice accursed ! from what dire struggles and what groans have ye been born ! The air in its anger drives them to the sea, and ocean spues them forth upon the solid land, earth tosses them into the flames of the untiring sun, he flings them back again into the whirlwinds of the air ; from one to the other are they cast, and all abhor them."

And the following adjuration has a frantic energy, to modern readers almost laughable but for its indubitable gravity :—

"Wretches, thrice wretches, keep your hands from beans !"

or, again, with reference to the abomination of animal food :—

"The father drags along his dear son changed in form and slays him, pouring prayers upon his head. But the son goes begging mercy from his maniac sire. The father heeds him not, but goads him on, and, having slaughtered him, prepares a cursed meal. In like manner sons take their fathers, and children their mothers, and tearing out the life devour the kindred flesh. Will ye not put an end to this accursed slaughter ? Will ye not see that ye consume each other in blind ignorance of soul ?"

It is not strange that the poems of Empedocles were pilfered by oracle-mongers in after-ages.

Besides these passages, there are some of a milder beauty which deserve high praise for their admirable power of suggesting the picture that the poet wishes to convey. The following lines describe the golden age of old,—to which Empedocles looked back with melancholy longing :—

"There every animal was tame and familiar with men, both beasts and birds, and mutual love prevailed. Trees flourished with perpetual leaves and fruits, and ample crops adorned their boughs through all the year. Nor had these happy people any Ares or mad Uproar for their god ; nor was their monarch Zeus, or Cronos, or Poseidon, but Queen Cypris. Her favour they besought with pious symbols and with images, and fragrant essences, and censers of pure myrrh, and frankincense, and with brown honey poured upon the ground. The altars did not reek with bullock's gore."

It may sound ridiculous to say so, yet Empedocles resembles Shelley in the quality of his imagination and in many of his utterances. The lines just quoted, the belief in a beneficent universal soul of

nature, the hatred of animal food, the love of all things moving or growing on the face of earth, the sense of ancient misery and present evil, are all, allowing for the difference of centuries, and race, and education, points by which the Greek and the English poets meet in a community of nature. Two more passages illustrative of the poetical genius of Empedocles may be quoted. In the first he describes the nature of God, invisible and omnipresent. In the second he asserts the existence of an universal law. They both are remarkable for simplicity and force, and elevation of style :—

“Blessed is the man who hath obtained the riches of the wisdom of God ; wretched is he who hath a false opinion about things divine.

“He (God) may not be approached, nor can we reach him with our eyes or touch him with our hands. No human head is placed upon his limbs, nor branching arms ; he has no feet to carry him apace, nor other parts of man ; but he is all pure mind, holy, and infinite, darting with swift thought through the universe from end to end.”

“This law binds all alike, and none are free from it ; the common ordinance which all obey prevails through the vast spaces of wide-ruling air and the illimitable fields of light in endless continuity.”

The quotations which have served to illustrate the poetical genius of Empedocles have also exhibited one aspect of his philosophy—that wherein he was connected with the Pythagoreans. It is quite consistent with the whole temper of his intellect that he should have been attracted to the semi-Oriental mysticism which then was widely spread through Grecian Italy and Sicily. After the dissolution of the monastic commonwealth founded by Pythagoras, it is probable that refugees imbued with his social and political theories scattered themselves over the adjacent cities ; and from some of these men Empedocles may have imbibed in early youth the dream-like doctrines of an antenatal life, of future immortality, of past transgression and the need of expiation, of abstinence, and of the bond of fellowship which bound man to his kindred sufferers upon the earth. It is even asserted in one legend that the philosopher of Agrigentum belonged to the Pythagorean Society, and was expelled from it for having been the first to divulge its secrets. In later life these theories were developed by Empedocles after his own fashion, and received a peculiar glow of poetic colouring from his genius. There is no need to suppose that he visited the East and learned the secrets of Gymnosophists. A few Pythagorean seeds sown in his fruitful soil sprang up and bore a hundredfold. Referring to the exordium of his poem on Nature, and to the lines in which he describes the unapproachable Deity, we find that Empedocles believed in a pristine state of happiness, when the “Dæmons,” or “gods, long of life, supreme in honour,” dwelt together, enjoying a society of bliss. Yet this state was not perfect, for some of these immortals stained their hands with blood, and some spoke perjury, and so sin entered in and tainted heaven. After such offence the erring spirit, by the fateful, irrevocable, and perennial law of the

divine commonwealth, had to relinquish his heavenly throne and wander "thirty thousand seasons" apart from his comrades. In this period of exile he passed through all the changes of metempsychosis. According to the rigorous and gloomy conception of Empedocles, this change was caused by the hatred of the elements; earth, air, fire, and water refusing to retain the criminal, and tossing him about from one to the other without intermission. Thus, he might be a plant, a bird, a fish, a beast, or a human being in succession. But the transmigration did not depend upon mere chance. If the tortured spirit, environed, as he was, by the conflicting shapes and contradictory principles and baleful destinies which crowded earth—"the over-vaulted cave," the "gloomy meadow of discord," as Empedocles in his despair described our globe—could yet discover some faint glimmering of the truth, seize and hold fast some portion of the heavenly clue, then he might hope to reascend to bliss. Instead of abiding among birds, and unclean beasts, and common plants, his soul passed into the bodies of noble lions, and mystic bay-trees, or became a bard, a prophet, a ruler among men, and lastly rose again to the enjoyment of undying bliss. Throughout these wanderings death was impossible. Empedocles laughed at the notion of birth and death; he seems to have believed in a fixed number of immortal souls, capable of any transformation, but incapable of perishing. Therefore, when his spirits, falling earthward, howled at the doleful aspect of the hideous land, the very poignancy of their grief consisted in that bitter thought of Dante's, "*questi non hanno speranza di morte*"—in that thought which makes the Buddhist welcome annihilation. It has been already hinted, that although the soul by its forced exile lost not only happiness but also knowledge, yet the one might be in part retrieved, and the other toilsomely built up again in some degree by patient observation, prayer, and magic rites. On this point hinges the philosophy of Empedocles. It is here that his mysticism and his science are united into one system. In like manner, Plato's philosophy rests upon the doctrine of Anamnesis, and is connected with the vision of a past beatitude, the tradition of a miserable fall, and the prospect of a possible restoration. Empedocles, like Parmenides and Xenophanes in their disquisitions on the eternal Being, like Plato in his references to the Supreme Idea, seems to have imagined that the final Essence of the universe was unapproachable, and to have drawn a broad distinction between the rational and sensual orders, between the world as cognisable by pure intellect, and the world as known through the medium of human sense. The lines of Empedocles upon God, which have been already quoted, are similar to those of Xenophanes: both philosophers assert the existence of an unknown Deity pavilioned in dense inscrutability, yet not the less to be regarded as supreme and omnipresent and omnipotent—as God of gods, as life of life. How to connect this intuition with the physical speculations of Empedocles is difficult. The best way seems to be to refrain from identifying his

eloquent description of the unknown God with the Sphærus of his scientific theories, and to believe that he regarded the same universe from different points of view at different times, as if in moments of high exaltation he obtained a glimpse of the illimitable Being by a process of ecstatic illumination, while in more ordinary hours of meditation his understanding and his senses helped him to obtain a knowledge of the actual phenomena of this terrestrial globe. His own language confirms this view of the case :—

“Weak and narrow,” he says, “are the powers implanted in the limbs of men; many the woes that fall on them and blunt the edge of thought; short is the measure of the life in death through which they toil; then are they borne away, like smoke they vanish into air, and what they dream they know is but the little each hath stumbled on in wandering about the world; yet boast they all that they have learned the whole—vain fools! for what *that* is, no eye hath seen, no ear hath heard, nor can it be conceived by mind of man. Thou, then, since thou hast fallen to this place, shalt know no more than human wisdom may attain.

“But, O ye gods, avert the madness of those babblers from my tongue, and cause the stream of holy words to issue from my hallowed lips. And thou, great Muse of Memory, maiden with the milk-white arms, I pray to thee to teach me things that creatures of a day may hear. Come from the House of Holiness, and bring to me her harnessed car.”

Here we see plainly set forth the impossibility of mortal, fallen intellects attaining to a perfect knowledge of the Universe, the impiety of seeking such knowledge, or pretending to have found it; and, at the same time, the limitations under which true science remains within the reach of human beings. How this science may be reached, he tells us in some memorable lines, probably supposed to issue from the lips of the Muse whom he invokes :—“But come, search diligently, and discover what is clear in every realm of sense, . . . check the conviction of thy senses, and judge by reason what is evident in every case.”

Thus the senses, although feeble and erring guides, are, after all, the gates to knowledge; and their reports, when tested by the light of reason, form the data for human speculation. The senses, resident in the limbs, are composed in certain proportions of the four elements, which also constitute the earth. Therefore, between the frame of man and the world outside him, there is a community of substance, whereby he is enabled to know. “Ὁμοια ὁμοίοις γινώσκεται (likes are known by likes) is the foundation of our philosopher’s theory of knowledge. The rational soul, being that immortal part of man whereon depends his personal identity, whether he take the shape of plant or animal, receives and judges the results of sensation. This theory, it will be observed, has a kind of general similarity to that of Parmenides. Empedocles draws a marked difference between the province of the senses and of the reason, and inveighs against the impotence of the former. Again, he speaks of the real being of the world as pure and perfect intellect; and at the same time elaborately describes the universe as it appears to human sense and understanding. But here the like-

ness ends. Parmenides has no mysticism, and indulges in no theology. He believes in the actual truth of his rational ontology, and sneers at the senses. "Thy fate it is," he says, "all mysteries to learn, both the unswerving mind of truth that wins a sure assent, and the vain thoughts of men, in which no certainty abides. But, baseless as they are, these also shalt thou learn; since thou must traverse every field of knowledge, and discern the fabric of the dreams of men." His ontology is just as elaborate as his physics, and he evidently considers its barren propositions of more value than any observations on astronomy or physiology. Empedocles, on the other hand, despaired of ontology, and gave all his mind to explanations of the physical universe—how it came to be, and what laws governed its alternations,—believing all along that there was a higher region of pure intellect beyond the reach of his degraded soul. "Here we see in a glass darkly, but then face to face." In this respect he resembled Xenophanes more than Parmenides. Xenophanes has said, "No man hath been, nor will ever be, who knows for certain all about the gods, and everything of which I speak; for should one publish the most sure and settled truth, yet even he cannot be said to *know*; opinion is supreme in all things." Empedocles belonged more to the age behind him than to that which followed; and his extensive knowledge of nature was a part of his artistic rather than his scientific temperament.

Yet, allowing for the march of human progress during twenty-three centuries, we are bound to hold much the same language as Empedocles regarding the limitations of knowledge. We have, indeed, infinitely extended our observation of phenomena; we have gained fuller conceptions of the Deity and of the destinies of man. But the plummet which he threw into the bottomless abyss of science has as yet found no bottom, and the circle which it made by striking on the surface of the illimitable ocean has grown and grown, but yet has touched no shore on any side. Like him, we still speak of an unapproachable God, utterly beyond the reach of human sense and intellect; like him, we still content ourselves with receiving the reports of our senses, comparing and combining them by means of our understanding, and thus obtaining some conception of the universe in which we live. If we reject the light of Christianity, the guesses which we form about a future world are less vague than those of Empedocles, but founded on no surer scientific basis; the God we worship still remains enveloped in symbols; we still ascribe to Him, if not a human form, at least the reason, partialities, and passions of mankind. Indeed, in this respect, the sage of Agrigentum stood unconsciously upon the platform which only our profoundest thinkers have attained. He felt the awe of the Unseen—he believed in the infinite Being,—but he refused to dogmatise about His attributes, confining his own reason to the phenomenal universe which he strove in every way to understand, and to employ for the good of his race. Empedocles was greater than most of his contemporaries, for he neither believed it possible to explain the whole

mystery of the world, nor did he yet reject the notion of there being a profound mystery. He steered clear between the Parmenides and Democritus of his own day—between the Spinoza and the materialist of modern speculation. Herein the union of philosophy and poetry, of thought and feeling, in his nature, gave the tone to all his theories. We must not, however, in our praise forget that all these problems appeared in a far more simple form to the Greeks of that age than to ourselves, and were therefore more hastily and lightly answered. Between the ontology of Parmenides and that of Hegel what a step there is! What meagre associations gather round the one; what many-sided knowledge gives substance to the other!

Remembering, therefore, in what light Empedocles regarded his own physical speculations, we may proceed to discuss them more in detail. We shall find that he deserved a large portion of that praise which Bacon rather whimsically lavished on the pre-Socratic philosophers, to the disadvantage of the mightier names of Plato and Aristotle.

The poem on Nature is addressed to Pausanias the physician, who was a son of Anchitus of Agrigentum, and a special friend of Empedocles. To Pausanias, the philosopher begins his instruction with these words:—"First learn what are the four chief roots of everything that is: fiery Zeus, and Herè, source of vital breath, and Aidoneus, and Nestis with her tears, who is the fount of moisture in the world." Thus Empedocles, after the fashion of the Pythagoreans, allegorised his four elements. In other passages he calls them "fire, water, earth, and air's immeasurable height"; or "earth, and ocean with his countless waves, and liquid air, the sun-god, and ether girdling the universe in its embrace"; or again, "Hephæstus, rain, and radiant ether"; or lastly, "light, earth, heaven, and ocean." It will be seen that he designated his elements sometimes by mythological titles, sometimes by abstract terms, and sometimes by selecting one or other natural object—such as the sun, the air, the ocean—in which they were most manifest. It is well known that Empedocles was the first philosopher to adopt the four elements, which, since his day, continued to rule supreme over natural science, until modern analysis revealed far simpler and broader bases. Other speculators of the Ionian sect had maintained each of these four elements,—Thales the water, Anaximenes the air, Heraclitus the fire, and perhaps (but this rests on no sure evidence) Pherecydes the earth. Xenophanes had said, "Of earth and water are all things that come into existence." Parmenides had spoken of dark and light, thick and subtle, substances. Each of these fundamental principles is probably to be regarded not as pure fire, or pure water, or pure air, but as an universal element differing in rarity, and typified according to the analogical necessities of language, by means of some familiar object. The four elements of Empedocles appear to have been suggested to him, partly by his familiarity with contemporary speculation, and partly by his observation of Nature.

They held their ground so long in scientific theory, because they answered so exactly to a superficial view of the world. Earth with everything of a solid quality, water including every kind of fluid, fire that burns or emits light, air that can be breathed, appear to constitute an exhaustive division of the universe. Of the eternity of these four primal substances, according to the Empedoclean theory, there is no doubt. The philosopher frequently reiterates his belief in the impossibility of an absolute beginning or ending, though he acquiesces in the popular use of these terms to express the scientific conceptions of dissolution and recombination.

These elements, then, were the material part of the world according to Empedocles. But inherent in them, as a tendency is inherent in an organism, and yet separable in thought from them as the soul is separable from the body, were two conflicting principles of equal power, love and discord. Love and discord by their operation wrought infinite changes in the universe: for it was the purpose of love to bind the elements together into a compact, smooth, motionless globe; and of discord to separate them one from another, and to keep them distinct in a state of mutual hostility. When, therefore, either love or discord got the upper hand, the phenomenal universe could not be said to exist, but in the intermediate state was a perpetual order of growth and decay, composition and dissolution, whereby the world, as we behold it, came into existence. This intermediate state, *das Werdende*, τὸ γιγνόμενον καὶ ἀπολλύμενον (the Becoming, that which comes into existence and passes out of it again by dissolution), was φύσις, or Nature. The conflicting energies of love and discord formed the pulses of its mighty heart, the systole and diastole of its being, the one power tending to life, the other power to death, the one pushing all the elements forward to a perfect unity of composition, the other rending them apart. To the universe when governed by love in supremacy Empedocles gave the name of σφαῖρος (perfect globe), which he also called a god. This σφαῖρος answered to the Eleatic εἶν (one, or unity), while the disjointed elements subservient to the force of strife corresponded to the Eleatic πολλά (the many, or multiplicity). Thus the old Greek antagonism of Good and Evil, One and Many, Love and Hatred, Being and Not-being, were interpreted by Empedocles. He looked on all that is, *das Werdende*, as transitory between two opposite and contradictory existences.

Again, according to his system, the alternate reigns of love and discord succeeded one another at fixed intervals of time; so that, from one point of view, the world was ceaselessly shifting, and from another point of view, was governed by eternal unalterable Law. Thus he reconciled the Heraclitean flux and the Parmenidean immobility by a middle term. Each of the elements possessed a separate province, had separate functions, and was capable of standing by itself. To fire it would seem that the philosopher assigned a more active influence than to any of the other elements; therefore a kind of dualism may be

recognised in his Universe between this ruling principle and the more passive ingredients of air, earth, and water. The influence of love and harmony kept them joined and interpenetrated, and so mingled as to bring the different objects which we see around us into being. Empedocles professed to understand the proportions of these mixtures, and measured them by Pythagorean rules of arithmetic. Thus everything subsists by means of transformation and mixture; absolute beginning and ending are impossible.

Such, briefly stated, is the theory of Empedocles. The following passage may be quoted to show how the phenomenal Universe comes into being under the influence of love:—

“When strife has reached the very bottom of the seething mass, and love assumes her station in the centre of the ball, then everything begins to come together, and to form one whole—not instantaneously, but different substances come forth, according to a steady process of development. Now, when these elements are mingling, countless kinds of things issue from their union. Much, however, remains unmixed, in opposition to the mingling elements, and these malignant strife still holds within his grasp. For he has not yet withdrawn himself altogether to the extremities of the globe; but part of his limbs still remain within its bounds, and part have passed beyond. As strife, however, step by step, retreats, mild and innocent love pursues him with her force divine; things which had been immortal instantly assume mortality; the simple elements become confused by interchange of influence. When these are mingled, then the countless kinds of mortal beings issue forth, furnished with every sort of form—a sight of wonder.”

In another passage this development is compared to the operation of a painter mixing his colours, and forming with them a picture of various objects. Discord is said to have made the elements immortal, because he kept them apart, and would willingly have preserved their separate qualities; whereas love mixes them together, breaks up their continuity, and confuses their kinds. What Empedocles exactly meant by *Sphærus* is hard to understand; nor do we know how far he intended Chance to operate in the formation of the Universe. He often uses such expressions as these, “So they chanced to come together,” and describes the amorphous condition of the first organisms in a way that makes one think he fancied a perfectly chaotic origin. Yet “the art of Aphrodite,” “so Cypris ordained their form,” are assertions of designing intelligence. In fact, we may well believe that Empedocles, in the infancy of speculation, was led astray by his double nomenclature. When talking of Aphrodite, he naturally thought of a person ruling creation; when using the term “Love,” he naturally conceived an innate tendency, which might have been the sport of chance in a great measure. It also appears probable that, when Empedocles spoke of “Chance” and “Necessity,” he referred to some inherent quality in the elements themselves, whereby they grew together under certain laws, and that the harmony and discord which ruled them in turn were regarded by him as forces aiding and preventing their union.

To understand the order of creation, we may begin by imagining the

sphere, which, in the words of Empedocles, "by the hidden bond of harmony is established, and rejoices in unbroken rest . . . in perfect equipoise, of infinite extent, it stays a full-orbed sphere rejoicing in unbroken rest." Love now is omnipotent; she has knit all the elements into one whole; Discord has retreated, and abides beyond the globe. But soon his turn begins: he enters the sphere, and "all the limbs of the god begin to tremble." Now the elements are divided one from the other—ether first, then fire, then earth, then water from the earth. Still the elements are chaotic; but wandering about the spaces of the world, and "permeating each the other's realm," they form alliances and tend to union. Love is busy no less than Discord. The various tribes of plants and animals appear at first in a rudimentary and monstrous condition: "many heads sprouted up without necks, and naked arms went wandering forlorn of shoulders, and solitary eyes were straying destitute of foreheads." Still the process of seething and intermingling continued; "when element with element more fully mixed, these members fell together by haphazard . . . many came forth with double faces and two breasts, some shaped like oxen with a human front, others, again, of human race with a bull's head; and some were mixed of male and female parts." Unfortunately, the lines in which he describes the further progress of development have been lost, and we do not know how the interval between chaos and order was bridged over in his system. Only with reference to human beings he asserts that in the earliest stage they were produced in amorphous masses, containing the essence, as it were, of both male and female; and that after the separation of these masses into two parts, each part yearned to join its tally. And therefrom sprang the passion of desire in human hearts. This theory has been worked out by Plato artistically in the *Symposium*. Also with reference to the accretion of the phenomenal universe, he says that earth formed the basis of all hard and solid substances, preponderating in the shells of fish, and so on. Bones were wrought of earth, and fire, and water, "marvellously jointed by the bonds of Harmony." It is needless to follow Empedocles through all his scattered fancies, to show that he knew that the night was caused by the earth intercepting the sun's rays, or that he thought the sun reflected heaven's fire like a mirror, or that he placed the intellect in the blood, and explained respiration by a theory of pores, and the eyesight by imagining a fire shut up within the pupil. The fragments we possess are too scanty to allow of our obtaining a perfect view of his physical theory; all we gather from them is that Empedocles possessed more acquired and original knowledge than any of his contemporaries.

It may appear from what has been said about his system that Empedocles was at best a great Eclectic. But this is not entirely the case. If he deserves the name of Eclectic, he deserves it in the same sense as Plato, though it need not be said how infinitely inferior, as an original thinker, he is to Plato. Empedocles was deeply versed in all

the theories, metaphysical, cosmogonical, mystical, and physiological, of his age. He viewed from a high station all the problems, intellectual, social, and moral, which then vexed Greece. But he did not pass his days in a study or a lecture-room, nor did he content himself with expounding or developing the theories of any one master. He went abroad, examined nature for himself, cured the sick, thought his own thoughts, and left an impress on the constitution of his native state. In his comprehensive mind all the learning he had acquired from men, from books, from the world, and from reflection, was consolidated into one system, to which his double interest for mysticism and physics gave a double aspect. He was the first in Greece to reconcile Eleatic and Heraclitean speculations, the puzzle of plurality and unity, the antagonism of good and evil, in one theory, and to connect it with another which revealed a solemn view of human obligations and destinies, and required a life of social purity and self-restraint. The misfortune of Empedocles as a philosopher consisted in this—that he succeeded only in resuming the results of contemporary speculation, and of individual research, in a philosophy of indisputable originality, without anticipating the new direction which was about to be given to human thought by Socrates and Plato. He closed one period,—the period of poetry and physical theories and mysticism. The period of prose, of logic, and of ethics, was about to begin. He was the last of the great colonial sages of Greece. The Hellenic intellect was destined henceforth to centre itself at Athens.

CHAPTER VIII

THE GNOMIC POETS

Definition of the term Gnostic—The Elegiac Metre—The Age of the Despots in Greece—Three Periods in Elegiac Poetry: the Martial, the Erotic, the Gnostic—Callinus—Tyrtaeus—Mimnermus—His Epicurean Philosophy of Life—Solon—The Salaminian Verses—Doctrine of Hereditary Guilt—Greek Melancholy—Phocylides—His Bourgeois Intellect—Xenophanes—Theognis—The Politics of Megara—Cyrnus—Precepts upon Education and Conduct in Public and Private Life—The Biography of Theognis—Dorian Clubs—Lamentations over the Decay of Youth and Beauty.

THE term Gnostic, when applied to a certain number of Greek poets, is arbitrary. There is no definite principle for rejecting some and including others in the class. It has, however, been usual to apply this name to Solon, Phocylides, Theognis, and Simonides of Ceos. Yet there seems no reason to exclude some portions of Callinus, Tyrtaeus, Mimnermus, and Xenophanes. These poets, it will be observed, are all writers of the elegy. Some of the lyric poets, however, and iambographers, such as Simonides of Amorgos and Archilochus, have strong claims for admission into the list. For, as the derivation of the name implies, gnostic poets are simply those who embody *γνώμαι*, or sententious maxims on life and morals, in their verse; and though we find that the most celebrated masters of this style composed elegies, we yet may trace the thread of gnostic thought in almost all the writers of their time. Conversely, the most genuine authors of elegiac gnomes trespassed upon the domain of lyric poetry, and sang of love and wine and personal experience no less than of morality. In fact, the gnostic poets represent a period of Greek literature during which the old and simple forms of narrative poetry were giving way to lyrical composition on the one hand, and to meditative writing on the other; when the epical impulse had become extinct, and when the Greeks were beginning to think definitely. The elegy, which seems to have originated in Asia Minor, and to have been used almost exclusively by poets of the Ionian race for the expression of emotional and reflective sentiments,

lent itself to this movement in the development of the Greek genius, and formed a sort of midway stage between the impassioned epic of the Homeric age and the no less impassioned poetry and prose of the Athenian age of gold.

Viewed in this light, the gnomic poets mark a transition from Homer and Hesiod to the dramatists and moralists of Attica. The ethical precepts inherent in the epos received from them a more direct and proverbial treatment; while they in turn prepared for the sophists, the orators, and Socrates.

This transitional period in the history of Greek literature, corresponding, as it does, to similar transitions in politics, religion, and morality, offers many points of interest. Before Homer, poetry had no historical past, but after the age of the Epic a long time elapsed before the vehicle of verse was exchanged for that of prose. Xenophanes, Parmenides, and Empedocles wrote poems upon nature in hexameters. Solon and Theognis committed their state-craft and ethics to elegiac couplets. Yet at the same time Heraclitus and the seven sages were developing the germs of prose, and preparing the way for Attic historians and philosophers.

Again, whereas Homer introduces us to a Hellas small in its extent, and scarcely separated from surrounding tribes, we find in the transitional period that the strength and splendour of the Greek race are dissipated over distant colonies, Hellenic civilisation standing out in definite relief against adjacent barbarism. The first lyrical and elegiac poets come from the islands of the Archipelago, or from the shores of Asia Minor. The first dramatists of note are Sicilian. Italy and Sicily afford a home to the metaphysical poets, while the philosophers of the Ionian sect flourish at Ephesus and Miletus.

Corresponding to this change in the distribution of the race, a change was taking place in the governments of the States. The hereditary monarchies of Homer's age have disappeared, and, after passing through a period of oligarchical supremacy, have given place to tyrannies. The tyrants of Miletus and of Agrigentum, rising from the aristocracy itself; those of Corinth, Athens, and Megara, owing their power to popular favour; others, like Cylon, flourishing a while by force of mere audacity and skill; others, again, like Pittacus of Mitylene, using the rights of their dictatorship for the public benefit,—had this one point in common: it was the interest of all of them to destroy the traditional prejudices of the race, to gather a powerful and splendid court around them, to patronise art, to cultivate diplomacy, and to attach men of ability to their persons. As the barons of feudalism encouraged the romances of the Nibelungen, Carlovingian, and Arthurian cycles, so the hereditary monarchies had caused the cyclical epos to flourish. It was not for the interest of the tyrants to revive Homeric legends, but rather to banish from the State all traces of the chivalrous past. With this view Cleisthenes of Sicily put down the worship of Adrastus, and parodied the heroic names of the three tribes. Poetry, thus

separated from the fabulous past, sought its subjects in the present,—in personal experience, in pleasure, in politics, in questions of diplomacy, in epigrammatic morality.

Such, then, was the period during which the gnomic poets flourished,—a period of courts and tyrannies, of colonial prosperity, of political animation, of social intrigue, of intellectual development, of religious transformation, of change and uncertainty in every department. Behind them lay primitive Homeric Hellas; before them, at no great distance, was the time when the Greek genius would find its home in Athens. Poetry and Science were then to be distinguished; the philosophers, historians, and orators were to make a subtle and splendid instrument of Greek prose; the dramatists were to raise the choric and dialectic beauty of the Greek language to its highest possible perfection; tyrannies were to be abolished, and the political energies of Hellas to be absorbed in the one great struggle between the Dorian and Ionian families. But in the age of gnomic poetry these changes were still future; and though the mutations of Greek history were accomplished with unparalleled rapidity, we yet may draw certain lines, and say—Here was a breathing-time of indecision and suspense; this period was the eve before a mighty revolution. I propose, therefore, to consider the gnomic poets as the representatives to some extent of such an age, and as exponents of the rudimentary, social, and political philosophy of Greece before Socrates.

Three periods may be marked in the development of the early Greek elegiac poetry—the Martial, the Erotic, and the Gnostic. Callinus and Tyrtaeus are the two great names by which the first is distinguished. Mimnermus gave a new direction to this style of composition, fitting the couplet, which had formerly been used for military and patriotic purposes, to amatory and convivial strains.¹ In after years it never lost the impress of his genius; so that Ovid, Tibullus, and Propertius may be regarded as the lineal descendants of the Colophonian bard. Solon at a later date applied the elegiac measure to severer subjects. He was the first perhaps to use it for purely gnomic purposes, maintaining, however, the martial spirit in his Salaminian verses, and imitating the example of Mimnermus in his lighter compositions. Phocylides, to judge by the scanty fragments which we possess of his poems, was almost wholly gnomic in his character. But Theognis, who is the latest and most important of the elegiac writers of this period, combined the political, didactic, and erotic qualities to a remarkable degree. As a poet, Simonides was greater than any of those whom I have named; but his claims to rank among the sententious philosophers rest more upon the fragments of his lyrics than upon the elegiac epigrams for which he was so justly famed.

¹ This seems to have been recognised by the ancients, as is proved by the lines quoted from Hermesianax in Athenæus, xiii. 597, where the epithet *μαλαχός* (effeminate), assigned to his pentameter, is meant to be emphatic. Mimnermus gave it a luxurious and tender quality.

These are the poets of whom I intend to speak in detail. Taken together with Homer and Hesiod, their works formed the body of a Greek youth's education at the time when Gorgias and Hippias were lecturing at Athens. From them the contemporaries of Pericles, when boys, had learned the rules of good society, of gentlemanly breeding, of practical morality, of worldly wisdom. Their saws and precepts were on the lips of the learned and the vulgar; wise men used them as the theses for subtle arguments or the texts for oratorical discourses. Public speakers quoted them as Scripture might be quoted in a synod of the clergy. They pointed remarks in after-dinner conversation or upon the market-place. Polemarchus, for instance, in Plato's *Republic*, starts the dialogue on Justice by a maxim of Simonides. Isocrates, the Rhetor, alludes to them as being "the best counsellors in respect of human affairs," and Xenophon terms the gnomes of Theognis "a comprehensive treatise concerning men." Having been used so commonly and largely by the instructors of youth, and by men of all conditions, it was natural that these elegies should be collected into one compendious form, and that passages of a gnomic tendency should be extracted from larger poems on different subjects. In this way a body of sententious poetry grew up and received the traditional authority of Solon, Phocylides, Simonides, and Theognis. But in the process of compilation confusions and mistakes of all kinds occurred, so that the same couplets were often attributed to several authors. To bear this in mind at the outset is a matter of some moment; for at this distance of time it is no longer possible to decide the canon of the several elegists with accuracy. In dealing with them, we must, therefore, not forget that we are handling masses of heterogeneous materials roughly assigned to a few great names.

The earliest elegiac poet was Callinus, a native of Ephesus, between the years 730 and 678 B.C. His poems consist almost exclusively of exhortations to bravery in battle. "How long will ye lie idle?" he exclaims; "put on your valour; up to the fight, for war is in the land!" He discourses in a bold and manly strain upon the certainty of death, and the glory of facing it in defence of home and country, winding up with this noble sentiment:—"The whole people mourns and sorrows for the death of a brave-hearted man; and while he lives he is the peer of demigods." The lines of Tyrtæus, whose prominent part during the second Messenian war is the subject of a well-known legend, embody the same martial and patriotic sentiments in even more masculine verse.

It would be alien from my purpose to dwell long upon these military poems, since the only gnomic character which they display is the encouragement of a heightened honour, unselfishness, indifference to gain, devotion to the State, and love of public fame. Yet the moment in the history of Hellas represented by Tyrtæus, the leader whose voice in the battlefield was like a clarion to his manly Spartans, and in the council-chamber was a whisper of Athene quelling strife, is so

interesting that I cannot omit him in this place. "Never," to use the words of Müller, "was the duty and the honour of bravery impressed on the youth of a nation with so much beauty and force of language, by such natural and touching motives." If of a truth it be, as Milton says, the function of the poet "to inbreed and cherish in a great people the seeds of virtue and public civility," then Tyrtæus, less by his specific maxims than by the spirit that his verses breathe, deserves an honoured place among the bards whom Aristotle would have classed as ἠθικώ-*τατοι*, most serviceable for the formation of a virile and powerful temperament, most suited for the education of Greek youth. The following translation stands as Thomas Campbell made it from a martial elegy ascribed to the bard of Lacedæmon: ¹—

- "How glorious fall the valiant, sword in hand,
 In front of battle for their native land!
 But oh! what ills await the wretch that yields,
 A recreant outcast from his country's fields!
 The mother whom he loves shall quit her home,
 An aged father at his side shall roam;
 His little ones shall weeping with him go,
 And a young wife participate his woe;
 While scorned and scowled upon by every face,
 They pine for food, and beg from place to place.
- "Stain of his breed! dishonouring manhood's form,
 All ills shall cleave to him: affliction's storm
 Shall blind him wandering in the vale of years,
 Till, lost to all but ignominious fears,
 He shall not blush to leave a recreant's name,
 And children, like himself, inured to shame.
- "But we will combat for our fathers' land,
 And we will drain the life-blood where we stand,
 To save our children:—fight ye side by side,
 And serried close, ye men of youthful pride,
 Disdaining fear, and deeming light the cost
 Of life itself in glorious battle lost.
- "Leave not our sires to stem the unequal fight,
 Whose limbs are nerved no more with buoyant might;
 Nor, lagging backward, let the younger breast
 Permit the man of age (a sight unblessed)
 To welter in the combat's foremost thrust,
 His hoary head dishevell'd in the dust,
 And venerable bosom bleeding bare.
 But youth's fair form, though fallen, is ever fair,
 And beautiful in death the boy appears,
 The hero boy, that dies in blooming years:
 In man's regret he lives, and woman's tears;
 More sacred than in life, and lovelier far,
 For having perished in the front of war."²

¹ Without attempting to discuss the vexed question whether Tyrtæus was a native Spartan, or, according to the ancient tale, an Athenian naturalised in Sparta, his self-identification with the people he inspired justifies the phrase that I have used above.

² The sentiment of these last lines is not only ethically spirited, but it is also singularly, exquisitely Greek. The æsthetic tact of the Greek race felt the plastic charm of a youth's

Strangely different are the elegies of Mimnermus, the poet of Colophon, who flourished toward the end of the seventh century B.C.¹ His name has passed into a proverb for luxurious verse, saddened by reflections on the fleeting joys of youth, and on the sure and steady progress of old age and death. Tyrtæus, though a native of Attica, wrote for Spartans at war with a strong nation; Mimnermus was born and lived among Ionian Greeks emasculated by barbarian control and by contact with the soft Lydians. It was of these Colophonians that Xenophanes, a native poet, said, "Instructed in vain luxury by the Lydians, they trailed their robes of purple through the streets, with haughty looks, proud of their flowing locks bedewed with curious essences and oils." For such a people the exquisitely soft and musical verses of Mimnermus, pervaded by a tone of lingering regret, were exactly suited. They breathe the air of sunny gardens and cool banquet-rooms, in which we picture to ourselves the poet lingering out a pensive life, endeavouring to crowd his hours with pleasures of all kinds, yet ever haunted and made fretful among his roses by the thought of wrinkles and death. "When your youth is gone," he says, "however beautiful you may have been, you lose the reverence of your children and the regard of your friends." "More hideous is old age than death. It reduces the handsome and the plain man to one level—cares attend it—the senses and the intellects get deadened—a man is forgotten and put out of the way." The Greek sentiment of hatred for old age is well expressed in one epithet which Mimnermus employs—*ἄμορφον*, *formless*. The Greeks detested the ugliness and loss of grace which declining years bring with them, almost more than weakened powers or the approach of death. Nay, "when the flower of youth is past," says Mimnermus, "it is best to die at once." Men are like herbs, which flourish for a while in sunshine—then comes the winter of old age, with poverty or disease, or lack of children. His feeling for the charm of youth was intense; he expressed it in language that reminds us of the fervency of Sappho—"Down my flesh the sweat runs in rivers, and I tremble when I see the flower of my equals in age gladsome and beautiful."

This tender and regretful strain is repeated by Mimnermus with a monotonous, almost pathetic persistency, as if the one thought of inevitable age oppressed him like a nightmare day and night. His delight in the godliness of youth and manhood is so acute, and his

form dead upon the battlefield. Like a statue marbled by the frost of death he lies, the perfection of life-moulded clay; and his red wounds are the lips of everlasting praise. Not so the elder man. Nakedness and mutilation bring no honour to him; he has no loveliness of shape to be revealed and heightened by the injuries of war; for him the flowing beard and the robes of reverend old are a majestic covering, to be withdrawn by no hand seeking to unveil secluded beauties. His lot is cast no longer in those fields intense and passionate of art and love, where death, cropping the bloom unset, confers a crown of immortality. Cf. *Iliad*, xxii. 71. An echo of this Greek feeling for the beautiful young dead may be traced in David's picture of the drummer-boy at Avignon, in Walt Whitman, and in Lord Albemarle's *Recollections of Waterloo*.

¹ The birthplace of Mimnermus is not very certain. Fragment 9 in Bergk's *Collection* would seem to justify the opinion that he was a native of Smyrna colonised from Colophon.

enjoyment of existence is so exquisite, that he shrinks with loathing from the doom imposed on all things mortal to decline and wither. "May I complete my life without disease or cares, and may death strike me at my sixtieth year!" Such is the prayer he utters, feeling, probably, that up to sixty the senses may still afford him some enjoyment, and that, after they are blunted, there is nothing left for man worth living for. In all this Mimnermus was true to one type of the Greek character. I shall have occasion further on to revert to this subject, and to dwell again upon the fascination which the flower of youth possessed for the Greeks, and the horror with which the ugliness of age inspired them.¹ That some escaped this kind of despair, which to us appears unmanly, may be gathered from the beautiful discourse upon old age with which the *Republic* of Plato opens. Mimnermus, however, belonged to a class of men different from Cephalus: nowhere in the whole range of literature can be found a more perfect specimen of unmitigated *ennui*.² In his verse we trace the prostrate tone of the Oriental, combined with Greek delicacy of intellect and artistic expression. The following passage may be cited as at once illustrative of his peculiar lamentation, and also of his poetical merits:—

"What's life or pleasure wanting Aphrodite?
 When to the gold-haired goddess cold I am,
 When love and love's soft gifts no more delight me,
 Nor stolen dalliance, then I fain would die!
 Ah! fair and lovely bloom the flowers of youth;
 On men and maids they beautifully smile:
 But soon comes doleful eld, who, void of ruth,
 Indifferently afflicts the fair and vile:
 Then cares wear out the heart; old eyes forlorn
 Scarce reckon the very sunshine to behold—
 Unloved by youths, of every maid the scorn,—
 So hard a lot God lays upon the old."³

We are not surprised to hear that the fragments of Mimnermus belonged to a series of elegies addressed to a flute-player called Nanno.⁴ They are worthy of such a subject. Nanno, according to one account, did not return the passion of the poet.

In Mimnermus, however luxurious he may have been, we yet observe a vein of meditation upon life and destiny, which prepares us for the more distinctly gnostic poets. Considered in the light of Greek philosophy, Mimnermus anticipates the ethical teaching of the Hedonists

¹ Notice particularly the couplets of Theognis beginning *ᾠμοι ἐγὼν ἠβης* and *ἄφρονες ἀνθρώποι*, Bergk, vol. ii. pp. 420, 550.

² Fragment 9 in Bergk's *Collection* might seem to express a manlier spirit, if we could suppose that it referred to personal exploits of the poet. It forms, however, part of a description of the early colonisation of Smyrna from Pylos; when Mimnermus alludes to martial deeds, he does so with a tone of regret, as one who has no share in them, and lives his own life in political stagnation.

³ *Miscellanies*, by the late John Addington Symonds, M.D. (Macmillan & Co., 1871), p. 410.

⁴ Strabo quotes "the Nanno" as Athenæus quotes "the Leontion" of Hermesianax, another Colophonian amourist.

and Epicureans. In other words, he represents a genuine view of life adopted by the Greeks. Horace refers to him as an authority in these well-known lines :—

“ Si, Mimnermus uti censet, sine amore jocisque
Nil est jucundum, vivas in amore jocisque ; ”¹

on which the scholiast observed that the elegiac poet “ agreed with the sect of the Epicureans.”

Next to Mimnermus in point of time is Solon. Perhaps the verses of this great man were among his least important productions. Yet their value, in illustrating the history of Athens, would have been inestimable, had they been preserved to us in a more perfect state. “ There is hardly anything,” says Grote, “ more to be deplored, amidst the lost treasures of the Grecian mind, than the poems of Solon ; for we see by the remaining fragments that they contained notices of the public and social phenomena before him, which he was compelled attentively to study, blended with the touching expression of his own personal feelings, in the post, alike honourable and difficult, to which the confidence of his countrymen had exalted him.” The interest of Solon as a gnomic poet is derived chiefly from the fact that he was reckoned one of the seven wise men of Greece, that he was one of the two most distinguished Nomothetæ of Hellas, that he is said to have conversed familiarly with the great Lydian monarch, and that he endeavoured at Athens to resist the growing tyranny of Pisistratus. Thus Solon bore a prominent part in all the most important affairs of the period to which the gnomic poetry belongs. Its politics, diplomacy, and social theories, its constitutional systems and philosophy, were perfectly familiar to him, and received a strong impress from his vigorous mind. It is thought that his poems belong to an early period of his life ; yet they embody the same sentiments as those which Herodotus refers to his old age, and express in the looser form of elegiac verse the gist of apophthegms ascribed to him as one of the seven sages.

Literature and politics were cultivated together at this period among the Greeks ; philosophy was gained in actual life and by commerce with men of all descriptions. The part which Tyrtaeus, Alcæus, Pythagoras, Parmenides, Empedocles, and Archilochus played in the history of their States need not be more than alluded to. Simonides of Amorgos founded a colony ; Theognis represented a large and important party. But Solon, in a truer sense than any of these men, combined decisive action in public life with letters. Nor is it, perhaps, necessary to agree with Grote in depreciating the poetical value of his verses. Some of them are very fine and forcible. The description, for example, of the storm which sweeps away the clouds, and leaves a sunny sky (Frag. 13, ed. Bergk), is full of noble imagery.

The first three fragments of Solon’s elegies form part of the ode

¹ *Epistles*, bk. i. 6. Translated thus by Conington : “ If, as Mimnermus tells you, life is flat With nought to love, devote yourself to that.”

recited by him in the market-place of Athens, when he braved the penalty of death, and urged his fellow-citizens "to rise and fight for the sweet isle of Salamis." These lines are followed by a considerable fragment of great importance, describing the misery of ill-governed and seditious Athens. Among the sayings attributed to Solon (Diog. Laer., i. 63) is one that gives the keynote to this poem. When asked what made an orderly and well-constituted state, he answered, "When the people obey the rulers, and the rulers obey the laws." The paraphrase which I subjoin exhibits in strong contrast the difference between *Dysnomia* and *Eunomia*, as conceived by the Athenian law-giver. Demosthenes, who used the name of Solon on all occasions with imposing rhetorical effect, quotes these lines in a celebrated passage of the speech *De Fals. Leg.*, 254 :—"The citizens seek to overthrow the State by love of money, by following indulgent and self-seeking demagogues, who neglect religion and pervert the riches of the temples. Yet justice, silent but all-seeing, will in time bring vengeance on them for these things. War, want, civil discord, slavery, are at our gates; and all these evils threaten Athens because of her lawlessness. Whereas good laws and government set all the State in order, chain the hands of evil-doers, make rough places plain, subdue insolence, and blast the budding flowers of Até, set straight the crooked ways of tortuous law, root out sedition, quell the rage of strife; under their good influence all things are fair and wise with men." Thus early and emphatically was the notion of just balance enunciated among the Greeks. It formed the ruling principle of their philosophy as well as of their politics; for the *μηδὲν ἄγαν* (nothing over-much) of Solon corresponded to the *μέτρον* (measure) of the Ionic speculators, and contained within itself the germ of Aristotle's ethical system, no less than of the political philosophy of Plato's *Republic*.

In the fifth and sixth fragments Solon describes the amount of power he would wish to see intrusted to the Athenian Demos; in the ninth, he prophesies the advent of a despot: "From storm-clouds descend furious snow and hail, and thunder is born of bright lightning; so great men produce the overthrow of States, and into the bondage of a despot's power the people fall unwittingly. Easy it is to raise the storm, but hard to curb the whirlwind; yet must we now take thought of all these things." Fragment the second contains a further warning on the subject of impending tyranny. The power of Pisistratus was growing to a head, and Solon told the Athenians that if he proved despotic, they would have no one but themselves to blame for it.

The remaining fragments of Solonian poetry are more purely meditative. "Bright daughters of Memory and Olympian Zeus," he begins, "Pierian Muses! hear my prayer. Grant me wealth from the blessed gods, and from all men a good name. May I be sweet to my friend and bitter to my foe; revered by the one and dreaded by the other. Money I desire, but no ill-gotten gain: for the wealth that the gods give lasts, and fleets not away; but the fruits of insolence

and crime bring vengeance—sure, though slow. Zeus seeth all things, and like a wind scattering the clouds, which shakes the deep places of the sea and rages over the corn-land, and comes at last to heaven, the seat of gods, and makes a clear sky to be seen, whereupon the sun breaks out in glory, and the clouds are gone—so is the vengeance of Zeus. He may seem to forget, but sooner or later he strikes; perchance the guilty man escapes, yet his blameless children or remote posterity pay the penalty.” Two points are noticeable in this passage; first, the dread of ill-gotten gain; and secondly, the conception of implacable justice. There was nothing which the Greeks more dreaded and detested than wealth procured by fraud. They were so sensitive upon this point that even Plato and Aristotle regarded usury as criminal, unnatural, and sure to bring calamity upon the money-lender. Thus Chilon, the Lacedæmonian sage, is reported to have said, “Choose loss rather than dishonourable gain: for the one will hurt you for the moment, the other will never cease to be a curse.” There are few of the seven sages who have not at least one maxim bearing on this point. It would seem as if the conscience of humanity were touched at a very early period by superstitious scruples of this kind. The Jewish law contains warnings similar to those of Solon; and among our own people it has been commonly believed that wealth unlawfully acquired, money taken from the devil, or property wrested from the Church, is disastrous to its owner, and incapable of being long retained in the possession of his family. Theognis expresses nearly the same sentiments as Solon in the following verses:—“He who gets wealth from Zeus by just means, and with hands unstained, will not lose it; but if he acquire it wrongfully, covetously, or by false swearing, though it may seem at first to bring him gain, at last it turns to calamity, and the mind of Heaven prevails. But these things deceive men, for the blessed gods do not always take vengeance on crime at the moment of its being committed; but one man in his person pays for a bad deed, another leaves disaster hanging over his own children, a third avoids justice by death.”

Both Solon and Theognis, it will be observed, express emphatically their belief in a vengeance of Heaven falling upon the children, and the children's children of offenders. This conception of doom received its most splendid illustration at the hands of the tragic poets, and led philosophers like Empedocles to devise systems of expiation and purification, by means of which ancestral guilt might be purged away, and the soul be restored to its pristine blamelessness. Theognis in another fragment (731-752) discusses the doctrine, and calls in question its justice. He takes it for granted, as a thing too obvious to be disputed, that children suffer for their father's sin, and argues with Zeus about the abstract right and policy of this law, suggesting that its severity is enough to make men withdraw their allegiance from such unjust governors. The inequality of the divine rule had appeared in the same light to Hesiod and Homer (see *Iliad*, xiii. 631; Hesiod, *Op.*

et Dies, 270). But it is in the gnostic poets that we first discover a tendency to return and reason upon such questions: the wedge of philosophical scepticism was being inserted into the old beliefs of the Greek race. In some respects these gnostic poets present even a more gloomy view of human destinies than the epic poets. Solon says, "It is fate that bringeth good and bad to men; nor can the gifts of the immortals be refused;" and in Theognis we find, "No man is either wealthy or poor, mean or noble, without the help of the gods." . . . "Pray to the gods; nought happens to man of good or ill without the gods." . . . "No one, Cyrnus, is himself the cause of loss and gain; but of both these the gods are givers."¹ It would be easy to multiply passages, where the same conception of the divine government as that for which Plato (*Rep.*, p. 379) blamed Homer is set forth; but the gnostic poets go beyond this simple view. They seem to regard Heaven as a jealous power, and superstitiously believe all changes of fortune to be produced by the operation of a god anxious to delude human expectations. This theology lies at the base of the Solonian maxim, that you ought not to judge of a man's happiness until his death: "for," in the language of Herodotus, "there are many to whom God has first displayed good fortune, and whom He afterwards has rooted up and overthrown."

Thus Solon moralises in his elegies upon the vicissitudes of life:—"Danger lies everywhere, nor can a man say where he will end when he begins; for he who thinks to do well, without forethought, comes to grief; and often when a man is doing ill, Heaven sends him good luck, and he ends prosperously." It must however be observed that Solon in no passage of his elegiac poems alludes distinctly to the intervention of a jealous or malicious destiny. He is rather deeply impressed with the uncertainty of human affairs—an uncertainty which the events of his own life amply illustrated, and which he saw displayed in every town about him. Simonides repeats the same strain of despondency, dwelling (*Frag.* 2, ed. Gaisford) upon the mutabilities of life, and exclaiming with a kind of horror: "One hideous Charybdis swallows all things—wealth and mighty virtue."

At this period in Greece the old simplicity of life was passing away, and philosophy had not yet revealed her broader horizons, her loftier aims, and her rational sources of content. We have seen how Mimnermus bemoaned the woes of old age. Solon, whose manliness contrasts in every other respect with the effeminacy and languor of the Colophonian poet, gave way to the same kind of melancholy when he cried, "No mortal man is truly blessed; but all are wretched whom the sun beholds." What can be more despairing than the lamentations of Simonides?—"Few and evil are our days of life; but everlasting

¹ The well-known passage in the *Iliad* (xxiv. 527), which describes the two casks at the threshold of the house of Zeus, contains the germ of this belief. But after Homer there arose a darker sense of the jealousy of the gods, accompanied in speculative minds by a tendency to call the principles of the divine rule in question.

is the sleep which we must sleep beneath the earth." . . . "Small is the strength of man, and invincible are his sorrows; grief treads upon the heels of grief through his short life; and death, which no man shuns, hangs over him at last: to this bourne come the good and bad alike." In the midst of this uncertainty and gloom Theognis cannot find a rule of right conduct. "Nothing," he says, "is defined by Heaven for mortals, nor any way by which a man may walk and please immortal powers." Nor can we point to any more profoundly wretched expression of misery than the following elegy of the same poet: "It is best of all things for the sons of earth not to be born, nor to see the bright rays of the sun, or else after birth to pass as soon as possible the gates of death, and to lie deep down beneath a weight of earth." This sentiment is repeated by Bacchylides, and every student of Greek tragedy knows what splendid use has been made of it by Sophocles in one of the choruses of *Œdipus Coloneus*. Afterwards it passed into a commonplace. Two Euripidean fragments embody it in words not very different from those of Theognis, and Cicero is said to have translated it. When we consider the uneasy and uncertain view of human life expressed in these passages, it seems wonderful that men, conscious of utter ignorance, and believing themselves, like Herodotus, to be the sport of almost malignant deities, could have grown so nobly and maintained so high a moral standard as that of the Greek race.¹

The remaining fragments of Solon contain the celebrated lines upon the Life of Man, which he divided into ten periods of seven years. He rebuked Mimnermus for wishing to make sixty the term of human life, and bade him add another decade. We also possess some amorous verses of questionable character, supposed to have been written in his early youth. The prudes of antiquity were scandalised at Solon, a lawgiver and sage, for having penned these couplets. The libertines rejoiced to place so respectable a name upon their list of worthies. To the student of history they afford, in a compact form, some insight into the pursuits and objects of an Athenian man of pleasure. Plato quotes one couplet in the *Lysis*, and the author of the dialogue *περὶ ἐρώτων* (On Loves), attributed to Lucian, makes use of the same verses to prove that Solon was not exempt from the passion for which he is apologising. Apuleius mentions another as "lascivissimus ille versus." It should be added that the most considerable of these elegies has also been ascribed to Theognis. The doubt of authorship which hangs over all the gnomic fragments warns us, therefore, to be cautious in ascribing them to Solon. At the same time there is no strong external or internal argument against their authenticity. Solon displays no asceticism in his poetry, or in anything that is recorded of his life or sayings.² It is

¹ This subject will be resumed in the introduction to my chapter on Euripides, where I attempt to show how the Herodotean notion of divine jealousy was moralised at the time of the Persian war into the idea of Nemesis.

² See the passage quoted from Philemon by Athenæus, xiii. 569, where the institution of public *lupanaria* is ascribed to Solon.

probable that he lived as a Greek among Greeks, and was not ashamed of any of their social customs.

Passing from Solon to Phocylides we find a somewhat different tone of social philosophy. Phocylides was a native of Miletus, who lived between 550 and 490 B.C. If Mimnermus represents the effeminacy of the Asiatic Greeks, Phocylides displays a kind of prosaic worldly wisdom, for which the Ionians were celebrated. He is thoroughly *bourgeois*, to use a modern phrase; contented with material felicity, shrewd, safe in his opinions, and gifted with great common sense. Here are some of his maxims:—"First get your living, and then think of getting virtue." . . . "What is the advantage of noble birth, if favour follow not the speech and counsel of a man?" . . . "The middle classes are in many ways best off; I wish to be of middle rank in the State." Aristotle (*Pol.*, iv. 9, 7) quotes the last of these sayings with approbation. It is a thoroughly Ionian sentiment. Two of his genuine fragments contain the germ of Greek ideas afterwards destined to be widely developed and applied by the greatest thinkers of Greece. One of these describes the Greek conception of a perfect State:—"A small city, set upon a rock, and well governed, is better than all foolish Nineveh." We here recognise the practical wisdom and thorough solidity of Greek good sense. Wealth, size, and splendour they regarded as stumbling-blocks and sources of weakness. To be compact and well governed expressed their ideal of social felicity. Plato in the *Republic*, and Aristotle in the *Politics*, carry the thought expressed in this couplet of Phocylides to its utmost logical consequences. Again he says, "In justice the whole of virtue exists entire." This verse, which has also been incorporated into the elegies of Theognis, was probably the common property of many early moralists. Aristotle quotes it in the fifth book of the *Ethics* with the preface: *Διὸ καὶ παροιμαζόμενοί φαμεν* (wherefore in a proverb too we say). It might be placed as a motto on the first page of Plato's *Republic*, for justice is the architectonic virtue which maintains the health and safety of the State.

Phocylides enjoyed a high reputation among the ancients. Though few genuine fragments of his sayings have been handed down to us, there is a long and obviously spurious poem which bears his name. Some moralist of the Christian period has endeavoured to claim for his half-Jewish precepts the sanction of a great and antique authority. The greater number of those which we may with safety accept as genuine are prefaced by the words *καὶ τόγε Φωκυλίδεω* (and this too of Phocylides), forming an integral part of a hexameter. Phocylides was author of an epigram in imitation of one ascribed to Demodocus, which is chiefly interesting as having furnished Porson with the model of his well-known lines on Hermann. He also composed an epigrammatic satire on women, in which he compares them to four animals, a dog, a bee, a pig, and a horse, in the style of the poem by Simonides of Amorgos.

Xenophanes, a native of Colophon, and the founder of the Eleatic school of philosophy, has left some elegies of a gnomic character, which illustrate another point in the Ionian intellect. While Phocylides celebrated the superiority of comfort and the solid goods of life, Xenophanes endeavoured to break down the prejudice in favour of mere physical advantages, and to assert the absolute pre-eminence of intellectual power. In his second fragment (ed. Bergk) he says, "You give all kinds of honours—precedence at festivals, pensions, and public maintenance—to runners, boxers, pentathletes, wrestlers, pancratisers, and charioteers, who bear away the prize at Olympia; yet these men are not so worthy of reward as I am; for better than the strength of men or horses is our wisdom. What is the use of all this muscular development? It will not improve the constitution of the State or increase the revenue."¹ In this paraphrase, I have, for the sake of brevity, modernised the language of Xenophanes, while seeking to preserve the meaning of an elegy which admirably illustrates the principles of the Ionian race, and of Athens in particular, as contrasted with those of the Dorians. Plato, Aristotle, and all the political moralists of Greece, blamed Sparta and Thebes for training mere soldiers and gymnasts, to the exclusion of intellectual culture; thus retarding the growth of their constitutions and forcing them to depend in all emergencies upon brute force. Had all Ionians been like Solon and Xenophanes, had there been nothing of Mimnermus or Phocylides in their character, then the Athenians might have avoided the contrary charge of effeminacy and ignobility of purpose and merely æsthetical superiority, with which they have been taxed.

Contemporary with Phocylides was Theognis, a poet of whose gnomic elegies nearly fourteen hundred lines are still extant. Some of these are identical with verses of Solon, and of other writers; yet we need not suppose that Theognis was himself an imitator. It is far more probable that all the gnomic poets borrowed from the same sources, or embodied in their couplets maxims of common and proverbial wisdom. That Aristotle so regarded one of their most important aphorisms on the architectonic supremacy of justice, we have already seen. Besides, it is not certain on what principle the elegies which bear the names of different poets, were assigned to them. Theognis covers more ground than any of his predecessors, and embraces a greater variety of subjects. It has never been imagined that the fragments we possess formed part of an elaborate and continuous poem. They rather seem to have been written as occasion served, in order to express the thoughts of the moment; while not a few included in the canon of Theognis belong probably to other poets. Many of them contain maxims of political wisdom, and rules for private conduct in the choice of friends; others seem to have been composed for the lyre, in praise of good society, or wine, or beauty; again we find discussions of moral

¹ We may compare with this fragment a passage preserved from the *Autolycus* of Euripides, translated by me in the second volume of these Studies.

questions, and prayers to the gods, mixed up with lamentations on the miseries of exile and poverty; a few throw light upon the personal history of Theognis; in all cases the majority are addressed to one person, called Cynrus.¹

Theognis was a noble, born at Megara about the middle of the sixth century B.C. His city, though traditionally subject to the yoke of Corinth, had under the influence of its aristocracy acquired independence. In course of time Theagenes, a demagogue, gained for himself despotical supremacy, and exiled the members of the old nobility from Megara. He, too, succumbed to popular force, and for many years a struggle was maintained between the democratic party, whom Theognis persistently styles *κακοί* and *δειλοί* (bad and cowardly), and the aristocracy, whom he calls *ἀγαθοί* and *ἔσθλοι* (good and stanch). Theognis himself, as far as we can gather from the fragments, spent a long portion of his life in exile from Megara; but before the period of his banishment he occupied the position of friend and counsellor to Cynrus, who, though clearly younger than himself, seems to have been in some sense leader of the Megarian aristocracy. A large number of the maxims of Theognis on State-government are specially addressed to him.

Before proceeding to examine these elegies in detail, we may touch upon the subject of the friendship of Theognis for Cynrus, which has been much misunderstood. It must be remembered that Theognis was the only Doric poet of the gnomic class—all those who have been hitherto mentioned belonging without exception to the Ionian family of the Greek race. We are not, therefore, surprised to find some purely Dorian qualities in the poetry of Theognis. Such, for instance, are the invocations to Phœbus and Artemis, with which our collection of fragments opens; but such, in a far more characteristic sense, is the whole relation of the poet to his friend. From time immemorial it had been the custom among the Dorian tribes for men distinguished in war or statecraft to select among the youths one comrade, who stood to them in the light of pupil and squire. In Crete this process of election was attended with rites of peculiar solemnity, and at Sparta the names of *εἰσπνήλης* and *ἀῦτης*, or "inbreather" and "listener," were given to the pair. They grew up together, the elder teaching the younger all he knew, and expecting to receive from him in return obedience and affection. In manhood they were not separated, but

¹ A very ingenious attempt was made by Mr. Hookham Frere to reconstruct the life of Theognis from his elegies. It would be too much to assert that his conjectures are always successful. Indeed he often introduces foreign matter and modern sentiment, while he neglects the peculiarly Greek relations of the poet to his friend. Those who are curious about such works of hypercriticism would do well to study his *Theognis Restitutus* (Frere's Works, vol. ii.). In doing so, they must, however, bear in mind, as already observed above, that a great many of the couplets and short poems ascribed to Theognis by the later Greeks were not really his own. Theognis, like Hesiod, Solon, and Phocylides, was credited with more proverbial wisdom than he can be held responsible for. Contradictory utterances are therefore not unfrequent in his elegies, and this fact renders a trustworthy restoration of his biography and body of opinion almost impossible.

fought and sat in the assembly side by side, and were regarded in all points as each other's representatives. Thus a kind of chivalry was formed, which, like the modern chivalry of love and arms, as long as it remained within due limits, gave birth to nothing but honourable deeds and noble friendships, but which in more degenerate days became a cause of reproach to Hellas. There is every reason to believe that Theognis was united to Cyrnus in the purest bonds of Doric chivalry; and it is interesting to observe the kind of education which he gives his friend (see 1049-1054, *Theogn.*, ed. Bergk). Boys in the Doric States were so soon separated from their home, and from the training of the family, that some substitute for the parental discipline and care was requisite. This the institution to which I have briefly alluded seems to have to some extent supplied. A Spartan or Cretan settlement resembled a large public school, in which the elder boys choose their fags, and teach them and protect them, in return for duty, service and companionship.

Lines 87-100 describe the sincere and perfect affection, the truthfulness and forbearance, which the poet requires from Cyrnus. In another passage (1259-1270) he complains of the changeable character of the youth, and compares him to a skittish horse. One of his longest, and, in point of poetry, most beautiful elegies, celebrates the immortality which his songs will confer on Cyrnus (237-254). He tells his friend that he has given him wings to fly with over land and sea, that fair young men at festivals will sing of him to sweetly-sounding pipes, and that even Hades shall not prevent him from wandering on wings of fame about the isles and land of Hellas so long as earth and sun endure. The lofty enthusiasm and confidence of these promises remind us of Shakespeare's most pompous sonnets. I have endeavoured to preserve some portion of the spirit of the original in the following verses:—

“Lo, I have given thee plumes wherewith to skim
 The unfathomed deep, and lightly hover around
 Earth's huge circumference. Thou shalt be found
 At banquets on the breath of pæan and hymn:
 To shrill-voiced pipes with lips of seraphim
 Lovely young men thy rapturous fame shall sound:
 Yea, when thou liest lapped in the noiseless ground,
 Thy name shall live, nor shall oblivion dim
 Thy dawn of splendour. For these lands, these isles,
 These multitudinous waves of reflux seas,
 Shall be thy pleasure-ground wherethrough to roam,
 Borne by no steed, but wafted by the smiles
 Of Muses violet-crowned, whose melodies,
 While earth endures, shall make all earth thy home.”

Again, he bewails the difficulties and dangers of this kind of friendship (1353 and 1369), or entreats Cyrnus not to let malicious slanders interrupt their intimacy. In some cases we cannot acquit Theognis any more than Solon of licentiousness in the expression of his love. But the general tone of his language addressed to Cyrnus is so dignified

and sober that we are inclined to think his looser verses may refer to another and more scandalous attachment.

The first elegy of great importance (43-69) describes the state of Megara when under the control of a democracy. It expresses the bitter hatred and contempt which the Greek nobles in a Dorian State felt for the Periceci, or farmers of the neighbouring country, whom they strove to keep beneath them, and to exclude from all political rights:—"Cyrnus, this city is still a city, but the people are all changed, who some time since knew neither law nor justice, but wore goatskins, and dwelt like deer beyond the walls. Now they are noble, son of Polyas; and the brave of heretofore are base. Who can endure to look upon these things?" Again he says (1109-1114), "The nobles of old days are now made base, and the base are noble, . . . a man of birth takes his bride from a low man's house." In another place he complains that the rabble rule the State with monstrous laws, that the sense of shame has perished, and that impudence and insolence lord it over the land (289-292). In these perilous times he compares the State to a ship managed by incompetent and unruly mariners: the waves are breaking over her, but the sailors prevent the good pilot from guiding her helm, while they make pillage of the common good (667-682). This simile bears a striking resemblance to the passage of the *Republic* in which Plato compares a State possessed by demagogues and the mob to an ill-governed ship. Lastly, says Theognis, "Porters rule, and the nobles are subject to the base." In this state of disorder the very principles of Dorian society are neglected. Money is regarded as the charter of nobility, and no attempts are made to maintain a generous breed of citizens. "We are careful," he says (183-196), "to select the best race of horses and the like, but a noble man doubts not about marrying a mean woman if she bring him money; nor does a woman reject the suit of a mean man if he be rich. Wealth is honoured; wealth has confused our blood." This passage has great interest, both as showing the old prejudices of the Dorian aristocracy, and also as proving that a new order of things was beginning in Greece. Even the Dorian States could not resist the progress of commerce and republican institutions; and little Megara, situated between mercantile Corinth and democratic Athens, had but small strength to stem the tide. But the party of Theognis were not always out of power. When Cyrnus and his friends held sway in Megara, he gives them this advice (847-850): "Trample on the empty-headed rabble; strike them with the stinging goad; and put a galling yoke upon their neck; for never shall you find so despot-loving a Demos in the whole earth." That he had frequent cause to apprehend the rising of some tyrant from the body of the people may be noticed in the fragments. Among the earliest of these in our arrangement (39-42) occurs this elegy:—"Cyrnus, this city is pregnant; but I fear that it will bring forth a man to chastise our evil violence." He then proceeds to lay down the axioms of the oligarchical State

theory: the nobility, he says, never ruined a city; it is only when base leaders get the upper hand, and wrest justice in order to indulge the populace and make their own gain, that civil dissension and ruin ensue. Tyrants were as hateful to the true oligarchs as a democracy, and Theognis in one place actually advises tyrannicide: "To lay low a despot who consumes the people is no sin, and will not be punished by the gods" (1181). This sentiment corresponds with the couplet of Simonides on Harmodius and Aristogeiton, and with the apophthegms of several of the sages.¹

Theognis, seeing Cyrenus environed with political difficulties, thought fit to furnish him with rules of conduct. He was very particular about the choice of proper friends. One elegy (31-38), in which he discourses on the desirability of consorting with none but the best company, and of avoiding the contagion of low comrades, attained a wide celebrity among the Greeks. So much of their life was spent in public, and so much of their education depended on society, that the question of social intercourse was one of paramount importance. Plato in the *Meno*, Xenophon in his *Memorabilia*, and Aristotle in the ninth book of the *Ethics*, all make use of these verses:—"Come not into the company of bad men, but cling always to the good; eat and drink with them; sit with them, and seek to please those who have great power. For from the noble you will learn what is noble; but if you mix with base men you will lose the wits you have." It must always be borne in mind that by ἐσθλοί and ἀγαθοί Theognis meant the men of his own party. The "good" and "noble" were men of birth, wealth, breeding, and power, on whom, by prejudice and habit, he conferred these moral titles. In course of time, however, as the words acquired a more ethical significance, the philosophers were able to appropriate maxims of worldly prudence to their own more elevated purposes; nor were they even in the times of Theognis other than ambiguous, for the identification of aristocratic position and moral worth was so conventionally complete, that words which were intended to be taken in the one sense had an equal application in the other. In another elegy (305-308) Theognis repeats this advice, when he observes that no one is born utterly bad by nature, but that he contracts habits of depravity from his associates. Here it is obvious how much of ethical meaning the words "good" and "bad" involved, even in the times of the Megarian poet, and how vastly important he considered the society of well-bred companions to be in the formation of character. A different view of moral habits seems to be taken in another fragment (429-438), where Theognis attributes more influence to nature than to training:—"To beget and rear a child," he says, "is easier than to instil good principles. No one ever devised means for making fools wise, or bad men good. If Heaven had given to the sons of Æsculapius the gift of healing wickedness and folly, great fees would they have

¹ "Truly a great light dawned on the Athenians when Aristogeiton with Harmodius slew Hipparchus."

earned. If you could fashion or insert what minds you liked, good men would never have bad sons. But no amount of teaching will make a bad man good." These verses are quoted both by Plato and Aristotle, with whose inquiries into the subject of Education *versus* Nature (of *τρόφή* as opposed to *φύσις*) they had, of course, considerable correspondence.

In connection with this subject of moral habits and companionship, Theognis thought fit to give his pupil advice about his deportment at the public dinners of the Dorians. At these social meetings there was ample scope for political intrigue; and hence it followed that a public man was forced to be particular about his associates. The poet devotes a series of couplets (61-82) to this point, recommending Cyrnus to be reticent, and not to communicate the whole of his plans even to his friends. He warns him how difficult it is to get a faithful friend. You could not find, he says (83-86), one shipload of really trustworthy and incorruptible men upon the face of the world. Moreover, nothing requires more skill than to discover the insincerity of a hypocrite (117-128). You may test gold and silver, but there are no means of getting at the thoughts of men. This sentiment, together with the metaphor of pinchbeck metal, is used by Euripides in *Medea* (line 515). Aristotle also quotes the passage in his Eudemian *Ethics* (vii. 2). Time, however, says Theognis (963-970), and experience, and calamity, are the true tests of friendship. If a man will bear misfortune with you, or will help you in a serious undertaking, you may then, but not till then, rely upon his expressions of attachment. This suspicious temper recalls the social philosophy of Machiavelli; indeed, Greek politics in no respect resembled those of modern Italy more closely than in the diplomatic footing upon which all the relations of society were placed. There are two very curious passages (213-218 and 1071-1074) in which Theognis bids his friend be as much as possible all things to all men. "Turn a different side of your character," he says, "to different men, and mix part of their temper with your own. Get the nature of the cuttlefish, which looks exactly like the rock it clings to: be versatile, and show a variety of complexions." Again, he boasts that "among madmen I am exceeding mad; but among the just no man is more just than I am." Nor is this subtlety to be confined to friendly relations merely. In one most Jesuitical couplet (363) Theognis urges his friend "to beguile his foe with fair words; but when he has him in his power, to take full vengeance and to spare not." As to the actual events of the life of Cyrnus, we know nothing except what is told us in one of the elegies (805-810), that he went as a Theorus to the shrine of Delphi. We may gather from some expressions of the poet that he was of a rash and haughty and unconciliatory temper.

Passing now to the personal history of Theognis, we are struck with his frequent lamentations over poverty and the wretchedness

of exile. "Miserable poverty!" he cries, "go elsewhere; prithee stay not with a host that hates thee." "Poverty breaks the spirit of a noble man more than anything, more even than age or age. The poor man is gagged and bound; he cannot speak or act. . . . Poverty comes not to the market or the lawsuits; everywhere she is laughed and scoffed at, and hated by all men . . . mother she is of helplessness: she breaks the spirit of a man within his breast, so that he suffers shame and wrong in silence, and learns to lie and cheat and do the sin his soul abhors. . . . Wretched want, why, seated on my shoulders, dost thou debase body and mind alike?" (267, 351, 385, 173-182, 649). Wealth, on the other hand, he cries with bitterness, is omnipotent (1117): "O wealth! of gods the fairest and most full of charm! with thy help, though I am a mean man, I am made noble." "Every one honours a rich man and slightes a poor man: the whole world agrees upon this point." But the finest and most satirical of all his poems on this subject is one (699-718) in which he says: "Most men have but one virtue, and that is wealth; it would do you no good if you had the self-control of Rhadamanthus himself, or if you knew more wiles than Sisyphus, or if you could turn falsehood into truth with the tongue of a Nestor, or if you were more fleet of foot than the children of Boreas. You must fix your mind on wealth—wealth alone. Wealth is almighty." It was poverty that gave its bitterness to exile. My friends, he says, pass me by; "no one is the friend or faithful comrade of an exile. This is the sting of exile." "I have suffered what is as bad as death, and worse than anything besides. My friends have refused me the assistance which they owed, and I am forced to try my foes" (811-814). Hope, which has always been the food and sustenance of exiles, alone remained to him. There is one beautiful elegy (1135-1150) in which he imitates Hesiod, singing how faith and temperance and the graces have left the earth, how oaths are broken and religion is neglected, how holiness hath passed away; yet, if a pious man remain, let him wait on Hope, to Hope pray always, to Hope sacrifice first and last.

Verses 825-830 and 1197-1202 describe his condition while living as a poor man, stripped of his paternal farms, in Megara. The voice of the harvest-bird brings him sorrow, for he knows that other men will reap his fields. How can he pipe or sing, when from the marketplace he sees his own land made the prey of revellers? The same sense of the *res angusta domi* is expressed in the welcome to Clearistus. We gather from another elegy (261-266) that Theognis had lost not only his land, but also a girl to whom he was betrothed. Her parents gave her in marriage to a man less noble and less worthy than himself. Nor do we fail to get some insight into his domestic circumstances. Mr. Frere explains one fragment (271-278), full of Lear's indignation, by conjecturing that Theognis had left a wife and children behind him at Megara during his wanderings, and had returned to

find them estranged and thankless. He translates the fragment thus :—

“ One single evil, more severe and rude
Than age or sickness or decrepitude,
Is dealt unequally, for him that rears
A thankless offspring ; in his latter years,
Ungratefully requited for his pains,
A parsimonious life and thrifty gains,
With toil and care acquired for their behoof ;
And no return ! but insolent reproof ;
Such as might scare a beggar from the gate,
A wretch unknown, poor and importunate !
To be reviled, avoided, hated, curst ;
This is the last of evils, and the worst ! ”

The same kind of ingenious conjecture supplies us with a plausible explanation of some obscure couplets (1211-1216), in which it appears that Theognis, having been taunted by a female slave, replied by making most sarcastic remarks on the servile physiognomy, and by boasting that among all his miseries he had remained a free man and a noble-minded gentleman. He often bids his soul be strong and bear bad fortune, like Ulysses when he cried, *τέτλαθι δὴ κραδίη καὶ κύντερον ἄλλο ποτ' ἔτλης*.¹ Nor does he fail to ease his heart by praying for vengeance, and indulging the hope that he may live to drink the blood of his foes (349), and to divide their property among his friends (562). That he was kindly entertained in the various States he visited, he tells us ; and it is thought that he received the citizenship of Hyblæan Megara. Sicily, Eubœa, and Sparta (783-788) are specially mentioned by him as his homes in exile. Wherever he went he carried with him fame, and found a welcome. “ Yet,” says the poet, “ no joy of those fair lands entered my soul, so far was anything from seeming dearer than my native land.”

Among the elegies of general interest attributed to Theognis, none is more beautiful than the following hymn to the goddesses of Song and Beauty, which has been very elegantly rendered into English verse :—

“ Muses and Graces ! daughters of high Jove,
When erst you left your glorious seats above
To bless the bridal of that wondrous pair,
Cadmus and Harmonia fair,
Ye chanted forth a divine air :
‘ What is good and fair
Shall ever be our care.’
Thus the burden of it rang :
‘ That shall never be our care
Which is neither good nor fair.’
Such were the words your lips immortal sang.”²

The very essence of the Greek feeling for the beautiful is expressed in these simple lines. Beauty, goodness, and truth were to the Greeks

¹ “ Be stout, O heart of mine : ere now thou hast endured even more grimly grief than this.”

² *Miscellanies*, by the late John Addington Symonds, M.D., p. 411.

almost convertible terms; and the nearest approach which Plato made to the conception of a metaphysical deity was called by him the *ἰδέα τοῦ καλοῦ* (Idea of the Beautiful). Not less Greek is the sentiment expressed in the following lines (1027):—"Easy among men is the practice of wickedness, but hard, friend Cynus, is the method of goodness." Theognis here expresses very prosaically what Hesiod and Simonides have both enunciated in noble verse (*Op. et Dies*, 285-290, and Simonides, Frag. 15, ed. Gaisford). It is noticeable that in his couplet τὸ ἀγαθόν (the good) is used instead of ἀρετή (virtue or excellence). The thought, however, is the same; nor does it differ widely from that which is contained in the Aristotelian "Hymn to Virtue," where we see that what the Greeks meant by this word, included not only moral rectitude, but also the labour of a Hercules, and all noble or patriotic deeds which implied self-devotion to a great cause.

The occasions for which the elegies of this class were composed by Theognis seem to have been chiefly banquets and drinking parties. In the Dorian States of Greece it was customary for men to form select clubs, which met together after the public meals for the purpose of drinking, conversing, and enjoying music. These friendly societies formed an appendix to the national *φειδίτια*, or public tables. Great care was taken in the selection of members, who were admitted by ballot; and in time the clubs acquired political importance. Periander is said (*Ar. Pol.* v. 9, 2) to have abolished them in Corinth because they proved favourable to aristocracy—no doubt by keeping up the old Doric traditions which he took pains to break down. In the verses of Theognis we are introduced to many members of his club by name—Onomacritus, Clearistus, Demonax, Democles, Timagoras, and doubtless Cynus. Of course these customs were not confined to Doric cities; on the contrary, the Symposia and Erani of the Athenians are more celebrated for their wit and humour, while readers of Thucydides remember how large a part the clubs played in the history of the Eighth Book. But the custom was systematised, like everything else, with greater rigour among Dorians. It appears that, after having eaten, the cups were filled and libations were made to the Doric patron Phoebus (cf. *Theogn.*, Frag. 1); then came the Comus or drinking-bout: flute-players entered the room, and some of the guests sang to the lyre, or addressed an elegy to the company at large, or to some particular person. These facts may be gathered from different fragments of Theognis (997, 757); but if we wish to gain a complete picture of one of these parties, we may seek it in an elegy of Xenophanes, which is so fresh and pretty that I feel inclined to paraphrase it at length:—

"Now the floor is cleanly swept; the hands of all the guests are washed; the cups shine brightly on the board. Woven wreaths and fragrant myrrh are carried round by the attendants, and in the middle stands a bowl full of that which maketh glad the heart of man. Wine too is ready in reserve, wine inexhaustible, honey-

sweet in jars, smelling of flowers. Frankincense breathes forth its perfume among the revellers, and cold water, sweet and pure, waits at their side. Loaves, fresh and golden, stand upon the table, which groans with cheese and rich honey. In the midst is an altar hung about with flowers, and singing and merriment resound throughout the house. First must merry-making men address the gods with holy songs and pure words; libations must they pour, and pray for strength to act justly; then may they drink as much as a man can carry home without a guide—unless he be far gone in years. This also is right, to speak of noble deeds and virtue over our cups; not to tell tales of giants or Titans or the Centaurs, mere fictions of our grandfathers, and foolish fables."

It was customary at these banquets to sing the praises of youth and to lament old age, ringing endless changes on the refrain "*Vivamus atque amemus*," which antiquity was never weary of repeating. Very sad and pathetic is the tone of these old songs, wherein the pæan mingles with the dirge; for youth and the grave are named in the same breath, and while we smell the roses we are reminded that they will wither. Then comes the end—the cold and solitary tomb, eternal frost and everlasting darkness, to which old age, the winter and night of life, is but a melancholy portal. *Gaudeamus igitur, juvenes cum sumus* (Let us take our pleasure then, while we are young).

"To pleasure, in life's bloom, yield we our powers,
While yet to be and to enjoy are ours;
For swift as thought our glorious youth goes by,
Swift as the coursers that to battle fly,
Bearing the chief with quivering spear in hand,
Madly careering o'er the rich corn-land,"—

so sings Theognis (977), and with even more of pathos he exclaims—

"Ah me! my youth! alas for old's dark day:
This comes apace, while that fleets fast away."

The same idea is repeated in many other elegies, always with the same sad cadence: "No man, as soon as the earth covers him, and he goes down to Erebus, the home of Persephone, takes any pleasure in the sound of the lyre, or the voice of the flute-player, or in the sweet gifts of Dionysus" (973-976). At another time he reckons up the ills of life: "When I am drinking I take no heed of soul-consuming poverty or of enemies who speak ill of me; but I lament delightful youth which is forsaking me, and wail for grim old age who cometh on apace" (1129-1132). Their tone reminds us of Mimnermus, who said the utmost when he cried—

"Zeus to Tithonus gave a grievous ill—
Undying age, than death more horrible!"

To multiply more elegies of this description would be useless. We may, however, allude to a poem of Simonides (Frag. 100, ed. Gaisford), which combines the sweetness of Mimnermus and the energy of Theognis:—"Nothing human endures for aye. Well said the bard of Chios, that like the leaves so is the race of men: yet few who hear

this keep it in their mind ; for hope is strong within the breast of youth. When the flower of youth lasts, and the heart of a man is light, he nurses idle thoughts, hoping he never will grow old or die ; nor does he think of sickness in good health. Fools are they who dream thus, nor know how short are the days of youth and life. But learn thou this, and live thy life out, cheering thy soul with good things." The tone of these elegies pervades a great many monuments of Greek sculpture. Standing before the Genius of Eternal Repose, or the so-called Genius of the Vatican, we are moved almost to tears by the dumb sadness with which their perfect beauty has been chastened. Like the shade of young Marcellus in Virgil, they seem to carry round them a cloud of gloom, impalpable, yet overshadowing their youth with warnings and anticipations of the tomb.

With Theognis the list of gnomic poets, strictly so called, may be said to close. Simonides, from whom I have adduced some passages in illustration of the elder elegiac writers, survived the bard of Megara, and attained a far greater reputation than he enjoyed, at the Syracusan and Athenian courts. How highly his maxims were valued by the moralists of the succeeding age, is known by every reader of the *Protagoras* and *Republic* of Plato. But a more detailed analysis of his verses would be out of place, when we consider that his chief fame rests upon epitaphs, patriotic epigrams, and lyrical fragments—none of them strictly gnomic in their character.

To modern readers the philosophy of the poets whom we have considered will perhaps seem trite, their inspiration tame, their style pedestrian. But their contemporaries were far from arriving at this criticism. To obtain concise and abstract maxims upon the ethics of society, politics, and education, was to them a new and inestimable privilege. In the gnomic poets the morality which had been merely implicit in Homer and Hesiod, received separate treatment and distinct expression. The wisdom which had been gradually collecting for centuries in the Greek mind, was tersely and lucidly condensed into a few pregnant sentences. These sentences formed the data for new syntheses and higher generalisations, the topics for enlarged investigation, the "middle axioms" between the scattered facts of life and the unity of philosophical system. We may regard the gnomic poets with interest, partly on account of the real, if rare, beauty of some of their fragments ; partly on account of their historical and illustrative value ; partly because all efforts of the human mind in its struggle for emancipation, and all stages in its development, are worthy of attentive study. To the sophists, to the orators, to Socrates and his friends, to the tragic writers, to educated men at large in Hellas, they were authorities on moral questions ; and their maxims, which the progress of the centuries has rendered commonplace, appeared the sentences of weightiest wisdom, oracles almost, and precepts inspired by more than human prudence.

CHAPTER IX

THE SATIRISTS

Invention of the Iambic Metre—Archilochus—His Parentage and Life—His Fame among the Ancients—Ancient and Modern Modes of Judging Artists—The Originality of Archilochus as a Poet—Simonides of Amorgos—His Satire on Women—The Ionian Contempt for Women—Hipponax—Limping Iambics—Differences between the Satire of the Greeks and Romans.

THE Greeks displayed their æsthetic instinct in nothing more remarkably than in their exact adaptation of the forms of art to the nature of the subjects which they undertook to treat. The Hexameter had sufficed for the needs of the Epic. The Elegiac had fulfilled the requirements of pathetic or contemplative meditation. But with the development of the national genius a separate vehicle for satire was demanded. Archilochus of Paros created a new style, and presented in the Iambic metre a new instrument to the poets of his race. The circumstances of the birth and parentage of Archilochus are significant. He was the son of Telesicles, a noble Ionian, and of Enipo, a slave-woman. Thus from the very first there were inequalities in his circumstances which may have sufficed to sour his temper. His birth, which may be fixed about 729 B.C., was predicted, according to old tradition, by the oracle at Delphi. The same oracle busied itself at a later period with his death, by cursing the Naxian soldier Calondas, who had killed him in battle, because he had "slain the servant of the Muses." As the fragments we possess of Archilochus render it difficult to understand the very high estimation in which he was held by the Greeks, and which these stories indicate, it may be well to preface this account of him with some quotations from the ancient critics. Longinus,¹ to begin with, explains the incongruities of his poetry by saying that he "dragged disorderly elements into his verse under the impulse of divine inspiration." Plato² calls him ὁ σοφώτατος Ἀρχίλοχος, "the prince of sages," which, in the mouth of a philosopher, is the highest panegyric. The Alexandrian critic Aristophanes, when asked

¹ *On the Sublime*, xxxiii. 5.

² *Rep.* 365, c.

which of the poems of Archilochus he liked best, answered with laconic brevity, "the longest." Hadrian,¹ in an epigram, says that the Muses turned the attention of Archilochus to mad Iambics, in order that their darling Homer might not have so dangerous a rival in the field of the Epic. All antiquity agreed in naming him second only to Homer: "Maximus poeta aut certe summo proximus," "a poet of the highest order, or surely next unto the greatest," says Valerius Maximus. The birthdays of Homer and Archilochus were celebrated on the same day; their busts were joined in Janus fashion—two faces and one head: Hippodromus the Sophist² called Homer the Voice, Archilochus the Breath or Soul, of the students of wisdom. The epithet κάλλιστος (most beautiful) was ascribed to him because of his perfect style, though the subjects of his poetry were anything but beautiful. Of this style Quintilian³ says that it excelled in "powerful as well as short and quivering sentences," that it contained "the greatest possible amount of blood and sinews." The highest praise which Gorgias could pronounce on Plato when he published his dialogues upon the Sophists, was to say that Athens had produced a new Archilochus. To multiply these panegyrics would be easy. But enough has been adduced to prove that the ancients looked on Archilochus as a worthy rival of Homer, as a poet supreme in his own department, as the creator of a new kingdom in poetry, as the sire of a long line of mighty artists.

What remains of the verse of Archilochus and what we know of his life are curiously at variance with this enthusiasm. Nothing proves the difference between ancient and modern views of art more strongly than the fact that all antiquity concurred in regarding as a divinely inspired benefactor of the human race, a man who in the present day would have been hunted from society with execrations. This son of the slave-woman, born in an Ionian island, where license was more tolerated than in a Dorian state, devoted himself to satire, making his genius the instrument of private hate, and turning the golden gifts of the Muses to the service of his selfish spite. A greater contrast cannot be conceived than that which exists between Homer, the priest of Gods and Heroes, the poet of high actions and lofty passions, whose own life is buried in sacred and sublime mystery, and this satirist who saw the world with jaundiced eyes, prying about for subjects of his wrath and bitterness and scorn, whose themes were the passions of his own heart, the sordid misadventures of his personality. It was this contrast between Archilochus and Homer that gave the former a right in the estimation of the Greeks to take equal rank with the Father of the Epos. He, the greatest poet next in date to Homer, by virtue of a divine originality of genius, exercised his art in exactly the opposite field to that which Homer ruled as his demesne. Clearer sign than this of inspiration could not be demanded; and how should posterity withhold its gratitude from the poet who had

¹ *Anth. Pal.* vii. 674.

² *Philostr. Bioi Soph.* 620.

³ x. 1. 60.

unlocked a new chamber of the treasure-house of art? This was how the ancients reasoned, instead of measuring their poets, as the moderns try to do, by moral standards and conventional conceptions of propriety.

The facts of the life of Archilochus are briefly these. He was engaged to be married to Neobulé, daughter of Lycambes. Her father retracted his consent to the marriage, having possibly discovered that the temper of his proposed son-in-law was a mixture of gall, worm-wood, vinegar, verjuice, vitriol, and nitric acid. Thereupon, as Horace says :—

“ Archilochum proprio rabies armavit iambo.”¹

He made the Iambic metre his own, and sharpened it into a terrible weapon of attack. Each verse he wrote was polished and pointed like an arrow-head. Each line was steeped in the poison of hideous charges against his sweetheart, her sisters, and her father. The set of poems which he produced, and, as it would appear, recited publicly at the festival of Demeter, were so charged with wit and fire, that the country rang with them. The daughters of Lycambes, tradition avers, went straightway and hanged themselves—unable to endure the flight of fiery serpents that had fallen on them: for, to quote the words of Browning, Archilochus had the art of writing verse that “ bit into the live man’s flesh like parchment,” that sent him wandering, branded and for ever shamed, about his native streets and fields. After this murderous exhibition of his power Archilochus left Paros.²

“ Away with Paros ! her figs and fishy life ! ”

He removed to Thasos, where the Parians founded a colony. But Thasos was worse than Paros:³ “ Like the backbone of an ass it stood bristling with wild wood ; for, in sooth it is not a fair land, or pleasant, or delightful, like that which spreads by Siris’ stream.” It was here he threw his shield away in a battle with the Thracians, and gave Horace and Alcæus a precedent by writing a poem on his want of prowess. The remainder of his life was spent in wandering. He visited Sparta, where, however, he was not suffered to remain an hour. The Ephors judged rightly that this runaway soldier and foul-mouthed Ionian satirist might corrupt the Spartan youth, or sow dissension in the State. The publication of his works was forbidden in this, the most conservative of all Greek States. Finally Archilochus returned to Paros, and was killed in battle by a native of Naxos. A more unhappy existence, wretched in itself and the cause of wretchedness to others, can scarcely be imagined, if the tale of the life of Archilochus be true. Dishonoured by the inequality of his parentage, slighted in the matter of his marriage, discontented at home, restless and rejected abroad, he seems to have been formed by the facts of

¹ “ It was rage that armed Archilochus with his own Iambic.”

² Bergk, *Poeta Lyrici*, p. 696.

³ *Ib.* p. 689.

his biography for the creation of Satire. And this is his greatest title to fame.

It is possible that the Iambic metre existed before the date of Archilochus. An old myth connects it with the festivals of Demeter. Demeter, it is said, could not be made to laugh after her daughter's loss, until a nymph, Iambé, by her jests and sarcasms, raised a smile upon her lips. This legend proves that the Greeks referred the origin of the Iambic to those jokes and gibes which were common in the feasts of Demeter, and from the licentious mirth of which the satiric element of Comedy was developed. The Iambic is nearest in cadence to the language of common life; it is therefore the fit vehicle for dialogue, and for all poetry that deals with common and domestic topics. Again, it is essentially rapid in movement: Horace speaks of *celerēs Iambi* (swift Iambi); Hadrian calls them *λυσσῶντες ἰαμβοὶ* (raging Iambi): this rapidity fitted them for sharp attack and swift satiric pungency. Admitting then that the metre may have been employed in early attempts at colloquial satire, Archilochus, perceiving its capacities, fashioned it to suit the purpose of his own consummate art. He was celebrated among the ancients for having perfected the metres belonging to what they called the *διπλάσιον γένος*, as distinguished from the *ἴσον γένος*—that is to say, the Iambic and Trochaic rhythms, in which either the arsis or the thesis has twice the time of the other. In a trochee the first syllable equals two of the same time as the second; in an iamb this order is reversed; whereas the dactyl and the spondee, on which the hexameter and elegiac metres are based, are feet, each member of which has the same time, the two shorts of the dactyl being equivalent to the second long of the spondee. Archilochus, if not absolutely the inventor, was the creator of these two metres, the Iambic and Trochaic, as truly as Homer was the creator of the heroic measure. No proof of the power of his genius can be greater than the fact that, whatever changes may have been subsequently wrought in the Iambic and Trochaic metres, they remained substantially the same as those which Archilochus employed, whether afterwards adapted to Satire, Tragedy, or Comedy. While speaking of Archilochus as a technical artist, it ought to be mentioned that he gave further proof of his originality by elaborating the metrical systems which the Greeks called *Asynartêtes*, or unconnected. These consisted of a mixture of dactylic and anapæstic with trochaic feet. The Ithyphallic, which was marked by a succession of three trochees at the end of the line, was the most distinguished.

To translate Archilochus is almost impossible. His merit is the perfection of style, which will admit of no transplantation. His language is the language of common life, exquisitely chosen, and kept within the most exact limits, with a view to the production of a carefully studied effect. It is hopeless to render such fragments as we possess without making them seem coarse or prósy, the poet's supremacy having been achieved by his artistic handling of vernacular Greek.

When we compare its pithy terseness with the flowing grandeur of the Epic—a grandeur which had already become conventional in Greece, a fluency which poetasters abused—it is easy to understand that the racy epigrams of Archilochus, in which the subject was set forth with exquisite point and without circumlocution, must have been an acceptable novelty to his audience. Greek sculpture is not more pure in outline than the following fragment,¹ which sets before our eyes the figure of a girl embossed on marble or engraved in chalcedony :—

ἔχουσα θαλλὸν μυρσίνης ἐτέρπετο
 ῥοδῆς τε καλὸν ἄνθος, ἣ δὲ οἱ κόμη
 ὤμους κατεσκίαζε καὶ μετάφρενα.

Archilochus flourished between 714 and 676 B.C. The date of the next Iambic poet, Simonides of Amorgos, is 660 B.C. It is noticeable that both of these satirists are Ionian. The relaxation of Ionian life and the freedom of Ionian manners, as concerned the artist and the public, rendered the development of satire in Ionia more natural than it could ever have been in a Dorian state. Simonides owes his celebrity to a poem upon women, a very ungallant production of 119 lines, which presents one of the most curious examples upon record of a perfectly smooth and yet crushing satire. The Iambic lines flow quietly and swiftly off the poet's lips, in mild and polished phraseology, with none of the concentrated fury of Archilochus. Yet Simonides aims at no less than destroying the character of a whole sex. In a sort of gentle, well-mannered, lazy way he is successful, not so much by persuading us through examples, after the method of Juvenal, that his satire is justified, as by the imperturbable expression of a profound conviction. The interest of this poem is very great, as marking a departure from the personalities of Archilochus and an attempt to introduce generalities into the region of satiric delineation. In this respect it is in Greek literature almost unique, if we except Sicilian, Megarian, and Attic Comedy, whereof this is not the place to speak. The rhetorical treatment of a problem of social ethics from the point of view of satire was, as we shall see hereafter, alien to Greek literature.

This is the plan of the poem. Simonides describes the nature of the different sorts of women by comparing them successively to a hog, a fox, a dog, mud, sea-water, an ass, a weasel, a mare, an ape, a bee. Thus there are ten kinds, and only one respectable or industrious. He rushes at once *in medias res* : " God made the mind of women in the beginning of different qualities : for one he fashioned of a bristly hog ; in whose house everything tumbles about in disorder, bespattered with mud, and rolls upon the ground : she, dirty, with unwashed

¹ Bergk, p. 691 :—

" Holding a myrtle-rod she blithely moved,
 And a fair blossoming rose ; the flowing tresses
 Shadowed her shoulders, falling to her girdle."

clothes, sits and grows fat in a dung-heap." The woman like mud is thus hit off: "This woman is ignorant of everything both good and bad; her only accomplishment is eating: cold though the winter be, she is too stupid to draw near the fire." Here is the woman who takes after the sea: "She has two minds; when she laughs and is glad, the stranger seeing her at home will give her praise—there is not a better woman than this on the earth, no, nor a fairer; but another day she is unbearable, not to be looked at or approached, but she is right mad. To friend and foe she is alike implacable and odious. Thus as the sea often is calm and innocent, a great delight to sailors in summer-time, and oftentimes again is frantic, tearing along with roaring billows; so is this woman in her temper." The woman who resembles a mare offers other disagreeable qualities. She is "delicate and long-haired, unfit for drudgery or toil: *she* would not touch the mill or lift the sieve or clean the house out! She bathes twice or thrice a day, and smears herself with myrrh; then she wears her hair combed out, long and wavy, decked with flowers. It follows that this woman is a rare sight to one's guests, but to her husband she's a curse, unless he be a tyrant who prides himself on such expensive luxuries." The ape-like wife is treated even worse. But at last we reach the bee: "The man who gets her is lucky; to her alone belongs no blame: his property thrives and increases under her; and loving with a loving helpmate she grows old, the mother of a fair and famous race. Such wives are the best and wisest Zeus grants to men." Yet even after this pretty picture Simonides winds up with a comprehensive condemnation of the female sex: "Zeus made this supreme evil—women: even though they seem to be of good, when one has got one, she becomes a plague."

The spirit of this invective is derived in a great measure from Hesiod, whose myth of Pandora marked his estimate of women, and whose precepts concerning the choice of a wife must have depressed the Bœotian bachelors with the certainty that nine women out of ten would prove a curse. This is precisely the proportion of bad to good that Simonides establishes. His tenth and virtuous wife is praised because she is industrious and quiet, and the mother of many children. We here get the primitive ideal of the helpmeet for man. Modern theorists would condemn it as the model of a slave. And it is certain that, as Greek civilisation advanced, without a corresponding elevation of the conception of wifehood, the chivalrous sentiment of the Greeks sought other channels than that of sexual love, exalting a form of passionate friendship between men as the real source of heroic action and inspiring thought.¹ The outline traced by Simonides was filled

¹ The inferiority of women was undoubtedly the source of many of the worst faults of the Greek race. Yet it is easy to overestimate the importance of such satires as that of Simonides; nor would it be fair to take them as expressing the deliberate opinion of the nation. The Jews, who gave a nobler place in social life to women, ascribed the fall of man to Eve. Modern literature again, in spite of Christianity and chivalry, is not wanting in

in by subsequent satirists. Susarion, the Comic Poet, makes this grandiloquent proclamation: "Hear, O ye people! These are the words of Susarion of Tripodiscus, Philinus' son, of Megara: Woman is a curse!" Aristophanes in his plays, the *Lysistrata*, the *Thesmophoriazusæ*, and the *Ecclesiazusæ*, gives to the Athenian women all the attributes of the hog, the ape, the clay, the sea, and the fox; in the *Clouds* he draws the picture of one who is like the blood-mare; but he does not hint, even by way of parody, that there existed any bees. The Greeks never learned the art of making women their companions in the noblest sense. It must, however, be borne in mind that the Ionians were less civilised in this respect than the Dorians, who had a higher regard for the excellences of women, and allowed them greater liberty.¹ Simonides is expressing Ionian rather than Dorian sentiments, and at the same time may be reasonably supposed to be overstraining them for the sake of a burlesque effect.

Next in date to Simonides among the Iambographers ranks Hipponax of Ephesus, who flourished about 540 B.C. He too was an Ionian. The satire which Archilochus had directed against private enemies was extended, as we have seen, by Simonides to a whole sex; and thus its purely selfish character had been considerably modified. But Hipponax restored it to its primitive function. He used the Iambic as a weapon of personal attack: and as Archilochus had shot his arrows against Lycambes and his daughters, so Hipponax found a butt in Bupalus and Athenis, sculptors of Chios. These two artists had begun by ridiculing the poet, who was short and thin and ugly. They seem to have made caricatures of him, piquing themselves no doubt upon the durability of the marble in which they worked. But they found more than their match in Hipponax, whose biting verses are said to have driven Bupalus to hang himself. Whether this is a mere echo of the tale of Lycambes remains doubtful; but at any rate the statues of the sculptor have perished, while the poet's Iambics exist in sufficient force to justify his reputation among the ancients for having been the most caustic, crabbed, and sour of satirists. They called him *ὁ πικρός* (the pungent), and in their epigrams, made merry over his traditional bad temper. Leonidas of Tarentum, for instance, warns travellers not to touch his tomb, lest they should rouse the sleeping wasp; and Alcæus of Messene says that no ivy, vine, or rose, should adorn his grave, but only thorns and thistles.

In order apparently to bring the metre still more within the sphere of prose and common speech, Hipponax ended his Iambics with a spondee or a trochee instead of an iambus, doing thus the utmost violence to the rhythmical structure. These deformed and mutilated verses were called *χωλίamboi* or *ἰamboi σκάζοντες* (lame or limping

epigrams like the following, ascribed to Leo Battista Alberti: "Levity and inconstancy were given to women as a counterbalance to their perfidy and badness; for, could woman stick to her purpose, she would destroy all the fair works of man."

¹ Plutarch's *Life of Cleomenes* contains two historical pictures of heroic wifehood.

Iambics). They communicate a curious crustiness to the style. The Choliambi are in poetry what the dwarf or cripple is in human nature. Here again, by their acceptance of this halting metre, the Greeks displayed their acute æsthetic sense of propriety, recognising the harmony which subsists between crabbed verses and the distorted subjects with which they dealt—the vices and perversions of humanity—as well as their agreement with the snarling spirit of the satirist. Deformed verse was suited to deformed morality. Meanwhile it is but just to Hipponax to record that he appears to have been a sincere castigator of crime, extravagance, and folly. Without the sublime perfection and fervid energy of Archilochus, he does not seem to have shared the unamiable personal qualities of the greater poet. Two of his lines give a sufficient notion of his style :—

δύ' ἡμέραι γυναῖκός εἰσιν ἡδίσται,
ὅταν γαμῆ τις κάκφερον τεθνηκυῖαν.

“A woman gives two days of happiness to man, in her bridal and her burial.”

The satire which these three Ionians, Archilochus, Simonides, and Hipponax, inaugurated in Greece, was continued by the Attic comic poets. Satire in the Roman and the modern sense of the term never flourished among the Greeks. The life of the Agora, the Ecclesia, and the Theatre, was too complete and free to need the supplement of rhetorical invective intended either for reading or for recitation. Of satirical comments upon individuals and of pasquinades of every kind the Greeks had plenty. We hear, for example, that Alcæus exercised his poetical talent in satirising Pittacus, and one of the most considerable fragments of Anacreon contains a very ludicrous caricature of Artemon, his rival for the affections of a certain yellow-haired Eurypyle. But their satire did not incline to the form which the earlier writers of Iambics had invented. It found its true sphere in the Dorian Comedy of Epicharmus and the Athenian Comedy of Aristophanes, who combined the personalities of Archilochus and the generalities of Simonides in his own consummate work of dramatic art. Among the lost treasures of Greek literature we have to regret few things more than the plays of the Syracusan Epicharmus, from whom we might have learned directly what now we can only infer—that the Dorians, when uncontrolled by the severe taste of Sparta, indulged a humour for drollery and sarcasm, which, though rougher than that of the Ionians, must have had its own flavour of raciness and fun. Roman satire maintained a strictly moral intention; *facit indignatio versus* is the motto of Juvenal, while Horace holds the mirror of worldly philosophy to the follies and the vices of his age, and Persius applies the canons of Stoical Ethics to the phenomena of society as he observed them. This is the lead which our modern satirists—the Regnier of France, the Dryden or the Pope of England, have followed. Greek literature furnishes no specimen of this species of composition. Wherever in

the Comedies of Aristophanes, or the Dialogues of Lucian, or the Epigrams of the Anthology, we meet with satire, we find the simple motives of Archilochus and Simonides at work.¹ Personal animosity gives a barb and a venom to the shaft: or the poet delineates with more or less of comic wit the social anomalies that have struck his fancy. Of serious invective and of moral preaching, the Greeks, in their satiric art at least, knew nothing. Plato himself is only accidentally a satirist in the sense of the term which we moderns have adopted from the Romans.

¹ A study of Herondas appears in Chapter XX. He adapted the Choliambics of Hipponax to subjects which preserved something of the manner of Sophron in what were called his *Mimiambi*.

CHAPTER X

THE LYRIC POETS

The Æsthetic Instinct of the Greeks in their Choice of Metres—Different Species of Lyrical Poetry—The Fragments in Bergk's Collection—Proëmia—Prosodia—Parthenia—Pæan—Hyporchem—Dithyramb—Phallic Hymn—Epinikia—Threnoi—Scolia—Æolian and Dorian Lyrists—The Flourishing Period of Lesbos—Sappho—Alcæus—Anacreon—Nationality of the Dorian Lyrists—Spartan Education—Alcman—Arion—Stesichorus—Ibycus—Simonides—Greek Troubadours—Style of Simonides—Pindar.

To compress into a single chapter all that should be said about the Greek lyrical poets is impossible. Yet by eliminating the writers of elegies and iambics, who have been considered separately as gnomic poets and satirists, the field is somewhat narrowed. Simonides of Amorgos, Archilochus, Theognis, Solon, not to mention lesser names, are by this process legitimately excluded. The Æolian lyrists, with Sappho at their head, and the so-called Dorian lyrists, who culminate in Pindar, remain. Casting a glance backwards into the remote shadows of antiquity, we find that lyrical poetry, like all art in Greece, took its origin in connection with primitive Nature-worship. The song of Linus,¹ referred to by Homer in his description of the shield of Achilles, was a lament sung by reapers for the beautiful dead youth who symbolised the decay of summer's prime.² In the funeral chant

¹ τοῖσιν δ' ἐν μέσσοισι παῖς φόρμιγγι λιγέῃ
ἰμερβεν κιθάριζε· λίνον δ' ὑπὸ καλὸν ἄειδεν
λεπταλή φωνῇ.—*Iliad*, xviii. 569:

“A boy, amid them, from a clear-toned harp
Drew lovely music; well his liquid voice
The strings accompanied.”—*Lord Derby's Trans.*

² Bergk (*Poeta Lyrici Græci*, 3 vols., Leipsic, 1866) gives an old Greek Linus-song on p. 1297:—

“O Linus, thee the gods did grace:
For unto thee they gave, most dear,
First among men the song to raise
With shrill voice sounding high and clear;
And Phœbus thee in anger slays,
And Muses mourn around thy bier.”

for Adonis, women bewailed the fleeting splendour of the spring; and Hyacinthus, loved and slain by Phœbus, whom the Laconian youths and maidens honoured, was again a type of vernal loveliness deflowered. The Bacchic songs of alternating mirth and sadness, which gave birth, through the Dithyramb, to Tragedy, and through the Comus-hymn, to Comedy, marked the waxing and the waning of successive years, the pulses of the heart of Nature, to which men listened as the months passed over them. In their dim beginnings these elements of Greek poetry are hardly to be distinguished from the dirges and the raptures of Asiatic ceremonial, in which the dance and chant and song were mingled in a vague monotony—generation after generation expressing the same emotions according to traditions handed down from their forefathers. But the Greek genius was endowed with the faculty of distinguishing, differentiating, vitalising, what the Oriental nations left hazy and confused and inert. Therefore with the very earliest stirrings of conscious art in Greece we remark a powerful specialising tendency. Articulation succeeds to mere interjectional utterance. Separate forms of music and of metre are devoted, with the unerring instinct of a truly æsthetic race, to the expression of the several moods and passions of the soul. An unconscious psychology leads by intuitive analysis to the creation of distinct branches of composition, each accurately adapted to its special purpose.

From the very first commencement of their literature, the Greeks thus determined separate styles and established critical canons, which, though empirically and spontaneously formed, were based on real relations between the moral and æsthetic sides of art, between feeling and expression, substance and form. The Hexameter was consecrated to epical narrative; the Elegy was confined to songs of lament or meditation; the Iambic assumed a satiric character. To have written a narrative in Iambics or a satire in Hexameters would have been odious to Greek taste: the stately march of the Dactylic metre seemed unfit for snarling and invective; the quick flight of the Iambic did not carry weight enough or volume to sustain a lengthy narrative. In the same way the infinite divisions of lyrical poetry had all their own peculiar proprieties. How could a poet have bewailed his loves or losses in the stately structure of the Pindaric ode? Conversely, a hymn to Phœbus required more sonorousness and elaboration than the recurring stanzas of the Sapphic or Alcaic offered. It was the business, therefore, of the Greek poet, after duly considering his subject, to select the special form of poetry consecrated by long usage for his particular purpose, to conform his language to some species of music inseparable from that style, and then, within the prescribed limits both of metre and of melody, to exercise his imagination as freely as he could, and to produce novelty. This amount of fixity in the forms of poetry and music arose from the exquisite tact and innate taste of the Greek race. It was far from being a piece of scholastic pedantry or of Chinese conservatism. No; the diction, metre, and music of

an elegy or an ode tended to assume a certain form as naturally as the ingredients of a ruby or a sapphire crystallise into a crimson or an azure stone. The discrimination shown by the Greeks in all the technicalities of art remained in full vigour till the decline of their literature. It was not until the Alexandrian age that they began to confound these delicate distinctions, and to use the Idyllic Hexameter for all subjects, whether narrative, descriptive, elegiac, encomiastic, hymeneal.¹ Then, and not till then, the Greeks descended to that degradation of art which prevailed, for instance, in England during what we call the classic period of our literature. Under the influence of Dryden and of Pope, an English poet used no metre but the heroic couplet, whether he were writing a play, an epigram, a satire, an epic, an eclogue, an elegy, or a didactic epistle; thus losing all elasticity of style, all the force which appropriate form communicates to thought.

To catalogue the minute subdivisions of the art of lyric poetry in Greece, to show how wisely their several limits were prescribed, how firmly adhered to, and to trace the connection of choral song with all the affairs of public and private life, would be a task of some magnitude. Colonel Mure, in a well-known passage, writes:—"From Olympus down to the workshop or the sheepfold, from Jove and Apollo to the wandering mendicant, every rank and degree of the Greek community, divine or human, had its own proper allotment of poetical celebration. The gods had their hymns, nomes, pæans, dithyrambs; great men had their encomia and epinikia; the votaries of pleasure their erotica and symposiaca; the mourner his threnodia and elegies; the vine-dresser had his epilenia; the herdsmen their bucolica; even the beggar his eiresione and chelidonisma." Lyrical poetry in Greece was not produced, like poetry in modern times, for the student, by men who find they have a taste for versifying. It was intimately intertwined with actual life, and was so indispensable that every town had its professional poets and choruses, just as every church in Europe now has its organist, of greater or less pretension. The mass of lyrical poetry which must have existed in Greece was probably enormous. We can only compare it to the quantity of church music that exists in Germany and Italy, in MS. and print, good, bad, and indifferent, unknown and unexplored, so voluminous that no one ventures to sift it or reduce it to order. Of this large mass we possess the fragments. Just as the rocky islands of the Ægean Archipelago testify to the existence of a submerged tract of mountain heights and valleys, whose summits alone appear above the waves, so the odes of Pindar, the waifs and strays of Sappho, Simonides, and others, are evidences of the loss we have sustained. They prove that beneath the ocean of time and oblivion remain for ever buried stores of poetry, which might have

¹ Many poems of the Syracusan Idyllists are valuable historically as adaptations of the Hexameter to subjects essentially lyrical. In the Adoniazusa, the Epithalamium Helenæ, Bion's Lament for Adonis, and Moschus' Lament for Bion, etc., we trace a lyrical inspiration overlaid by the Idyllic form. Theocritus must have worked on the lines of old choral and dramatic poetry.

been sufficient to form the glory of a literature less rich in masterpieces than the Greek. To collect the fragments, to piece them together, to ponder over them until their scattered indications offer some suggestion of the whole which has been lost, is all that remains for the modern student. Like the mutilated marbles of Praxiteles, chips broken off from bas-reliefs and statues, which are disinterred from the ruins of Rome or Herculaneum, the minutest portions of the Greek lyrists have their value. We must be thankful for any two words of Sappho that survive in authentic juxtaposition, for any hemistich that may be veritably styled a relic of "some tender-hearted scroll of pure Simonides."

Chance has wrought fantastically with these relics. The lyrists, even in classical days, fell comparatively early into neglect. They were too condensed in language, too difficult in style, too sublime in imagination for the pedants of the later Empire. Long before its close, Greek literature was oppressed with its own wealth; in the words of Livy, *magnitudine laboravit suâ*. Taste, too, began to change; sophistic treatises, idyllic verses, novelettes in prose, neat epigrams, usurped upon the grander forms of composition. The stagnation, again, of civic life under imperial sway proved unfavourable to the composition of national odes and to choric celebrations in which whole peoples took a part. So disdainful in her almsgiving has Fortune been, that she has only flung to us the Epinikian odes of Pindar; while his hymns to the gods, his processional chants, and his funeral dirges, are lost. Young Athens, Alexandria, and Byzantium cared, we may conceive, for poems which shed lustre on athletic sports and horse-racing. Trainers, boxers, riders, chariot-drivers—all the muscular section of the public—had some interest in bygone Pythian or Olympian victories. But who sought to preserve the antiquated hymns to Phœbus and to Zeus, when the rites of Isis and Serapis and the Phrygian mother were in vogue? The outspoken boldness of the Erotic and Satiric lyrists stood them in bad stead. When Theodora was exhibiting her naked charms in the arena, who could commend the study of Anacreon in the schoolroom? Degeneracy of public morals and prudery of literary taste go not unfrequently together. Therefore, the emperor Julian proscribed Archilochus; and what Julian proscribed, the Christians sought to extirpate. To destroy an ode of Sappho was a good work. Consequently, we possess no complete edition of even a section of the works of any lyrist except Pindar; what remains of the others has been preserved in the works of critics, anecdote-mongers, and grammarians; who cite tantalising passages to prove a rule in syntax, to illustrate a legend or a custom, to exemplify a canon of taste. Embedded in ponderous prose, these splintered jewels escaped the iconoclastic zeal of the monks. Thanks be to Athenæus above all men (the author of an imaginary dialogue in fifteen bulky books on every topic of Greek antiquity), to Longinus, to Philostratus, to Maximus Tyrius, to Plutarch the moralist, to Stobæus, to Hephæstion,

to Herodian, and to the host of other Dryasdusts from whose heaps of shot rubbish Bergk and his predecessors have sorted out the fragments of extinguished stars! As a masterpiece of patient, self-denying, scientific, exhaustive investigation, the three volumes of Bergk are unrivalled. Every author of antiquity has been laid under contribution, subjected to critical analysis, compared and confronted with his fellow-witnesses. The result, reduced to the smallest possible compass, yields a small glittering heap of pure gold-dust, a little handful of auriferous deposit sifted from numberless river-beds, crushed from huge masses of unfertile quartz. In our admiration of the scholar's ingenuity, we almost forget our sorrow for so much irreparable waste.

Before proceeding to consider the justice of the time-honoured division of Greek Lyrics into Æolian and Dorian, it will be well to pass in review a few of the principal classes into which Greek choral poetry may be divided. Only thus can any idea of its richness and variety be formed. The old Homeric ὕμνοι, or hymns dedicated to special deities, were intended to be sung at festivals and rhapsodical contests. Their technical name was Proëmia, or preludes—preludes, that is, to a longer recitation; and on this account, as they were chanted by the poet himself, they were written in hexameters. With them, therefore, we have nothing here to do. Processional hymns, or Prosodia, on the contrary, were strictly lyrical, and constituted a large portion of the poetry of Pindar, Alcman, and Stesichorus. They were sung at solemn festivals by troops of men and maidens walking, crowned with olive, myrtle, bay, or oleander, to the shrines. Their style varied with the occasion and the character of the deity to whom they were addressed. When Hecuba led her maidens in dire necessity to the shrine of Pallas, the Prosodion was solemn and earnest. When Sophocles, with lyre in hand, headed the chorus round the trophy of Salamis, it was victorious and martial. If we wish to present to our mind a picture of these processional ceremonies, we may study the frieze of the Parthenon preserved among the Elgin Marbles. Those long lines of maidens and young men, with baskets in their hands, with flowers and palm-branches, with censers and sacred emblems, are marching to the sound of flutes and lyres, and to the stately rhythms of antiphonal chanting. When they reach the altar of the god, a halt is made; the libations are poured; and now the music changes to a solemn and spondaic measure—for the term spondaic seems to be derived from the fact that the libation-hymn was composed in a grave and heavy metre of full feet. Hephæstion has preserved a spondaic verse of Terpander which illustrates this rhythm:—

σπένδωμεν ταῖς Μνάμας
 πασιν Μώσαις
 καὶ τῷ Μωσάρχῳ
 Λατοῦς υἱεῖ.¹

¹ "Pour we libations to Memory's daughters, the Muses, and to the Muse-leading son of Leto."

In the age of Greek decadence the honours of the Prosodion were sometimes paid to men. Athenæus gives this lively description of the procession which greeted Demetrius Poliorketes: "When Demetrius returned from Leucadia and Corcyra to Athens, the Athenians received him not only with incense and garlands and libations, but they even sent out processional choruses, and greeted him with Ithyphallic hymns and dances: stationed by his chariot-wheels, they sang and danced and chanted that he alone was a real god; the rest were sleeping, or were on a journey, or did not exist; they called him son of Poseidon and Aphrodite, eminent for beauty, universal in his goodness to mankind; then they prayed and besought and supplicated him like a god." The hymn which they sang may be read in Bergk, vol. iii. p. 1314. It is one of the most interesting relics of antiquity.¹

For the sake of its rare and curious metre alternating the Iambic and Trochaic rhythms, I have faced the difficulties of translation, and have ventured on the following version:—

"See how the mightiest gods, and best-beloved,
Towards our town are winging!
For lo, Demeter and Demetrius
This glad day is bringing!
She to perform her Daughter's solemn rites;
Mystic pomps attend her:
He, joyous as a god should be, and blithe,
Comes with laughing splendour.
Show forth your triumph! Friends all, troop around
Let him shine above you!
Be you the stars to circle him with love;
He's the sun to love you.
Hail, offspring of Poseidon, powerful god,
Child of Aphrodite!
The other deities keep far from earth;
Have no ears, though mighty;
They are not, or they will not hear us wail:
Thee our eye beholdeth;
Not wood, not stone, but living, breathing, real,
Thee our prayer enfoldeth.
First give us peace! Give, dearest, for Thou canst;
Thou art Lord and Master!
The Sphinx, who not on Thebes, but on all Greece
Swoops to gloat and pasture;
The Ætolian, he who sits upon his rock,
Like that old disaster;
He feeds upon our flesh and blood, and we
Can no longer labour;
For it was ever thus the Ætolian thief
Preyed upon his neighbour;

¹ Plutarch records with just indignation the honours of this sort paid by Aratus to Antigonus: "He offered sacrifices, called Antigonea, in honour of Antigonus, and sang pæans himself, with a garland on his head, to the praise of a *wasted, consumptive Macedonian*."—*Life of Cleomenes*. The words in italics strongly express a true Greek sense of disgust for the barbarian and the weakling.

Him punish Thou, or if not Thou, then send
 Œdipus to harm him,
 Who'll cast this Sphinx down from his cliff of pride,
 Or to stone will charm him."

A special kind of prosodia were the Parthenia, or processional hymns of maidens; such, for example, as the Athenian girls sang to Pallas while they climbed the staircase of the Parthenon. Aristophanes has presented us with a beautiful example of antiphonal Parthenia at the end of his *Lysistrata*, where choruses of Athenian and Spartan girls sing turn and turn about in rivalry. Aleman won his laurels at Sparta by the composition of this kind of hymn. A fragment (Bergk, p. 842) only remains to show what they were like: "No more, ye honey-voiced, sweet-singing maidens, can my limbs support me: oh, oh, that I were a cerylus, who skims the flower of the sea with halcyons, of a dauntless heart, the sea-blue bird of spring!" Such Parthenia, when addressed to Phœbus, were called Daphnephorica; for the maidens carried laurel-branches to his shrine. A more charming picture cannot be conceived than that which is presented to our fancy by these white-robed virgins, each with her rod of bay and crown of laurel-leaves, ascending the marble steps of the temple of the Dorian god. John Lyly, who had imbibed the spirit of Greek life, has written a hymn, "Sing to Apollo, god of day!" which might well have been used at such a festival.

The Prosodia of which we have been speaking were addressed to all the gods. But there were other choric hymns with special names, consecrated to the service of particular deities. Of this sort was the Pæan, sung to Phœbus in his double character of a victorious and a healing god. The Pæan was both a song of war and of peace; it was the proper accompaniment of the battle and the feast. In like manner the Hyporchem, which, as its name implies, was always accompanied by a dance, originally formed a portion of the cult of Phœbus. The chorus described in the *Iliad*, xviii. 590, and the glorious pageant of Olympus celebrated in the Hymn to Apollo, 186, were, technically speaking, Hyporchems. As the Pæan and the Hyporchem were originally consecrated to Apollo, so the Dithyramb and the Phallic hymn belonged to Dionysus. The Dithyramb never lost the tempestuous and enthusiastic character of Bacchic revelry; but in time it grew from being a wild celebration of the mystic sufferings of Bacchus into the sublime art of Tragedy. Arion forms the point of this transition. He seems to have thrown a greater reality of passion and dramatic action into his choruses, which led to the introduction of dialogue, and so by degrees to Tragedy proper. Meanwhile the Dithyramb, as a tumultuous choric song, retained its individual existence. As Arion had devoted his genius to the cultivation of the Tragic or Cyclic chorus, Lasos, the master of Pindar, stamped his own style upon the Dithyrambic ode as it continued to be used at festive meetings. Every town in Greece had its chorodidascaus, a functionary

whom Aristophanes ridicules in the person of Kinesias in the *Birds*.¹ He is introduced warbling the wildest, windiest nonsense, and entreating to have a pair of wings given him that he may chase his airy ideas through the sky. The Phallic Hymn, from which in like manner Comedy took its origin, was a mad outpouring of purely animal exultation. Here the wine-god was celebrated as the pleasure-loving, drunken, lascivious deity. Aristophanes, again, our truest source of information respecting all the details of Greek life, supplies us with an instance of one of these songs, and of the simple rites which accompanied its performance.² In the *Frogs*, also, the Master of Comedy has presented us with an elaborate series of Bacchic hymns.³ Here the Phallic and Satyric element is combined with something of the grandeur of the Dithyrambic Ode; the curious mixture of sarcasm, obscenity, and splendid poetry offers a striking instance of Greek religious feeling, so incomprehensible to modern minds. It is greatly to be regretted that our information respecting the Dithyramb and the Phallic Chorus has to be obtained from a dramatic poet rather than from any perfect specimens of these compositions. Bergk's Collection, full as it is, yields nothing but hints and fragments.⁴

Passing to the Lyrics, which were connected with circumstances of human life, the first to be mentioned are Epinikia, or odes sung in honour of victors at the games. Of these, in the splendid series of Pindar and in the fragments of Simonides, we have abundant examples. We are also able to trace their development from the simple exclamation of *τήνελλα ὦ καλλίνυκε*⁵ (Huzza! thou conquering hero!), the composition of which was ascribed to Archilochus, and which Pindar looked back upon with scornful triumph. Indeed, in his hands, to use the phrase of Wordsworth, "the thing became a trumpet, whence he blew soul-animating strains." The Epinikian Ode was the most costly and splendid flower in the victor's wreath. Pindar compares the praise which he pours forth for Diagoras the Rhodian to noblest wine foaming in the golden goblet, which a father gives to honour his son-in-law, the prime and jewel of his treasure-house. The occasions on which such odes were sung were various—either when the victor was being crowned, or when he was returning to his native city, or by torchlight during the evening of the victorious day, or at a banquet after his reception in his home. On one of these occasions the poet would appear with his trained band of singers and musicians, and, taking his stand by the altar of the god to whom the victor offered a thanksgiving sacrifice, would guide the choric stream of song through strophe and antistrophe and epode, in sonorous labyrinths of eulogy and mythological allusion—prayer, praise, and admonition mingling with the fumes of intoxicating poetry. Of all these occasions the most striking

¹ See Frere, vol. ii. pp. 200, 201.

² See Tr. of *Acharnians*, Frere, vol. ii. p. 17.

³ Frere's *Translation*, vol. ii. pp. 241-245.

⁴ See however the interesting archaic hymns to Dionysus, pp. 1299, 1300.

⁵ Bergk, p. 716; Pindar, *Olymp.* ix. 1.

must have been the commemoration of a victory in the temple of Zeus at Altis, near Olympia, by moonlight. The contest has taken place during the day; and the olive wreath has been placed upon the head, say of Myronides, from Thebes. Having rested from his labours, after the bath and the banquet, crowned with his victorious garland and with fillets bound about his hair, he stands surrounded by his friends. Zeus, in ivory and gold, looks down from his marble pedestal. Through the open roof shines a moon of the south, glancing aslant on statue and column and carved bas-relief; while below, the red glare of torches, paling her silver, flickers with fitful crimson on the glowing faces of young men. Then swells the choral hymn, with praise of Myronides and praise of Thebes, and stormy flights of fancy shooting beyond sun and stars. At its close follow libation, dedication, hands upraised in prayer to Zeus. Then the trampling of sandalled feet upon the marble floor, the procession with songs still sounding to the temple-gate, and on a sudden, lo! the full moon, the hills, and plain, and solemn night of stars. The band disperses, and the Comus succeeds to the thanksgiving.

As a contrast to the *Epinikia* we may take the different kinds of *Threnoi*, or funeral songs. The most primitive was called *Epikedeion*, a dirge or coronach, improvised by women over the bodies of the dead.¹ The lamentations of Helen and Andromache for Hector, and of the slave-girls for Patroclus, are Homeric instances of this species. Euripides imitates them in his tragedies—in the dirge sung by Antigone, for instance in the *Phœnissæ*, and in the wailings of Hecuba for Astyanax in the *Troades*. A different kind of *Threnos* were the songs of Linus, Hyacinth, Adonis, and others, to which I have already alluded in the beginning of this chapter. The finest extant specimen of this sort is Bion's Lament for Adonis, which, however, was composed in the Idyllic age, when the hexameter had been substituted for the richer and more splendid lyric metres. A third class of *Threnos* consisted of complex choral hymns composed by poets like Simonides or Pindar, to be sung at funeral solemnities. Many of our most precious lyric fragments, those which embody philosophical reflections on life and dim previsions of another world, belong to dirges of this elaborate kind.

Marriage festivals offered another occasion for lyric poetry. The *Hymeneal*, sung during the wedding ceremony, the *Epithalamium*, chanted at the house of the bridegroom, and many other species, have been defined by the grammarians. Unfortunately we possess nothing but the merest *débris* of any true Greek ode of this kind. Sappho's are the best. We have to study the imitations of her style in Catullus, the marriage chorus at the end of the *Birds* of Aristophanes, and the

¹ It is interesting to observe that this custom of the funeral dirge, improvised with wild inspiration by women, has been preserved almost to the present day in Corsica. A collection of these coronachs, called *Voceri* in the language of the island, was published in 1855 at Bastia, by Cesare Fabiani.

Epithalamium of Helen by Theocritus, in order to form a remote conception of what a Sapphic marriage chorus might have been. In banquet songs we are more fortunate. Abundant are the Parœnia of Alcæus, Anacreon, Theognis, and others. *Scolia* or catches, so called from their irregular metrical structure, were also in vogue at banquets; and of these popular songs a sufficient number are preserved. A drunken passage in the works of Aristophanes brings before us after a lively fashion the ceremonies with which the Scolion and the wine-cup circled the symposium together.¹ Of all these catches the most celebrated in ancient days was the panegyric of Harmodius and Aristogeiton, attributed to Callistratus. As I have the opportunity of printing from MS. a translation of this song by the late Professor Conington, I will introduce it here :—

“ In a wreath of myrtle I'll wear my glaive,
Like Harmodius and Aristogeiton brave,
Who, striking the tyrant down,
Made Athens a freeman's town.

“ Harmodius, our darling, thou art not dead !
Thou liv'st in the isles of the blest, 'tis said,
With Achilles first in speed,
And Tydides Diomede.

“ In a wreath of myrtle I'll wear my glaive,
Like Harmodius and Aristogeiton brave,
When the twain on Athena's day
Did the tyrant Hipparchus slay.

“ For aye shall your fame in the land be told,
Harmodius and Aristogeiton bold,
Who, striking the tyrant down,
Made Athens a freeman's town.”

The whole collection of *Scolia* in Bergk (pp. 1287-1296) is full of interest, since these simple and popular songs carry us back more freshly than elaborate poems to the life of the Greeks. One of these, attributed to Simonides, sums up the qualities which a Greek most desired :—

ὄγυαλινειν μὲν ἀριστον ἀνδρὶ θνατῶ,
δεύτερον δὲ φῦαν καλὸν γενέσθαι,
τὸ τρίτον δὲ πλουτεῖν ἀδόλως,
καὶ τὸ τέταρτον ἡβᾶν μετὰ τῶν φίλων.²

Unlike Solomon, when asked what he would take from the Lord as a gift, the Greek poet does not answer Wisdom, but first Health, secondly Beauty, thirdly Wealth untainted by fraud, and fourthly Youth in the society of friends. The sentiment of Beauty being superior to Wealth was subjected to scornful criticism by the Comic

¹ Translated by Mitchell, vol. ii. p. 282, in his *Dicast turned Gentleman*.

² “ To be in health is the best thing for mortal man; the next best to be of form and nature beautiful; the third, to enjoy wealth gotten without fraud; and the fourth to be in youth's bloom among friends.”

dramatists. Still, it may be illustrated from the following tirade against riches in a lyrical fragment ascribed to Timocreon :—

“ Would, blind Wealth, that thou hadst been
 Ne'er on land or ocean seen,
 Nowhere on this upper earth !
 Hell's black stream that gave thee birth
 Is the proper haunt for thee,
 Cause of all man's misery ! ”

The last line of the Simonidean quatrain, celebrating the charm of youthful society, was expanded very beautifully in another Scolion :—

*σὺν μοι πίνε, συνῆβα, συνέρα, συστεφανηφόρει,
 σὺν μοι μαινομένῳ μαιρέο, σὺν σώφρονι σωφρόνει :*

“ Drink with me, be young with me, love with me, wear crowns with me, when I am mad be mad with me, be wise with me when I am wise.” The verb *συνηβᾶν* (to enjoy the bloom of youth together) is almost untranslatable. Of another kind is the Scolion of Hybrias the Cretan, translated thus into English verse by Thomas Campbell :—

“ My wealth's a burly spear and brand,
 And a right good shield of hides untanned,
 Which on my arm I buckle :
 With these I plough, I reap, I sow,
 With these I make the sweet vintage flow,
 And all around me truckle.

“ But your wights that take no pride to wield
 A massy spear and well-made shield,
 Nor joy to draw the sword :
 Oh, I bring those heartless, hapless drones,
 Down in a trice on their marrow bones,
 To call me king and lord.”

This catch brings before our eyes in a very lively picture the lawless Freiherr of early Dorian barbarism. Another species of the Scolion is more sentimental : “ Would that I were a fair lyre of ivory, and that fair boys bore me to the Bacchic Choir ; would that I were a fair, new, and mighty golden jar, and that a fair woman bore me with a pure heart.” Again we find moral precepts in these catches. “ Whoso betrayeth not a friend hath great honour among men and gods, according to my mind.”

While on the subject of Scolia, it will not do to pass over the most splendid specimen we have in this order of composition. It is a fragment from Pindar (Bergk, p. 327), to translate which, I feel, is profanation :—

“ O soul, 'tis thine in season meet,
 To pluck of love the blossom sweet,
 When hearts are young :
 But he who sees the blazing beams,
 The light that from *that* forehead streams,
 And is not stung ;—

Who is not storm-tost with desire,—
Lo ! he, I ween, with frozen fire,
Of adamant or stubborn steel,
Is forged in his cold heart that cannot feel.

“ Disowned, dishonoured, and denied
By Aphrodite glittering-eyed,
 He either toils
All day for gold, a sordid gain,
Or bent beneath a woman’s reign,
 In petty broils,
Endures her insolence, a drudge,
Compelled the common path to trudge ;
But I, apart from this disease,
Wasting away like wax of holy bees,

“ Which the sun’s splendour wounds, do pine,
Whene’er I see the young-limbed bloom divine
Of boys. Lo ! look you well ; for here in Tenedos,
Grace and Persuasion dwell in young Theoxenos.”

Of the many different kinds of lyric poetry consecrated to love and intended for recitation by single musicians, it is not possible to give a strict account. That the Greeks cultivated the serenade is clear from a passage in the *Ecclesiazusa* of Aristophanes, which contains a graceful though gross specimen of this kind of song.

To illustrate this species I have attempted to compose an irregularly-rhythmed ode, which might have been sung by an Athenian lover beneath the window of his beloved. It is conceived in the style of the serenade from Aristophanes alluded to above :—

“ Arise ! arise !
See how the starry skies
Keep breathing through the night their breath of love !
The nightingale above,
In myrtle boughs
Close-shrouded, sleepeth not but sings ;
And on the faint air flings
The delicate rose her perfume. Rouse
From slumber, darling, see,
I stand and wait for thee !
Come to thy lattice ; from thy curtained bed
Arise, and shed
Thy light of brightest eyes upon my head !

“ Shine forth, my golden sun,
My little lovely one !
Sweet bud of beauty, nursling of heaven’s grace !
Thou fairest face
Of all that bloom upon the smiling earth !
Why wilt thou shun
These words that wake thee to a happier birth,
Thou thoughtless one ?

"Nay, slay me not ! but rise !
 And let thy living eyes
 Be to me as the light
 Which envious night
 For all her clouds and shadows cannot chase away !
 It is Melanthius cries :
 Arise ! arise !
 And beam upon him with thy spirit's day !
 Nay, ere he dies,
 Be pitiful, and ease
 The languor of his love, Endiades !"

The children's songs (Bergk, 1303-1307) about flowers, tortoises, and hobgoblins are too curiously illustrative of Greek manners not to merit a passing notice, nor can I here omit a translation of the only Swallow-song preserved to us. Athenæus, to whom we owe this curious relic, localises the *Chelidonisma* in Rhodes, referring it particularly to the district of Lindus.¹ In springtime the children went round the town, collecting doles and presents from house to house, and singing as they went :—

"She is here, she is here, the swallow !
 Fair seasons bringing, fair years to follow !
 Her belly is white,
 Her back black as night !
 From your rich house
 Roll forth to us
 Tarts, wine, and cheese :
 Or if not these,
 Oatmeal and barley-cake
 The swallow deigns to take.
 What shall we have ? or must we hence away ?
 Thanks, if you give ; if not, we'll make you pay !
 The house-door hence we'll carry ;
 Nor shall the lintel tarry ;
 From hearth and home your wife we'll rob ;
 She is so small,
 To take her off will be an easy job !
 Whate'er you give, give largess free !
 Up ! open, open to the swallow's call !
 No grave old men, but merry children we !"

After this lengthy, but far from exhaustive enumeration of the kinds and occasions of lyrical poetry in Greece, we may turn to consider the different parts played in their cultivation by the several chief families of Hellas. It is remarkable that all the great writers of elegies and iambics were Ionians ; Theognis of Megara is the only Dorian whose genuine poems are celebrated ; and against his we have to set the bulk of Solon, Mimnermus, Phocylides, Callinus, and Tyrtaeus, all Ionians.² Not a single Dorian poet seems to have composed iambics, the rigid discipline and strong sense of decorum in a Dorian state probably

¹ Athen. lib. viii. 360.

² This begs the question of the nationality of Tyrtaeus, who, according to antique tradition, was of Attic origin, but who writes like a Spartan.

rendering the cultivation of satire impossible. We are told that the Spartans would not even suffer Archilochus to lodge as a stranger among them. But when we turn to lyric poetry—to the poetry of stanzas and strophes—the two other families of the Greeks, the Æolians and the Dorians, take the lead. As a Dorian was exceptional among the elegists, so now an Ionian will be comparatively rare among the lyricists. So great was the æsthetical conservatism of the Greeks that throughout their history their primitive distinctions of dialect are never lost sight of. When the Athenians developed Tragedy, they wrote their iambics in pure Attic, but they preserved a Dorian tone in their choruses. The epic hexameter and the elegy, on the other hand, retained an Ionian character to the last.

The paths struck out by the Æolians and Dorians in the domain of lyric poetry were so different as to justify us in speaking of two distinct species. When Milton, in the *Paradise Regained*, catalogued the poetical achievements of the Greeks, he assigned their true place to these two species in the line—

“Æolian charms and Dorian lyric odes.”

The poets and poetesses of the Ægean Islands cultivated a rapid and effusive style, polishing their passionate stanzas so exquisitely that they well deserve the name of charms. The Dorian poets, inspired by a graver and more sustained imagination, composed long and complex odes for the celebration of gods and heroes. The Æolian singer dwelt on his own joys and sorrows; the Dorian bard addressed some deity, or told the tales of demigods and warriors. The Æolian chanted his stanzas to the lyre or flute; the Dorian trained a chorus, who gave utterance to his verse in dance and song.

Though the Æolians were the eldest family of the Hellenic stock, their language retaining more than any other dialect the primitive character of the Greek tongue, yet they never rose to such historical importance as the Dorians and Ionians. Geographically they were scattered in such a way as to have no definite centre. We find Æolians in Elis, in Bœotia, in Lesbos, and on the Asian sea-coast south of the Troad. But in course of time the Æolians of Elis and Bœotia were almost identified with the Dorians as allies of Sparta, while the Æolians of Lesbos and Asia merged themselves in the Athenian empire. Politically, mentally, and morally, they showed less activity than their cousins of the blood of Dorus and Ion. They produced no lawgivers like Lycurgus and Solon: they had no metropolis like Sparta and Athens; they played no prominent part in the struggle with Persia, or in the Peloponnesian war. In the later days of Greece, Thebes, when Dorised by contact with the Spartans, for a short time headed Greece, and flourished with brief splendour. But it would not be accurate to give to the Æolian character the credit of the fame of Thebes at that advanced period. Yet, for a certain space of time, the Æolians occupied the very fore-

ground of Greek literature, and blazed out with a brilliance of lyrical splendour that has never been surpassed. There seems to have been something passionate and intense in their temperament, which made the emotions of the Dorian and the Ionian feeble by comparison. Lesbos, the centre of Æolian culture, was the island of overmastering passions: the personality of the Greek race burned there with a fierce and steady flame of concentrated feeling. The energies which the Ionians divided between pleasure, politics, trade, legislation, science, and the arts, and which the Dorians turned to war and statecraft and social economy, were restrained by the Æolians within the sphere of individual emotions, ready to burst forth volcanically. Nowhere in any age of Greek history, or in any part of Hellas, did the love of physical beauty, the sensibility to radiant scenes of nature, the consuming fervour of personal feeling, assume such grand proportions and receive so illustrious an expression as they did in Lesbos. At first this passion blossomed into the most exquisite lyrical poetry that the world has known: this was the flower-time of the Æolians, their brief and brilliant spring. But the fruit it bore was bitter and rotten. Lesbos became a byword for corruption. The passions which for a moment had flamed into the gorgeousness of Art, burning their envelope of words and images, remained a mere furnace of sensuality, from which no expression of the divine in human life could be expected. In this the Lesbian poets were not unlike the Provençal troubadours, who made a literature of Love, or the Venetian painters, who based their art upon the beauty of colour, the voluptuous charms of the flesh. In each case the motive of enthusiastic passion sufficed to produce a dazzling result. But as soon as its freshness was exhausted there was nothing left for Art to live on, and mere decadence to sensuality ensued.

Several circumstances contributed to aid the development of lyric poetry in Lesbos. The customs of the Æolians permitted more social and domestic freedom than was common in Greece. Æolian women were not confined to the harem like Ionians, or subjected to the rigorous discipline of the Spartans. While mixing freely with male society, they were highly educated, and accustomed to express their sentiments to an extent unknown elsewhere in history—until, indeed, the present time. The Lesbian ladies applied themselves successfully to literature. They formed clubs for the cultivation of poetry and music. They studied the arts of beauty, and sought to refine metrical forms and diction. Nor did they confine themselves to the scientific side of art. Unrestrained by public opinion, and passionate for the beautiful, they cultivated their senses and emotions, and indulged their wildest passions. All the luxuries and elegances of life which that climate and the rich valleys of Lesbos could afford, were at their disposal; exquisite gardens, where the rose and hyacinth spread perfume; river-beds ablaze with the oleander and wild pomegranate; olive-groves and fountains, where the cyclamen and violet flowered

with feathery maiden-hair; pine-tree-shadowed coves, where they might bathe in the calm of a tideless sea; fruits such as only the southern sun and sea-wind can mature; marble cliffs, starred with jonquil and anemone in spring, aromatic with myrtle and lentisk and sapphire and wild rosemary through all the months; nightingales that sang in May; temples dim with dusky gold and bright with ivory; statues and frescoes of heroic forms. In such scenes as these the Lesbian poets lived, and thought of Love. When we read their poems, we seem to have the perfumes, colours, sounds, and lights of that luxurious land distilled in verse. Nor was a brief but biting winter wanting to give tone to their nerves, and, by contrast with the summer, to prevent the palling of so much luxury on sated senses. The voluptuousness of Æolian poetry is not like that of Persian or Arabian art. It is Greek in its self-restraint, proportion, tact. We find nothing burdensome in its sweetness. All is so rhythmically and sublimely ordered in the poems of Sappho that supreme art lends solemnity and grandeur to the expression of unmitigated passion.

The world has suffered no greater literary loss than the loss of Sappho's poems. So perfect are the smallest fragments preserved in Bergk's Collection—the line, for example (p. 890), ἦρος ἄγγελος ἱμερόφωνος ἀήδων,¹ which Ben Jonson fancifully translated, “the dear good angel of the spring, the nightingale”—that we muse in a sad rapture of astonishment to think what the complete poems must have been. Among the ancients Sappho enjoyed a unique renown. She was called “The Poetess,” as Homer was called “The Poet.” Aristotle quoted without question a judgment that placed her in the same rank as Homer and Archilochus. Plato in the *Phædrus* mentioned her as the tenth Muse. Solon, hearing one of her poems, prayed that he might not see death till he had learned it. Strabo speaks of her genius with religious awe. Longinus cites her love-ode as a specimen of poetical sublimity. The epigrammatists call her Child of Aphrodite and Erôs, nursling of the Graces and Persuasion, pride of Hellas, peer of Muses, companion of Apollo. Nowhere is a hint whispered that her poetry was aught but perfect. As far as we can judge, these praises were strictly just. Of all the poets of the world, of all the illustrious artists of all literatures, Sappho is the one whose every word has a peculiar and unmistakable perfume, a seal of absolute perfection and inimitable grace. In her art she was unerring. Even Archilochus seems commonplace when compared with her exquisite rarity of phrase.

About her life—her brother Charaxus, her daughter Cleis, her rejection of Alcæus and her suit to Phaon, her love for Atthis and Anactoria, her leap from the Leucadian cliff—we know so very little, and that little is so confused with mythology and turbid with the

¹ Compare Simonides (Bergk, vol. iii. p. 1143):—

ἄγγελε κλυτὰ ξαρος ἀδυόδμου,
κτανεῖα χελιδοί.

“Blithe angel of the perfume-breathing spring,
Dark-vested swallow.”

scandal of the comic poets, that it is not worth while to rake up once again the old materials for hypothetical conclusions. There is enough of heart-devouring passion in Sappho's own verse without the legends of Phaon and the cliff of Leucas. The reality casts all fiction into the shade; for nowhere, except, perhaps, in some Persian or Provençal love-songs, can be found more ardent expressions of overmastering emotion. Whether addressing the maidens, whom even in Elysium, as Horace says, Sappho could not forget; or embodying the profounder yearnings of an intense soul after beauty, which has never on earth existed, but which inflames the hearts of noblest poets, robbing their eyes of sleep and giving them the bitterness of tears to drink—these dazzling fragments—

“ Which still, like sparkles of Greek fire,
Burn on through time and ne'er expire ”

are the ultimate and finished forms of passionate utterance, diamonds, topazes, and blazing rubies, in which the fire of the soul is crystallised for ever. Adequately to translate Sappho was beyond the power of even Catullus: that love-ode, which Longinus called, “ not one passion, but a congress of passions,” and which a Greek physician copied into his book of diagnoses as a compendium of all the symptoms of corroding emotion, appears but languid in its Latin dress of “ *Ille mi par.* ” Far less has any modern poet succeeded in the task: Rossetti, who deals so skilfully with Dante and Villon, is comparatively tame when he approaches Sappho. Instead of attempting, therefore, to interpret for English readers the charm of Sappho's style,¹ it is best to refer to pp. 874-924 of Bergk, where every vestige that is left of her is shrined.

Beside Sappho, Alcæus pales. His drinking-songs and war-songs have indeed great beauty; but they are not to be named in the same breath, for perfection of style, with the stanzas of Sappho. Of his life we know a few not wholly uninteresting incidents. He was a noble of Mitylene, the capital of Lesbos, where he flourished as early as 611 B.C. Alcæus belonged to a family of distinguished men. His brothers Cicis and Antimenidas upheld the party of the oligarchy against the tyrant Melanchrus; and during the troubles which agitated Mitylene after the fall of this despot, while other petty tyrants—Myrsilus, Megalagyrus, and the Cleanactids—were attempting to subdue the island, the three brothers ranged themselves uniformly on the side of the aristocracy. At first they seem to have been friendly with Pittacus. It was while fighting at his side against the Athenians at Sigeum that Alcæus threw his shield away—an exploit which, like Archilochus, he celebrated in a poem without apparently damaging

¹ Those who are curious in the matter of metres will find the Sapphic stanza reproduced in English, with perfect truth of cadence, in Swinburne's “ Sapphics ” (*Poems and Ballads*). The imitations by Horace are far less close to the original. A little volume published by H. T. Wharton (Stott, 1887) gives all the verses which English poets have composed in translation or imitation of Sappho's fragments. In that book will be found my own contributions to this literature.

his reputation for valour. Being a stout soldier, a violent partisan, the bard of revolutions, and the brother of a pair of heroes, he could trifle with this little accident, which less doughty warriors must have concealed. When Pittacus was chosen *Æsymnetes*, or dictator with despotic power for the preservation of public order, in 589 B.C., Alcæus and his brothers went into opposition and were exiled. All three of them were what in modern politics we should call High Tories. They could not endure the least approach to popular government, the slightest infringement of the rights of the nobility. During his exile Alcæus employed his poetic faculty in vituperating Pittacus. His satires were esteemed almost as pungent as those of Archilochus. But the liberal-minded ruler did not resent them. When Alcæus was on one occasion taken prisoner, he set him free, remarking that "forgiveness is better than revenge." Alcæus lived to be reconciled with him and to recognise his merits. As a trait in the domestic life and fortunes of the Greeks of this time, it is worth mentioning that Alcæus took refuge in Egypt during his banishment from Lesbos, and that his brother Antimenidas entered the service of the king of Babylon. In the same way two Englishmen in the times of the Edwards might have travelled in Germany or become soldiers of the Republic of Florence. Of the Greek oligarch who lent his sword to Nebuchadnezzar—in his wars perhaps against Jehoiakim or Pharaoh-Necho—we get a curious glimpse. Alcæus greeted him on his return in a poem of which we possess a fragment, and which may be paraphrased thus:—

" From the ends of the earth thou art come
 Back to thy home ;
 The ivory hilt of thy blade
 With gold is embossed and inlaid ;
 Since for Babylon's host a great deed
 Thou didst work in their need,
 Slaying a warrior, an athlete of might,
 Royal, whose height
 Lacked of five cubits one span—
 A terrible man."

We can fancy with what delight and curiosity Alcæus, who, as may be gathered from his poems, was an amateur of armour, examined this sword-handle, wrought perhaps from *Æthiopian* tusks by Egyptian artists with lotos-flowers or patterns of crocodiles, monkeys, and lions. This story of the polished Greek citizen's adventure among the Jews and Egyptians, known to us through Holy Writ, touches our imagination with the same strange sense of novelty as when we read of the Persian poet Saadi, a slave in the camp of Richard Cœur de Lion's Crusaders.

Considering the life Alcæus led, it is not strange that he should have sung of arms and civic struggles. Many fragments, preserved in all probability from the *Stasiotica*, or Songs of Sedition, which were very popular among the ancients, throw light upon the stormier

passages of his history. One of these pieces¹ describes the poet's armoury—his polished helmets and white horsehair plumes, the burnished brazen greaves that hang upon the wall, the linen breast-plates and bucklers thrown in heaps about the floor, with Chalkidian blades, and girdles, and tunics. The most striking point about this fragment is its foppery. Alcæus spares no pains to make us know how bright his armour is, how carefully his greaves are fixed against the wall by pegs you cannot see (*πασσάλοις κρύπτοισι περικείμεναι*), how carelessly the girdles and small gear are tossed about in sumptuous disarray. The poem seems to reveal a luxurious nature delighting in military millinery. No Dorian would have described his weapons from this point of view, but would have rather told us how often they had been used with effect in the field. The Æolian character is here tempered with Orientalism.

Of the erotic poems of Alcæus, only a very few and inconsiderable fragments have survived. Horace says of them, addressing his lyre :—

“Lesbio primum modulate civi,
 Qui ferox bello, tamen inter arma,
 Sive jactatam religârat udo
 Littore navim,
 Liberum et Musas Venermq; et illi
 Semper hærentem puerum caneabat ;
 Et Lycum nigris oculis nigroque
 Crine decorum.”²

Of Lycus we only know, on the authority of Cicero,³ that he had a wart upon the finger, which Alcæus praised in one of his poems. It has also been conjectured that the line *οἶνος, ὦ φίλε παῖ, καὶ ἀλάθεια*, “wine, dear boy, and truth,” which Theocritus quotes as a proverb at the beginning of his Æolic Idyll, was addressed to Lycus. An English version of this idyll made by me will be found in the appendix. A fragment of far greater interest is the couplet preserved by Hephæstion,⁴ in which Alcæus calls on Sappho by her name : “Violet-crowned, pure, sweetly-smiling Sappho ! I want to say something, but shame prevents me.” To this declaration Sappho replied : “If thy wishes were fair and noble, and thy tongue designed not to utter what is base, shame would not cloud thine eyes, but thou wouldst speak thy just desires.” This is all we know about the love-passages between the greatest lyrists of the Æolian school. In this way do the ancient critics tantalise us. Aristotle,⁵ in order to illustrate a moral proposition, Hephæstion, with a view to proving a metrical rule, fling

¹ Bergk, p. 935.

² *Carm.* i. 32, thus translated by Conington :—

“Thou, strung by Lesbos' minstrel hand,
 The bard, who 'mid the clash of steel,
 Or haply mooring to the strand,
 His battered keel,

“Of Bacchus and the Muses sung,
 And Cupid, still at Venus' side,
 And Lycus, beautiful and young,
 Dark-haired, dark-eyed.”

³ *De Nat. Deorum*, i. 28.

⁴ See Bergk, p. 948.

⁵ *Rhet.* i. 9.

these scraps of their wealth forth, little dreaming that after twenty centuries the men of new nations and other thoughts will eagerly collect the scraps, and long for more of that which might have been so freely lavished. Whether Sappho wrote her reply in maidenly modesty because the advances of Alcæus were really dishonourable, or whether she affected indignation to conceal a personal dislike for the poet, we cannot say. Aristotle or Hephæstion might probably have been able to tell us. But the one was only thinking of the signs of shame, while the attention of the other was riveted upon the "so-called *dodecasyllable Alcaic*."

The most considerable remains of the lyrics of Alcæus are drinking-songs—praises of wine, combined with reflections upon life and appropriate descriptions of the different seasons. No time was amiss for drinking, to his mind: the heat of summer, the cold of winter, the blazing dogstar and the driving tempest, twilight with its cheerful gleam of lamps, midday with its sunshine—all suggest reasons for indulging in the cup. Not that we are justified in fancying Alcæus to have been a vulgar toper: he retained Æolian sumptuousness in his pleasures and raised the art of drinking to an æsthetic altitude. One well-known piece from the *Parania* of Alcæus is capable of translation into Elizabethan rhymed verse, as follows:—

"The rain of Zeus descends, and from high heaven
 A storm is driven:
 And on the running water-brooks the cold
 Lays icy hold:
 Then up! beat down the winter; make the fire
 Blaze high and higher;
 Mix wine as sweet as honey of the bee
 Abundantly;
 Then drink with comfortable wool around
 Your temples bound.
 We must not yield our hearts to woe, or wear
 With wasting care;
 For grief will profit us no whit, my friend,
 Nor nothing mend:
 But this is our best medicine, with wine fraught
 To cast out thought."

The debt of Horace to Alcæus must have been immense. The fragment just translated is the original of the ninth ode of the first book. The fragment on the death of Myrsilus, *νῦν χρῆ μέθύσθην* (now it behoves us to drink deep), shows where Horace found the model for the last ode of the first book. Again, "O navis referent" (Hor. *Carm.* i. 14) is based on an ode of the Lesbian poet of which we possess a fragment.¹ Between the temperaments of Horace and of Alcæus, as between those of Catullus and of Sappho, there were marked similarities and correspondences. The poetry of both Horace and Alcæus was polished rather than profound, admirably sketched rather than richly coloured, more graceful than intense, less passionate than reflective.

¹ Bergk, p. 936.

In Sappho and Catullus, on the other hand, we meet with richer and more ardent natures: they are endowed with keener sensibilities, with a sensuality more noble because of its intensity, with emotions more profound, with a deeper faculty of thought, that never loses itself in the shallows of "Stoic-Epicurean acceptance," but simply and exquisitely apprehends the facts of human life. Where Horace talks of Orcus and the Urn, Catullus sings: ¹—

"Soles occidere et redire possunt,
 Nobis cum semel occidit brevis lux
 Nox est perpetua una dormienda."

This contrast between the polished sententiousness of Horace and the pathetic outcry of Catullus marks the difference between two classes of poets to whom Horace and Alcæus, Sappho and Catullus, respectively belong.

Of the other Lesbian poets, Erinna and Damophila, we know but little: the one survives in a single epigram—if we reject the epitaphs on Baucis: the other is a mere name. It is noticeable that of the four Lesbian poets three are women. We may remember that in Thebes, which was also an Æolian city, Myrtis and Corinna rivalled Pindar.

✓ To the list of Æolian poets Anacreon, though an Ionian by birth and an Ionian in temperament, is generally added, because he cultivated the lyrical stanza of personal emotion. Into the Æolian style Anacreon introduced a new and uncongenial element. His passion had none of Sappho's fiery splendour, none of the haughtiness and ✓ restlessness which distinguished Alcæus. There was a vein of levity, almost of vulgarity, in the Ionians, which removed them from the altitudes of Dorian heroism and Æolian enthusiasm. This tincture ✓ of flippancy is discernible in Anacreon. Life and love come easily to him. The roses keep no secrets for his ears, such as they told to Sappho: they serve very well for garlands when he drinks, and have a pleasant smell—especially in myrrh. The wine-cup does not suggest to him variety of seasons,—the frozen streams of winter, the parched breath of the Dog-star,—as with Alcæus: he tipples and gets drunk. His loves too are facile—neither permanent nor tempestuous. The girls and boys of whom he sings were flute-players and cup-bearers, servants of a tyrant, *instrumenta libidinis*, chosen for their looks, as the poet had been selected for the sweetness of his lyre with twenty chords. He never felt the furnace of Sappho, whose love, however criminal in the estimation of modern moralists, was serious and of the soul. The difference between the lives of these three lyrists is very striking. Alcæus was a politician and party leader. Sappho was the centre of a free society of female poets. Anacreon was the courtier ✓ and laureate of tyrants. He won his first fame with Polycrates, at

¹ Translated thus by Ben Jonson:—

"Suns that set may rise again;
 But if once we lose this light,
 'Tis with us perpetual night."

whose death Hipparchus fetched him to Athens in a trireme of fifty oars. Between Bacchus and Venus he spent his days in palaces; and died at the ripe age of eighty-five at Teos, choked, it is reported, by a grape-stone—a hoary-headed *roué*, for whom the rhyme of the Goliardic Archipoeta might have been written :¹—

“ Meum est propositum,
In tabernâ mori,” etc.

It need not be remarked that of the genuine poems of Anacreon we possess but few (pp. 1011-1045 of Bergk). His great popularity in Greece led to innumerable imitations of his lighter style.² These are fully preserved in Bergk's Collection (pp. 1046-1108).

The Dorian style offers a marked contrast to the Æolian. In the case of the Ionian satirists and elegists, and in that of the Æolian lyrists, the national peculiarities of the art resulted from national qualities in the artists. This is not the case with the so-called Dorian poets. The great lyrists of this school are, with one exception, of extraction foreign to the Dorian tribe. Alcman was a Lydian; Stesichorus acknowledged an Ionian colony for his fatherland; Arion was a Lesbian; Simonides and Bacchylides were Ionian; Pindar was Bœotian; Ibycus of Rhegium alone was a Dorian. Why then is the style called Dorian? Because the poets, though not Dorian by birth, wrote for Dorian patrons in the land of Dorians, to add splendour to ceremonies and solemnities in vogue among the Dorians. The distinctive features of this, the most sublime branch of Greek lyrical poetry, have been already hinted at: these elaborate Choral Hymns, in which strophe answers to antistrophe, and epode to epode, chanted by bands of singers and accompanied at times by dancing, were designed to give expression, no longer to personal emotions, but to the feelings of great congregations of men engaged in the celebration of gods, and heroes, and illustrious mortals. Why this species of choral poetry received the patronage and name of the Dorian tribe may be seen by glancing at the institutions peculiar to this section of the Hellenic family. The Dorians, more than any other Greeks, lived in common and in public. Their children were educated, not at home, but in companies, beneath the supervision of state-officers. Girls as well as

¹ In the public-house to die
Is my resolution;
Let wine to my lips be nigh
At life's dissolution:
That will make the angels cry,
With glad elocution,
“ Grant this toper, God on high,
Grace and absolution!”

From *Wine, Women, and Song*, by J. A. Symonds (Chatto and Windus, 1884).

² The people of Athens gave him a statue on their Acropolis. The Teians struck his portrait on coins. Critias said that his poems would last as long as the Cottabos in Hellas. He did in fact exactly represent one side, and that the least heroic side, of the character of the Greeks—their simple love of sensual pleasure. As mere Hedonism grew, so did the songs and the style of Anacreon gain in popularity, whereas the stormier passion of Sappho became unfashionable.

boys submitted to gymnastic training, and were taught to sacrifice domestic and personal to political and social interests. Tutored to merge the individual in the mass, habituated to associate together in large bodies, the Dorians felt no need of venting private feeling. Their personal emotions were stunted: they had no separate wants and wishes, aspirations and regrets, to utter. Yet the sense of melody and harmony which was rooted so profoundly in the Greek temperament, needed some outlet even here; while the gymnastic and athletic exercises practised by the Dorians rendered them peculiarly sensitive, not only to the beauties of the human body, but also to the refinements of rhythmical movement. The spiritual enthusiasm for great and glorious actions, which formed the soul of the Greek race, flamed with all the greater brilliancy among Dorians, because it was not narrowed, as among the Æolians, to the selfish passions of the individual, or diverted, as among Ionians, to meditation or satire; but was concentrated on public interests, on religious and heroic traditions, on all the thoughts and feelings which stimulate a large political activity. The Dorians required a poetry which should be public, which should admit of the participation of many individuals, which should give utterance to national enthusiasms, which should combine the movements of men and women in choric evolutions with the melodies of music and the sublime words of inspired prophecy. In brief, the Dorians needed poets able—

“to inbreed and cherish in a great people the seeds of virtue and public civility, to allay the perturbations of the mind, and set the affections in right tune; to celebrate in glorious and lofty hymns the throne and equipage of God’s Almightyness, and what He works, and what He suffers to be wrought with high Providence. . . . Lastly, whatsoever in religion is holy and sublime, in virtue amiable or grave; whatsoever hath passion or admiration in all the changes of that which is called fortune from without, or the wily subtleties and reflexes of man’s thoughts from within; all these things with a solid and treatable smoothness, to paint out and describe.”

But here arose a difficulty. With all their need of the highest and most elaborate poetry, with all their sensibility to beauty, the Dorians thought it beneath the dignity of a citizen to practise the arts. Their education, almost exclusively military and gymnastic, unfitted them, at all events in Sparta, for studies indispensable towards gaining proficiency in any science so elaborate as that of choral poetry. Drilled to abstinence, obedience, and silence, dwelling in a camp, without privacy or leisure, how could a Spartan, that automaton of the State, be expected to produce poetry, or excel in any fine art? A Spartan king, on being shown the most distinguished musician of his age, pointed to his cook as the best maker of black broth. Music, if music they must have; poetry, if poetry were required by some divinely implanted instinct; dancing, if dancing were a necessary compliment to the Deity; must be imported by these warriors from foreign lands. Thus the Spartans became the patrons of stranger artists, on whom they imposed their laws of taste. They pressed the flexible Ionian,

the passionate Lesbian, the languid Lydian, the acute Athenian, into their service, and made them use the crabbed Dorian speech. They said : We want such and such odes for our choruses ; we wish to amuse our youths and maidens, and to honour the gods with pompous harmonies ; you, men of art, write for us, sing for us ; but be careful to comprehend our character ; and remember that, though you are Ionians or Lesbians, your inspiration must be Dorian. They got what they required. The so-called Dorian lyric is a genuine product of the Dorian race, although its greatest masters were foreigners and aliens. Much after the same fashion did England patronise Handel in the last century ; in the same way may Handel's oratorios be called English music ; for though the English are not musicians, and are diffident in general of the artist class, yet neither Germans, nor Italians, nor French, have seen produced upon their soil such colossal works of art in the service of a highly intellectual religion.

It is interesting to reflect upon the influence of the Dorian race in the evolution of Greek art. That, as a nation, they possessed the germs of artistic invention, and that their character expressed itself very clearly in æsthetic forms, is evident from the existence of the Dorian style in architecture, and the Dorian mood in music, both of which reflect their broad simplicity and strength disdaining ornament. The same stamp they impressed upon Greek poetry, through the instruments they selected from other tribes. Had it not been for the strict legislation of Lycurgus, which, by forcing Sparta into a purely political development, and establishing a complete community of life among the citizens, checked the emergence of that individuality which is so all-important to the artist, Sparta might have counted her great sculptors, poets, musicians, orators, and painters, in rivalry with Pheidias, Sophocles, Damon, Pericles, Polygnotus. As it was, though without hands to paint and carve, without lips to sing and plead, the stubborn Dorian race set its seal on a wide field of Greek art.¹

The elaborate works of the choral lyrists may be regarded as the highly-wrought expansions of rudiments already existing among the Dorians. Alcman, Arion, and Stesichorus, the three masters who formed choral poetry from the materials indicated to us in the poems of Homer, and who had to blend in one harmonious whole the sister arts of dancing, music, and poetry, so as to present a pompous appeal to the intellect through speech, and through the ear and eye, found ready to their hands such simple songs as may be read in Bergk, pp. 1297-1303. The dithyramb of the women of Elis : " Come, hero, Dionysus, to the holy sea-temple, attended by the Graces, and rushing on with oxen-hoof ! Holy ox ! Holy ox ! " The chorus of the old men, men, and boys at Sparta : " We once were stalwart youths : we are ; if thou likest, try our strength : we shall be ; and far better too ! " The

¹ It is unhistorical to confound the Dorians with the Spartans, who were a specially-trained section of the Dorian stock. Yet it will be seen that, in relation at least to lyric poetry, Sparta fairly may be taken as *the* Dorian state.

march-song of the Spartans in their rhythmic revels: "Advance, boys, set your feet forward, and dance in the reel better still."—From these had to be trained the complex and magnificent work of art, which culminated in a Pythian ode of Pindar! Alcman was a native of Sardis, and a slave of Agesilaus the Spartan. He flourished at Sparta between 671 and 631 B.C., composing Parthenia for the maidens of Taygetus. Who does not know his lines upon the valley of Eurotas? "Sleep holds the mountain summits and ravines, the promontories and the water-courses; leaves, and creeping things, and whatsoever black earth breeds; and wild beasts of the hills, and bees, and monsters in the hollows of the dark blue deep; and all the wide-winged birds are sleeping." Junior to Alcman was Arion, who spent most of his time with Periander at Corinth. His contribution to choral poetry was the elaboration of the Dithyramb. But of his work we have unfortunately not a single fragment left. The piece that bears his name (Bergk, p. 872) has to be ascribed to some tolerable poet of the Euripidean period. His life is involved in mythology; most beautiful is the oft-told tale of his salvation from the sea waves by an enamoured dolphin—a fish, by the way, which Athenæus dignified by the title of *φιλαῶδος τε καὶ φίλαυλος* (song-loving and flute-loving), and which Aristotle calls *φιλόανθρωπος* (affectionate to men). Rather more is known about Stesichorus. He was a native of Himera in Sicily, but possibly a Locrian by descent. His parents called him Tisias, but he took his more famous name from his profession. Stesichorus is a title that might have been given to any chorus-master in a Greek city; but Tisias of Himera won it by being emphatically the author of the choric system. Antiquity recognised in him the inventor of Strophe, Antistrophe, and Epode, with the corresponding movements of the dance, which were designated the Triad of Stesichorus. A remark made by Quintilian about this poet—that he sustained the burden of the Epos with his lyre—forms a valuable criticism on his style. In the days of Stesichorus, the epic proper had lost its vitality; but people still felt the liveliest interest in heroic legends, and loved to connect the celebration of the past with their ceremonies. A lyrical poet had therefore so to treat the myths of Hellas that choruses should represent them in their odes and semi-dramatic dances. It is probable that Stesichorus made far more use of mythical material than Pindar, dealing with it less allusively and adhering more closely to the epic form of narrative. When we hear of his ode, the Oresteia, being divided into three books (whatever that may mean), and read the titles of the rest—Cerberus, Cycnus, Scylla, Europa, the Sack of Troy, the Nostoi, and Geryonis, we are led to suspect that his choral compositions were not dissimilar to mediæval mystery plays—semi-lyrical, semi-dramatic poems, founded on the religious legends of the past. Stesichorus did not confine himself to this species of composition, but wrote hymns, encomia, and pæans, like other professional lyrists who succeeded him, and invented a curious kind of love-tale from real life. One of these romantic poems, called

Calycé, was about a girl, who loved purely but unhappily, and died. Another, called Rhadina, told the forlorn tale of a Samian brother and sister put to death by a cruel tyrant. It is a pity that these early Greek novels in verse are lost. We might have found in them the fresh originals of *Daphnis and Chloe*, or of the romances of *Tatius and Heliodorus*. Finally, *Stesichorus* composed fables, such as the *Horse and the Stag*, and pastorals upon the death of *Daphnis*, in which he proved himself true to his Sicilian origin, and anticipated *Theocritus*. Enough has been said about *Stesichorus* to show that he was a richly inventive genius—one of those facile and abundant natures who excel in many branches of art, and who give hints by which posterity may profit. Yet with all his genius he was not thoroughly successful. His pastorals and romances were abandoned by his successors; his epical lyrics were lost in the tragic drama. Like many other poets, he failed by coming at a wrong moment, or else by adhering to forms of art which could not long remain in vogue. In his attempt to reconcile the epical treatment of mythology with the choric system of his own invention, he proved that he had not fully grasped the capabilities of lyrical poetry. In his endeavour to create an idyllic and romantic species, he was far before his age.

The remaining choral poets of the Dorian style, of whom the eldest, *Ibycus*, dates half a century later than *Arion*, received from their predecessors an instrument of poetical expression already nearly complete. It was their part to use it as skilfully as possible, and to introduce such changes as might render it more polished. Excellence of workmanship is particularly noticeable in what remains of *Ibycus*, *Simonides*, *Bacchylides*. These latter lyrists are no longer local poets: under the altered circumstances of Hellas at the time of the Persian war, art has become Panhellenic, the artists cease to be the servants of one state or of one deity; they range from city to city, giving their services to all who seek for them, and embracing the various tribes and religious rites of the collected Greeks in their æsthetic sympathy. Now, for the first time, poets began to sell their songs of praise for money. *Simonides* introduced the practice, which had something shocking in it to Greek taste, and which *Plato* especially censures as sophistic and illiberal in his *Protagoras*. Now, too, poets became the friends and counsellors of princes, mixing freely in the politics of *Samos*, *Syracuse*, *Agrirentum*, *Thessaly*; aiding the tyrants *Polycrates*, *Hiero*, *Theron*, the *Scopads*, with their advice. *Simonides* is said to have suspended hostilities between *Theron* and *Hiero* by his diplomatic intercession after their armies had been drawn up in battle-array. *Petrarch* did not occupy a more important place among the princes and republics of mediæval Italy. Under these new conditions, and with this expansion of the poet's calling, the old character of the Dorian lyric changed. The title Dorian is now merely nominal, and the dialect is a conventional language consecrated to this style.

Ibycus was a native of *Rhegium*, a colony of mixed Ionians and

Dorians. To which of these families he belonged is not certain. If we judged by the internal evidence of his poems, we should call him an Ionian; for they are distinguished by voluptuous sweetness, with a dash of almost Æolian intensity. Ibycus was a poet-errant, carrying his songs from state to state. The beautiful story of the cranes who led to the discovery of his murder at Corinth, though probably mythical, like that of Arion's dolphin, illustrates the rude lives of these Greek troubadours, and shows in what respect the *sacer vates*, servant of the Muses and beloved of Phœbus, was held by the people. Ibycus was regarded by antiquity as a kind of male Sappho. His odes, composed for birthday festivals and banquets, were dedicated chiefly to the praise of beautiful youths; and the legends which adorned them, like those of Ganymede or Tithonus, were appropriate to the erotic style. Aristophanes, in the *Thesmophoriazusa*, makes Agathon connect him with Anacreon and Alcæus, as the three refiners of language. It is clear, therefore, that in his art Ibycus adapted the manner of Dorian poetry to the matter of Æolian or Ionian love-chants. Of his poetry we have but few fragments. The following seems to strike the keynote of his style: "Love once again looking upon me from his cloud-black brows, with languishing glances, drives me by enchantments of all kinds to the endless nets of Cypris: verily I tremble at his onset, as a chariot-horse, who hath won prizes, in old age goes grudgingly to try his speed in the swift race of cars." In another piece he compares the onset of Love to a downrush of the Thracian north wind armed with lightning. This fragment, numbered first in Bergk's Collection, is taken from Athenæus, who quotes it to prove the vehement emotion of the poet:—

" In spring Cydonian apple-trees,
Watered by fountains ever flowing
Through crofts unmown of maiden goddesses,
And young vines 'neath the shade
Of shooting tendrils, tranquilly are growing.
Meanwhile for me Love never laid
In slumber, like a north-wind glowing
With Thracian lightnings, still doth dart
Blood-parching madness on my heart,
From Kupris hurtling, stormful, wild,
Lording the man as erst the child."

We may turn aside to compare the different metaphors whereby the early lyrists imaged the assaults of the Love-God. Sappho describes him in one place as a youth arrayed with a flame-coloured chlamys descending from heaven; in another she calls him "a limb-dissolving, bitter-sweet, impracticable wild beast"; again, she compares the state of her soul under the influence of love to oak-trees torn and shaken by a mountain whirlwind. Anacreon paints a fine picture of Love like a blacksmith, forging his soul and tempering it in icy torrents. The dubious winged figure armed with a heavy sword, which is carved upon the recently-discovered column from the Temple of Ephesus, if he be the Love-God, and not, as some conjecture, Death, seems to

have been conceived in the spirit of these energetic metaphors. The Greeks, at the period of Anacreon and Ibycus, were far from having as yet imagined the baby Cupid of Moschus, the Epigrammatists, and the Alexandrian Anacreontics. He was still a terrible and passion-stirring power—no mere malicious urchin coming by night with drenched wings and unstrung bow to reward the poet's hospitality by wounding him; no naughty boy who runs away from his mother and steals honeycombs, no bee-like elf asleep in rosebuds.

Simonides is a far more brilliant representative than Ibycus, both of Greek choral poetry in its prime, and also of the whole literary life of Hellas during the period which immediately preceded and followed the Persian war. He was born in the island of Ceos, of pure Ionian blood and breeding; but the Ionians of Ceos were celebrated for their *σωφροσύνη* (reserve, or self-restraint), a quality strongly marked in the poems of Simonides. In his odes we do not trace that mixture of Æolian passion and that concentration upon personal emotions which are noticeable in those of Ibycus, but rather a Dorian solemnity of thought and feeling, qualifying Simonides for the arduous functions to which he was called, of commemorating in elegy and epigram and funeral ode the achievements of Hellas against Persia. Simonides belonged to a family of professional poets; for the arts among the early Greeks were hereditary; a father taught the trade of flute-playing and chorus-leading and verse-making to his son, who, if he had original genius, became a great poet, as was the fate of Pindar; or, if he were endowed with commonplace abilities, remained a journeyman in art without discredit to himself, performing useful functions in his native place.¹ Simonides exercised his calling of chorus-teacher at Carthæa in Ceos, and lived at the *χορηγείον*, or resort of the chorus, near the temple of Apollo. But the greater portion of his life, after he had attained celebrity, was passed with patrons,—with Hipparchus, who invited him to Athens, where he dwelt in amity with Anacreon, and at enmity with Pindar's master Lasos—with the Scopads and Aleuads of Thessaly, for whom he composed the most touching threnoi and the most brilliant panegyrics, of which fragments have descended to us;—finally, with Hiero of Syracuse, who honoured him exceedingly, and when he died, consigned him to the earth with princely funeral pomp. The relations of Simonides to these patrons may be gathered from numerous slight indications, none of which are very honourable to his character. For instance, after receiving the hospitality of Hipparchus, he composed an epigram for the statue of Harmodius, in which he calls the murder of the tyrant “a great light rising upon Athens.” Again, he praised

¹ The Dramatic art was hereditary among the Athenians. Æschylus left a son, Euphorion, and two nephews, Philocles and Astydamos, who produced tragedies. The last is reported to have written no fewer than two hundred and forty plays. Iophon the son and Sophocles the grandson of the great Sophocles were dramatists of some repute at Athens. Euripides had a nephew of his own name, and Aristophanes two sons who followed the same calling. It is only from families like the Bachs that we can draw any modern parallel to this transmission of an art from father to son in the same race.

the brutal Scopas, son of Creon, in an ode which is celebrated, both as being connected with the most dramatic incident in the poet's life, and also as having furnished Plato with a theme for argument, and Aristotle with an ethical quotation—"To be a good man in very truth, a square without blame, is hard." This proposition Plato discusses in the *Protagoras*, while Aristotle cites the phrase, τετράγωνος ἄνευ ψόγου (four-square without fault). From the general tenor of the fragments of this ode, from Plato's criticism, and from what is known about the coarse nature of Scopas, who is being praised, we must conjecture that Simonides attempted to whitewash his patron's character by depreciating the standard of morality. With Ionian facility and courtly compliment, he made excuses for a bad man by pleading that perfect goodness was unattainable. Scopas refused to pay the price required by Simonides for the poem in question, telling him to get half of it from the Dioscuri, who had also been eulogised. This was at a banquet. While the king was laughing at his own rude jest, a servant whispered to the poet that two goodly youths waited without, desiring earnestly to speak with him. Simonides left the palace, but found no one. Even as he stood looking for his visitors, he heard the crash of beams and the groans of dying men. Scopas with his guests had been destroyed by the falling of the roof, and Simonides had received a god-like guerdon from the two sons of Tyndareus. This story belongs, perhaps, to the same class as the cranes of Ibycus and the dolphin of Arion. Yet there seems to be no doubt that the Scopad dynasty was suddenly extinguished; for we hear nothing of them at the time of the Persian war, and we know that Simonides composed a threnos for the family.

The most splendid period of the life of Simonides was that which he passed at Athens during the great wars with Persia. Here he was the friend of Miltiades, Themistocles, and Pausanias. Here he composed his epigrams on Marathon, Thermopylæ, Salamis, Plataea—poems not destined to be merely sung or consigned to parchment, but to be carved in marble or engraved in letters of imperishable bronze upon the works of the noblest architects and statuaries. The genius of Simonides is unique in this branch of monumental poetry. His couplets—calm, simple, terse, strong as the deeds they celebrate, enduring as the brass or stone which they adorned—animated succeeding generations of Greek patriots; they were transferred to the brains of statesmen like Pericles and Demosthenes, inscribed upon the fleshy tablets of the hearts of warriors like Cleomenes, Pelopidas, Epaminondas. We are thrice fortunate in possessing the entire collection of these epigrams, unrivalled for the magnitude of the events they celebrate, and for the circumstances under which they were composed. When we reflect what would have become of the civilisation of the world but for these Greek victories—when we remember that the events which these few couplets record, transcend in importance those of any other single period of history—we are almost appalled by the contrast between the brevity of the epigrams and the world-wide vastness of their

matter. In reviewing the life of Simonides, after admitting that he was greedy of gain and not adverse to flattery, we are bound to confess that, as a poet, he proved himself adequate to the age of Marathon and Salamis. He was the voice of Hellas—the genius of Fame, sculpturing upon her brazen shield with a pen of adamant, in austere letters of indelible gold, the achievements to which the whole world owes its civilisation. Happy poet! Had ever any other man so splendid a heritage of song allotted to him?

In style Simonides is always pure and exquisitely polished. The ancients called him the sweet poet—Melicertes—*par excellence*. His *σωφροσύνη*, or tempered self-restraint, gives a mellow tone not merely to his philosophy and moral precepts, but also to his art. He has none of Pindar's rugged majesty, volcanic force, gorgeous exuberance: he does not, like Pindar, pour forth an inexhaustible torrent of poetical ideas, chafing against each other in the eddies of breathless inspiration. On the contrary, he works up a few thoughts, a few carefully selected images, with patient skill, producing a perfectly harmonious result, but one which is always bordering on the commonplace. Like all correct poets, he is somewhat tame, though tender, delicate, and exquisitely beautiful. Pindar electrifies his hearer, seizing him like the eagle in Dante's vision, and bearing him breathless through the ether of celestial flame. Simonides leads us by the hand along the banks of pleasant rivers, through laurel groves, and by the porticoes of sunny temples. What he possesses of quite peculiar to his own genius is pathos—the pathos of romance. This appears most remarkably in the fragment of a threnos which describes Danaë afloat upon the waves at night. It is with the greatest diffidence that I offer a translation of what remains one of the most perfect pieces of pathetic poetry in any literature:—

“ When, in the carven chest,
 The winds that blew and waves in wild unrest
 Smote her with fear, she, not with cheeks unwet,
 Her arms of love round Perseus set,
 And said: O child, what grief is mine!
 But thou dost slumber, and thy baby breast
 Is sunk in rest,
 Here in the cheerless brass-bound bark,
 Tossed amid starless night and pitchy dark.
 Nor dost thou heed the scudding brine
 Of waves that wash above thy curls so deep,
 Nor the shrill winds that sweep,—
 Lapped in thy purple robe's embrace,
 Fair little face!
 But if this dread were dreadful too to thee,
 Then wouldst thou lend thy listening ear to me;
 Therefore I cry,—Sleep babe, and sea be still,
 And slumber our unmeasured ill!
 Oh, may some change of fate, sire Zeus, from thee
 Descend, our woes to end!
 But if this prayer, too overbold, offend
 Thy justice, yet be merciful to me!”

The careful development of simple thoughts in Simonides may best be illustrated by the fragment on the three hundred Spartans who died at Thermopylæ :—

“ Of those who died at Thermopylæ glorious is the fate and fair the doom ; their grave is an altar ; instead of lamentation, they have endless fame ; their dirge is a chant of praise. Such winding-sheet as theirs no rust, no, nor all-conquering time, shall bring to nought. But this sepulchre of brave men hath taken for its habitant the glory of Hellas. Leonidas is witness, Sparta’s king, who hath left a mighty crown of valour and undying fame.”

The antitheses are wrought with consummate skill ; the fate of the heroes is glorious, their doom honourable : so far the eulogy is commonplace ; then the same thought receives a bolder turn : their grave is an altar. We do not lament for them so much as hold them in eternal memory ; our very songs of sorrow become pæans of praise. What follows is a still further expansion of the leading theme : rust and time cannot affect their fame ; Hellas confides her glory to their tomb. Then generalities are quitted ; and Leonidas, the protagonist of Thermopylæ, appears.

In his threnoi Simonides has generally recourse to the common grounds of consolation, which the Ionian elegists repeat *ad nauseam*, dwelling upon the shortness and uncertainty and ills of life, and tending rather to depress the survivors on their own account than to comfort them for the dead.¹ In one he says, “ Short is the strength of men, and vain are all their cares, and in their brief life trouble follows upon trouble ; and death, that no man shuns, is hung above our heads—for him both good and bad share equally.” It is impossible, while reading this lachrymose lament, to forget the fragment of that mighty threnos of Pindar’s which sounds like a trumpet-blast for immortality, and, trampling under feet the glories of this world, reveals the gladness of the souls who have attained Elysium :—

“ For them the night all through,
 In that broad realm below,
 The splendour of the sun spreads endless light ;
 ‘Mid rosy meadows bright,
 Their city of the tombs with incense-trees,
 And golden chalices
 Of flowers, and fruitage fair,
 Scenting the breezy air,
 Is laden. There with horses and with play,
 With games and lyres, they while the hours away.

“ On every side around
 Pure happiness is found,
 With all the blooming beauty of the world ;
 There fragrant smoke, upcurled

¹ The reputation gained by Simonides among the ancients for the sorrow of his song is proved by the phrase of Catullus,—“ *Mœstius lachrymis Simonideis* ” (more sad than tears shed by Simonides).

From altars where the blazing fire is dense
 With perfumed frankincense,
 Burned unto gods in heaven,
 Through all the land is driven,
 Making its pleasant place odorous
 With scented gales and sweet airs amorous."

The same note of melancholy reflection upon transient human life may be traced in the following fragment attributed to Simonides. He is rebuking Cleobulus of Lindus in Rhodes for an arrogant epigraph inscribed upon some column :—

"Those who are wise in heart and mind,
 O Lindian Cleobulus, find
 Naught in thy shallow vaunt aright ;
 Who with the streams that flow for aye,
 The vernal flowers that bloom and die,
 The fiery sun, the moon's mild rays,
 The strong sea's eddying water-ways,
 Matchest a marble pillar's might.
 Lo, all things that have being are
 To the high gods inferior far ;
 But carven stone may not withstand
 Even a mortal's ruthless hand.
 Therefore thy words no wisdom teach
 More than an idiot's idle speech."

What has been said about Simonides applies in a great measure also to Bacchylides, who was his nephew, pupil, and faithful follower. The personality of Bacchylides, as a man and a poet, is absorbed in that of his uncle—the greater bard, the more distinguished actor on the theatre of the world. While Simonides played his part in public life, Bacchylides gave himself up to the elegant pleasures of society ; while Simonides celebrated in epigrams the military glories of the Greeks, Bacchylides wrote wine-songs and congratulatory odes. His descriptions of Bacchic intoxication and of the charms of peace display the same careful word-painting as the description by Simonides of Orpheus, with more luxuriance of sensual suggestion. His threnoi exhibit the same Ionian despondency and resignation—a dead settled calm, an elegant stolidity of epicureanism. That this excellent, if somewhat languid, lyrist may receive his due meed of attention, I have selected his most important fragment, the *Praise of Peace*, for translation (Bergk, vol. iii. p. 1230) :—

"To mortal men Peace giveth these good things :
 Wealth, and the flowers of honey-throated song ;
 The flame that springs
 On carven altars from fat sheep and kine,
 Slain to the gods in heaven ; and, all day long,
 Games for glad youths, and flutes, and wreaths, and circling wine.
 Then in the steely shield swart spiders weave
 Their web and dusky wool :
 Rust to the pointed spear and sword doth cleave ;
 The brazen trump sounds no alarms ;

Nor is sleep harried from our eyes aloof,
 But with sweet rest my bosom warms :
 The streets are thronged with lovely men and young,
 And hymns in praise of boys like flames to heaven are flung."

The tone common to Simonides and Bacchylides in funeral poems will be illustrated by the four following fragments :¹—

" Being a man, say not what comes to-morrow,
 Nor, seeing one in bliss, how long 'twill last ;
 For wide-winged fly was ne'er of flight so fast
 As change to sorrow.

" Nay, not those elder men, who lived of yore,
 Of sceptred gods the half-immortal seed,
 Not even they to prosperous old age wore
 A life from pain and death and danger freed.

" Short is the strength of men, and vain their trouble,
 Through their brief age sorrows on sorrows double ;
 O'er each and all hangs death escaped by none ;
 Of him both good and bad an equal lot have won.

" For mortal men not to be born is best,
 Nor e'er to see the bright beams of the day ;
 Since, as life rolls away,
 No man that breathes was ever always blest."

Here we must stop short in the front of Pindar—the Hamlet among these lesser actors, the Shakespeare among a crowd of inferior poets. To treat of Greek lyrical poetry and to omit Pindar is a paradox in action. Yet Pindar is so colossal, so much apart, that he deserves a separate study, and cannot be dragged in at the end of a bird's-eye view of a period of literature. At the time of Pindar poetry was sinking into mannerism. He by the force of his native originality gave it a wholly fresh direction, and created a style as novel as it was inimitable. Like some high mountain-peak, upon the borderland of plain and lesser hills, he stands alone, sky-piercing and tremendous in his solitary strength.

Before, however, entering upon the criticism of Pindar's poetry, it will be of service to complete this review of the Greek lyric by some specimens of those later artificial literary odes, a few of which have been preserved for us by the anthologists and grammarians. The following Hymn to Virtue has a special interest, since it is ascribed to Aristotle, the philosopher, and makes allusion to his friend, the tyrant of Atarneus. The comparative dryness of the style is no less characteristic of the age in which the poem is supposed to have been written than its animating motive, the beauty of Virtue, is true to the Greek conception of morality and heroism :—

¹ See Bergk, vol. iii. pp. 1128, 1129, 1132, 1227.

" Virtue, to men thou bringest care and toil ;
 Yet art thou life's best, fairest spoil !
 O virgin goddess, for thy beauty's sake
 To die is delicate in this our Greece,
 Or to endure of pain the stern strong ache.
 Such fruit for our soul's ease
 Of joys undying, dearer far than gold
 Or home or soft-eyed sleep, dost thou unfold !
 It was for thee the seed of Zeus
 Stout Herakles, and Leda's twins, did choose
 Strength-draining deeds, to spread abroad thy name :
 Smit with the love of thee,
 Aias and Achileus went smilingly
 Down to Death's portal, crowned with deathless fame.
 Now, since thou art so fair,
 Leaving the lightsome air,
 Atarneus' hero hath died gloriously.
 Wherefore immortal praise shall be his guerdon :
 His goodness and his deeds are made the burden
 Of songs divine
 Sung by Memory's daughters nine,
 Hymning of hospitable Zeus the might
 And friendship firm as fate in fate's despite."

The next is a Hymn to Health, hardly less true to Greek feeling than the Hymn to Virtue. Simonides, it will be remembered, had said that the first and best possession to be desired by man is health. The ode is but a rhetorical expansion of this sentence, showing that none of the good things of human life can be enjoyed without physical well-being :—

" Health ! Eldest, most august of all
 The blessed gods, on thee I call !
 Oh, let me spend with thee the rest
 Of mortal life, securely blest !
 Oh, mayst thou be my housemate still,
 To shield and shelter me from ill !
 If wealth have any grace,
 If fair our children's face ;
 If kinghood, lifting men to be
 Peers with the high gods' empery ;
 If young Love's flying feet
 Through secret snares be sweet ;
 If aught of all heaven's gifts to mortals sent,
 If rest from care be dear, or calm content—
 These goodly things, each, all of them, with thee
 Bloom everlastingly,
 Blest Health ! yea, Beauty's year
 Breaks into spring for thee, for only thee !
 Without thee no man's life is aught but cold and drear."

As an example of the pæan or the prosodial hymn, when it assumed a literary form, I may select an ode to Phœbus, which bears the name of Dionysius. Apollo is here addressed in his character of Light-giver, and leader of the lesser powers of heaven. The stars and the

moon are his attendants, rejoicing in his music, and deriving from his might their glory :—

“ Let all wide heaven be still !
 Be silent vale and hill,
 Earth and whispering wind and sea,
 Voice of birds and echo shrill !
 For soon amid our choir will be
 Phœbus with floating locks, the Lord of Minstrelsy :
 O father of the snow-browed morn :
 Thou who dost drive the rosy car
 Of day’s wing-footed coursers, borne
 With gleaming curls of gold unshorn
 Over heaven’s boundless vault afar ;
 Weaving the woof of myriad rays,
 Wealth-scattering beams that burn and blaze,
 Enwinding them round earth in endless maze !
 The rivers of thy fire undying
 Beget bright day, our heart’s desire :
 The throng of stars to greet thee flying
 Through cloudless heaven, join choric dances,
 Hailing thee king with ceaseless crying
 For joy of thy Phœbean lyre.
 In front the gray-eyed Moon advances
 Drawn by her snow-white heifers o’er
 Night’s silent silvery dancing-floor :
 With gladness her mild bosom burns
 As round the dædal world she turns.”

From these specimens we may infer the character of that semi-ethical, semi-religious lyric poetry which was produced so copiously in Greece, and of which we have lost all but accidental remnants. Though not to be compared for grandeur of style and abundance of grace with the odes of Pindar and the fragments of Simonides, they display a careful workmanship, a clear and harmonious development of ideas, that make us long, alas too vainly, for the treasures of a literature now buried in irrevocable oblivion.

CHAPTER XI

PINDAR

His Life—Legends connected with Him—The Qualities of his Poetry—The Olympic Games—Pindar's Professional Character—His Morality—His Religious Belief—Doctrine of a Future State—Rewards and Punishments—The Structure of his Odes—The Proëmia to his Odes—His Difficulty and Tumidity of Style.

PINDAR, in spite of his great popularity among the Greeks, offers no exception to the rule that we know but little of the lives of the illustrious poets and artists of the world. His parents belonged to the town of Cynoscephalæ; but Pindar himself resided at Thebes, and spoke of Thebes as his native place—*Θήβα μᾶτερ ἐμά* (Thebes, mother mine!). That his father was called Daiphantus appears tolerably certain; and we may fix the date of his birth at about 522 B.C. He lived to the age of seventy-nine; so that the flourishing period of his life exactly coincides with the great Persian struggle, in which he lived to see Hellas victorious. He had three children—a son, Daiphantus, and two daughters, Eumetis and Protomache. His family was among the noblest and most illustrious of Thebes, forming a branch of the ancient house of the Ægeidæ, who settled both at Thebes and Sparta in heroic times, and offshoots from whom were colonists of Thera and Cyrene. Thus many of the heroes celebrated by Pindar, and many of the illustrious men to whom he dedicates his odes, were of his own kin. Genius for the art seems to have been hereditary in the family of Pindar, as it was in that of Stesichorus and of Simonides; therefore, when the youth showed an aptitude for poetry, his father readily acceded to his wishes, and sent him to Athens to learn the art of composing for the chorus from Lasos, the then famous but now forgotten antagonist of the bard of Ceos. Before his twentieth year, Pindar returned to Thebes and took, it is said, instruction from the poetesses Myrtis and Corinna. To this period of his artistic career belongs the oft-told tale, according to which Corinna bade her pupil interweave myths with his panegyrics, and when, following her advice, he produced

an ode in which he had exhausted all the Theban legends, told him τῇ χειρὶ δεῖν σπείρειν, ἀλλὰ μὴ ὄλω τῷ θυλάκῳ, "that one ought to sow with the hand and not with the whole sack." Against both Myrtis and Corinna, Pindar entered the lists of poetical contest. Corinna is reported to have beaten him five times, and never to have been vanquished by her more illustrious rival. Pausanias hints that she owed her victories to her beauty, and to the fact that she wrote in a broad Æolic dialect, more suited to the ears of her judges than Pindar's Doric style. The same circumstance which ensured her this temporary triumph may have caused her ultimate neglect. The fragment we possess of Corinna—

μεμφόμενῃ δὲ κῆ λιγούραν Μούρτιδ' ἰώνγα
ὅτι βανά φούσ' ἔβα Πινδάρου ποτ' ἔριν.

"I blame the clear-voiced Myrtis for that, a woman, she contended against Pindar," is curiously at variance with her own practice. Its Æolisms prove how local and provincial her language must have been.

The history of Pindar's life is the record of his poetical compositions. He was essentially a professional artist, taking no active part in politics, and studying to perfect his poetry all through the perilous days of Salamis and Plataea—like Michael Angelo, who went on modelling and hewing through the sack of Rome, the fall of Florence, the decline of Italian freedom, with scarce a word to prove the anguish of his patriot soul. Pindar, unlike his fellow-countrymen, did not side with the Persians, but felt enthusiasm for Athens, the ἔρεισμα Ἑλλάδος (buttress of Hellas), as he calls her in a dithyramb¹ (fr. 4). For this he was made Proxenos of Athens, and received a present of 10,000 drachmas. It is said that the Thebans fined him for his implied reflections upon them, and that Athens paid the debt. These facts, if true, testify to the post of honour which a mighty poet occupied in Hellas, when the *vox et præterea nihil* (voice and naught besides) of a bard, inspired indeed by muses, but dependent on a patron for his bread, was listened to with jealous ears by the rulers of great cities. The last Isthmian ode shows in what a noble spirit Pindar felt the dangers of Hellas during her deadly strife with Persia, and how he could scarcely breathe for anxiety until the stone of Tantalus suspended over her had been arrested. In the Proëmium he says:—

"For Cleander and his prime of beauty let some one, O ye youths, bear the glorious meed of toil to the splendid portals of his sire Telesarchus, the revel-song, which pays him for his Isthmian victory and for his might in Nemean games. For him I too, though grieved in soul, am asked to call upon the golden muse. Freed as we are from mighty griefs, let us not fall into the bereavement of victorious crowns, nor nurse our cares: but ceasing from vain sorrows, spread we honeyed song abroad thus after our great trouble: forasmuch as of a truth some god hath turned aside the stone of Tantalus which hung above our heads—intolerable suffering for Hellas. Me verily the passing away of dread hath cured not of all

¹ This and all references are made to Bergk's text of Pindar.

care ; yet it is ever better to notice what is present : for treacherous time is hung above the lives of men, rolling the torrent of their days. Still, with freedom on our side, men can cure even these evils ; and it is our duty to attend to wholesome hope."

Pindar passed his time chiefly at Thebes, where his home was. But he also visited the different parts of Greece, frequently staying at Delphi, where the iron chair on which he sat and sang was long preserved ; and also journeying to the houses of his patrons—Hiero of Syracuse, and presumably Theron of Agrigentum, and perhaps, too, Alexander of Macedon. Olympia must have often received him as a guest, as well as the island of Ægina, where he had many friends. Odes were sent by him to Cyrene, to Ceos, to Rhodes—on what tablets, we may wonder, adorned with what calligraphy from Pindar's stylus, in what casket worthy of the man who loved magnificence ? The Rhodians inscribed his seventh Olympian—the most radiant panegyric of the sea-born isle of Helios—in letters of gold on the walls of their temple of the Lindian Athene. In the midst of his artistic labours, and while serving many patrons, Pindar, as we shall see, preserved his dignity and loftiness of moral character.

Pindar is said to have died in the theatre at Argos, in the arms of Theoxenos, a youth whom he loved passionately, and whom he has praised in the most sublime strains for his beauty in a Scolion, the fragment of which we possess.¹ Anacreon choked by a grape-stone, Sophocles breathing out his life together with the pathetic lamentations of Antigone, Æschylus killed on the sea-shore by the eagle whose flight he had watched, Empedocles committing his fiery but turbid spirit to the flames of Etna, Sappho drowning her sorrows in the surf of the Leucadian sea, Ibycus, the poet-errant, murdered by land robbers, Euripides torn to pieces like his own Pentheus, Archilochus honoured in his death by an oracle that cursed his battle-foe, Pindar amid the plaudits of the theatre sinking back into the arms of his Theoxenos and dying in a noontide blaze of glory—these are the appropriate and dramatic endings which the literary gossips among the Greeks, always inventively ingenious, ascribed to some of their chief poets. As the Italian proverb runs, " If they are not true, they are well invented."

Some purely legendary details show the estimation in which Pindar was held by his countrymen. Multitudes of bees are said to have settled on his lips when he was an infant. Pan chose a hymn of his and sang it on the mountains, honouring a mortal poet with his divine voice. The Mother of the gods took up her dwelling at his door. Lastly, we have the famous story of the premonition of his death in dreams—a legend of peculiar significance, when we remember that Pindar, like Sir Thomas Browne, believed that " we are more than ourselves in our sleep," and wrote :—

¹ See above, p. 188.

“ All by happy fate attain
 The end that frees them from their pain ;
 And the body yields to death,
 But the shape of vital breath
 Still in life continueth ;
 It alone is heaven's conferring :
 Sleeps it when the limbs are stirring.
 But when they sleep, in many dreams it shows
 The coming consummation both of joys and woes.”¹

Just before his death, then, Pindar sent to inquire of the oracle of Ammon what was best for man ; and the answer, which he had already himself anticipated in his commemoration of Trophonius and Agamedes, was—Death. Meanwhile Persephone appeared to him in his sleep, and told him that he should praise her in her own realm, although on earth he had left her, alone of the blest gods, unsung. Ten days afterwards he died. The hymn which Pindar composed for Persephone in Hades, was dictated to a Theban woman by his ghost—so runs the tale—and written down. After his death, Pindar received more than heroic honours. They kept his iron chair at Delphi ; and the priest of Phœbus, before he shut the temple gates, cried, “ Let Pindar the poet go into the banquet of the god.” At Athens his statue was erected at the public cost. At Thebes his house was spared in the ruin of two sieges :—

“ Lift not thy spear against the Muses' bower ;
 The great Emathian conqueror bid spare
 The house of Pindarus, when temple and tower
 Went to the ground.”

At Rhodes, as we have seen, an ode of his was sculptured on the temple walls of Pallas. Throughout the future, so long as Greek poetry endured, he was known emphatically by the title of *ὁ λυρικός* (the lyricist).

Pindar was famous, as these semi-mythical stories about his infancy and old age indicate, for piety. Unlike Horace, who calls himself *Parcus deorum cultor et infrequens*, Pindar was a devout and steadfast servant of his country's gods. He dedicated a shrine or *ματρῶν* near his own house to the Mother of the gods, a statue to Zeus Ammon in Libya, and one to Hermes in the Theban agora. The whole of his poetry is impregnated with a lively sense of the divine in the world. Accepting the religious traditions of his ancestors with simple faith, he adds more of spiritual severity and of mystical morality than we find in Homer. Yet he is not superstitious or credulous. He can afford to criticise the Myths like Xenophanes and Plato, refusing to believe that a blessed god could be a glutton. In Pindar indeed we see the fine flower of Hellenic religion, free from slavish subservience to creeds and ceremonies, capable of extracting sublime morality from mythical legends, and adding to the old glad joyousness of the Homeric faith

¹ Translated by Conington, from Fragment 2 of *Dirges*.

a deeper and more awful perception of superhuman mysteries. The philosophical scepticism which in Greece, after the age of Pericles, corroded both the fabric of mythology and the indistinct doctrines of theological monotheism, had scarcely yet begun to act.

Passing to the poetry of Pindar, we have a hard task before us. What can be said adequate to such a theme? What can be left unsaid of the many thoughts that ought to be expressed? At the time of Pindar's youth, lyrical poetry in Greece was sinking into mannerism. He, by the force of his originality, gave it a wholly new direction, and, coming last of the great Dorian lyrists, taught posterity what sort of thing an ode should be. The grand pre-eminence of Pindar as an artist was due in a great measure to his personality. Frigid, austere, and splendid; not genial like that of Simonides, not passionate like that of Sappho, not acrid like that of Archilochus; hard as adamant, rigid in moral firmness, glittering with the strong keen light of snow; haughty, aristocratic, magnificent—the unique personality of the man Pindar, so irresistible in its influence, so hard to characterise, is felt in every strophé of his odes. In his isolation and elevation Pindar stands like some fabled heaven-aspiring peak, conspicuous from afar, girdled at the base with ice and snow, beaten by winds, wreathed round with steam and vapour, jutting a sharp and dazzling outline into cold blue ether. Few things that have life dare to visit him at his grand altitude. Glorious with sunlight and with stars, touched by rise and set of day with splendour, he shines when other lesser heights are dulled. Pindar among his peers is solitary. He had no communion with the poets of his day. He is the eagle; Simonides and Bacchylides are jackdaws. He soars to the empyrean; they haunt the valley mists. Noticing this rocky, barren, severe, glittering solitude of Pindar's soul, critics have not unfrequently complained that his poems are devoid of individual interest. Possibly they have failed to comprehend and appreciate the nature of this sublime and distant genius, whose character, in truth, is just as marked as that of Dante or of Michael Angelo.

Since I have indulged in one metaphor in the vain attempt to enter into some *rapport* with Pindar, let me proceed to illustrate the Pindaric influence—the impression produced by a sympathetic study of his odes upon the imagination saturated with all that is peculiar in his gorgeous style—by the deliberate expansion of some similes, which are by no means mere ornaments of rhetoric, but illustrations carefully selected from the multitude of images forced upon the mind during a detailed perusal of his poetry. One of the common names for Pindar is the Theban Eagle. This supplies us with the first image, which may be conveyed in the very words of Dante:¹—

“In dreams I seemed to see an eagle hovering in air on wings of gold, with pinions spread and ready to swoop. I thought I was on the spot where Ganymede

¹ *Purg.* ix. 19.

was taken from his comrades and borne aloft to the celestial consistory. I pondered—peradventure the great bird only strikes this hill and peradventure scorns to snatch elsewhere his prey. Then it seemed to me that, after wheeling a while, it swooped, terrible like lightning, and caught me up into the sphere of flame; and there I thought that it and I both burned; and so fiercely did the fire in my imagination blaze, that sleep no longer could endure, but broke.”

This simile describes the rapidity and fierceness of Pindar’s spirit, the atmosphere of empyreal splendour into which he bears us with strong wings and clinging talons. Another image may be borrowed from Horace,¹ who says—

“Fervet immensusque ruit profundo
Pindarus ore;”

likening the poet to a torrent, unrestrained, roaring to the woods and precipices with a thunderous voice. This image does not, like the other, fix our attention upon the quality peculiar to Pindar among all the poets of the world—splendour, fire, the blaze of pure effulgence. But it does suggest another characteristic, which is the stormy violence of his song, that chafes within its limits and seems unable to advance quickly enough in spite of its speed. This violence of Pindar’s style, as of some snow-swollen Alpine stream, the hungry Arve or death-cold Lutschine, leaping and raging among granite boulders, has misled Horace into the notion that Pindar’s odes are without metrical structure:—

“numerisque fertur
Lege solutis:”

whereas we know that, while pursuing his eagle-flight to the sun, or thundering along his torrent-path, Pindar steadily observed the laws of Strophé, Antistrophé, and Epode with consummate art. A third figure may be chosen from Pindar² himself.

“As when a man takes from his wealthy hand a goblet foaming with the dew of the grape, and gives it with healths and pledges to his youthful son-in-law to bear from one home to the other home, golden, the crown of his possessions, gracing the feast and glorifying his kinsman, and makes him in the eyes of the assembled friends to be admired for his harmonious wedlock: so I, sending outpoured nectar, the Muses’ gift, to conquering heroes, the sweet fruit of the soul, greet them like gods, victors at Olympia and Pytho.”

Then too he adds: “With the lyre and with the various voices of flutes³ I have come with Diagoras across the sea, chanting the wave-born daughter of the Cyprian goddess and the bride of Helios, island Rhodes.” In this passage we get a lively impression of some of the

¹ *Carm.* iv. 2. Translated thus by Conington:—

“Pindar, like torrent from the steep
Which, swollen with rain, its banks o’erflows,
With mouth unfathomably deep,
Foams, thunders, glows.”

² Seventh Ol.

³ Compare this with the passage in Pythian, iii. 68, where Pindar describes himself
Ἴονίαν τέμνων θάλασσαν (cleaving the Ionian Sea).

marked qualities of Pindar. Reading his poetry is like quaffing wine that bubbles in a bowl of gold. Then too there is the picture of the poet, gorgeously attired, with his singing robes about him, erect upon the prow of a gilded galley, floating through dazzling summer-waves toward the island of his love, Rhodes, or Sicily, or Ægina. The lyre and the flute send their clear sounds across the sea. We pass temple and citadel on shore and promontory. The banks of oars sweep the flashing brine. Meanwhile the mighty poet stretches forth his golden cup of song to greet the princes and illustrious athletes who await him on the marble quays. Reading Pindar is a progress of this pompous kind. Pindar, as one of his critics remarks, was born and reared in splendour: splendour became his vital atmosphere. The epithet *φιλάγλαος* (splendour-loving), which he gives to Girgenti, suits himself. The splendour-loving Pindar is his name and title for all time. If we search the vocabulary of Pindar to find what phrases are most frequently upon his lips, we shall be struck with the great preponderance of all words that indicate radiance, magnificence, lustre. To Pindar's soul splendour was as elemental as harmony to Milton's. Of the Graces, Aglaia must have been his favourite. Nor, love as he did the gorgeousness of wealth, was it mere transitory pomp, the gauds and trappings of the world, which he admired. There must be something to stir the depths of his soul—beauty of person, or perfection of art, or moral radiance, or ideal grandeur. The blaze of real magnificence draws him as the sun attracts the eagle; he does not flit moth-like about the glimmer of mere ephemeral lights.

After these three figures, which illustrate the fiery flight, the torrent-fulness, the intoxicating charm of Pindar, one remains by which the magnetic force and tumult of his poetry may be faintly adumbrated. He who has watched a sunset attended by the passing of a thunderstorm in the outskirts of the Alps, who has seen the distant ranges of the mountains alternately obscured by cloud and blazing with the concentrated brightness of the sinking sun, while drifting scuds of hail and rain, tawny with sunlight, glistening with broken rainbows, clothe the peak and precipice and forest in the golden veil of flame-irradiated vapour—who has heard the thunder bellow in the thwarting folds of hills, and watched the lightning, like a snake's tongue, flicker at intervals amid gloom and glory—knows in Nature's language what Pindar teaches with the voice of Art. It is only by a strained metaphor like this that any attempt to realise the *Sturm und Drang* of Pindar's style can be communicated. In plainer language, Pindar, as an artist, combines the strong flight of the eagle, the irresistible force of the torrent, the richness of Greek wine, the majestic pageantry of Nature in one of her sublimer moods.

Like all the great lyrists of the Dorian School, Pindar composed odes of various species—Hymns, Prosodia, Parthenia, Threnoi, Scolia, Dithyrambs, as well as Epinikia. Of all but the Epinikian Odes we have only inconsiderable fragments left; yet these are sublime and

beautiful enough to justify us in believing that Pindar surpassed his rivals in the Threnos and the Scolion as far as in the Epinikian Ode. Forty-four of his poems we possess entire—fourteen Olympians, twelve Pythians, eleven Nemeans, seven Isthmians. Of the occasions which led to the composition of these odes something must be said. The Olympian games were held in Elis once in five years, during the summer: their prize was a wreath of wild olive. The Pythian games were held in spring, on the Crissæan plain, once in five years: their prizes were a wreath of laurel and a palm. The Nemean games were held in the groves of Nemea, near Cleonæ, in Argolis, once in three years: their prize was a wreath of parsley. The Isthmian games were held at Corinth, once in three years: their prize was a wreath of pine, native to the spot. The Olympian festival honoured Zeus; that of Pytho, Phœbus; that of Nemea, Zeus; that of the Isthmus, Poseidon. Originally they were all of the nature of a *πανήγυρις* or national assembly at the shrine of some deity local to the spot, or honoured there with more than ordinary reverence. The Isthmian games in particular retained a special character. Instituted for an Ionian deity, whose rites the men of Elis refused to acknowledge, they failed to unite the whole Greek race. The Greek games, like the Schwing-feste and shooting matches of Switzerland, served as recurring occasions of reunion and fellowship. Their influence in preserving a Panhellenic feeling was very marked. During the time of the feast, and before and after, for a sufficient number of days to allow of travellers journeying to and from Olympia and Delphi, hostilities were suspended throughout Hellas; safe-conduct was given through all states to pilgrims. One common feeling animated all the Greeks at these seasons: they met in rivalry, not of arms on the battlefield, but of personal prowess in the lists. And though the various families of the Hellenic stock were never united, yet their games gave them a common object, and tended to the diffusion of national ideas.

Let us pause to imagine the scene which the neighbourhood of Olympia must have presented, as the great recurring festival of the Greek race approached—a festival in the fullest sense of the word popular, but at the same time consecrated by religion, dignified by patriotic pride, adorned with Art. The full blaze of summer is overhead; plain and hillside yield no shade but what the spare branches of the olive and a few spreading pines afford. Along the road throng pilgrims and deputies, private persons journeying modestly, and public ambassadors gorgeously equipped at the expense of their state. Strangers from Sicily, or Cyrene, or Magna Græcia, land from galleys on the coast of Elis. Then there are the athletes with their trainers—men who have been in rude exercise for the prescribed ten months, and whose limbs are in the bloom of manly or of boyish strength. Sages, like Gorgias, or Prodicus, or Protagoras, are on their way, escorted by bands of disciples, eager to engage each other in debate beneath the porticoes of the Olympian Zeus. Thales or Anaxagoras

arrives, big with a new theory of the universe. Historians like Herodotus are carrying their scrolls to read before assembled Hellas. Epic poets and rhapsodes are furnished with tales of heroes, freshly coined from their own brains, or conned with care from Homer. Rich men bring chariots for racing or display; the more a man spends at Olympia, the more he honours his native city. Women, we need not doubt, are also on the road—Hetairæ from Corinth, and Cyprus, and Ionia. Sculptors show models of their skill. Potters exhibit new shapes of vases, with scrolls of honeysuckle wreathing round the pictured image of some handsome boy, to attract the eyes of buyers. Painters have their tablets and colours ready. Apart from these more gay and giddy servants of the public taste, are statesmen and diplomatists, plenipotentiaries despatched to feel the pulse of Hellas, negotiators seeking opportunities for safe discussion of the affairs of rival cities. Every active brain, or curious eye, or wanton heart, or well-trained limb, or skilful hand, or knavish-wit may find its fit employment here.

As they approached Olympia, a splendid scene burst upon the travellers' eyes—the plain of Elis, rich, deep-meadowed, hoary with olive-trees. One cried to the other, There is the hill of Cronion! There is the grove of Altis! Thither flows Alpheus to the sea! Those white and glittering statues are the portraits of the victors! That temple is the house of everlasting Zeus; beneath its roof sits the Thunderer of Pheidias! Every step made the journey more exciting. By the bed of the Alpheus, tawny in midsummer with dusty oleander-blossoms, the pilgrims passed. At last they enter the precincts of Olympian Zeus: the sacred enclosure is alive with men; the statues among the trees are scarcely more wonder-worthy in their glittering marble than are the bodies of the athletes moving beneath them. The first preoccupation of every Greek who visited Olympia was to see the statue of Zeus. Not to have gazed upon this masterpiece of Pheidias was, according to a Greek proverb, the unhappiness of life. In this, his greatest work, the Athenian sculptor touched the highest point of art, and incarnated the most sublime conception of Greek religious thought. The god was seated on his throne; but, even so, the image rose to the height of forty feet, wrought of pure ivory and gold. At his feet stood figures symbolical of victory in the Olympian games: among them the portrait of Pantarkes, himself a victor, the youth whom Pheidias loved. In designing his great statue the sculptor had in mind those lines of Homer which describe Zeus nodding his ambrosial locks, and shaking Olympus. That he had succeeded in presenting to the eye all that the Greek race could imagine of godlike power and holiness and peace, was attested not only by the universal voice of Hellas, but also by the Romans who gazed as conquerors upon the god. Lucius Paulus Æmilius, we are told, after the battle of Pydna, swept Greece, and coming to Olympia, saw the Pheidian Zeus. He shuddered, and exclaimed that he had set mortal eyes upon the deity incarnate. Yet Paulus was a Roman tramping with his legionaries the subject

states of fallen Hellas. Cicero proclaimed that Pheidias had copied nothing human, but had carved the ideal image existing in an inspired mind.

Zeus, it must be remembered, was the supreme god of the Aryan race, the purest divinity of the Greek cultus. He was called Father, Sire of gods and men. Therefore his presence in the Panhellenic temple was peculiarly appropriate and awe-inspiring. We may imagine the feelings of an athlete coming to struggle for the fame of his own city, when he first approached this statue in the august Olympian shrine. The games were held at the time of a full moon; through the hypæthral opening of the temple-roof fell the silver rays aslant upon those solemn lineaments, making the glow of ivory and gold more solemn in the dimness of a wondrous gloom.

Presidents chosen from the people of Elis and named Hellanodikai, awarded the prizes and controlled the conduct of the games. From their decision, in cases of doubt, there was a final appeal to the assembly of Elis. In the morning the heralds opened the lists with this proclamation:¹ "Now begins the contest that dispenses noblest prizes; time tells you to delay no longer." When the runners were ready, the heralds started them with these words, "Put your feet to the line and run." At the end of the day they cried, "Now ceases the contest that dispenses noblest prizes; time tells you to delay no longer." The victor was crowned with wild olive, and led by his friends to the temple of Zeus. On the way they shouted the old Archilochian chorus, *τῆνελλα καλλίνικε*, to which Pindar alludes in the beginning of his ninth Olympian: "The song of Archilochus uttered at Olympia, the triple cry of Hail Victorious! was enough to conduct Epharmostus, leading the revel to the Cronian hill with his comrades. But now, from the far-darting bows of the Muses, approach Zeus of the blazing thunder and the holy jutting land of Elis with these mightier shafts." Sacrifice and banquet took place in the evening; and happy was the athlete who, in this supreme moment, was greeted by Pindar with attendant chorus and musicians of the flute and lyre. Three Olympians, which seem to have been composed and chanted on the spot, survive—the fourth, the eighth, the tenth. The Proëmia to these odes, two of which are remarkably short, indicating the haste in which they had been prepared, sufficiently establish this fact. "Supreme hurler of the thunderbolt that never tires, Zeus! Thy festival recurring with the season brings me with sound of lyre and song to witness august games." "Parent of golden-crowned contests, Olympia, mistress of truth," etc. But it could not be expected that the more elaborate of Pindar's compositions should be ready on such occasions. It usually happened that the victor either found Pindar at Olympia, or sent a message to him at Thebes, and bespoke an ode, adding gifts in accordance with the poet's rank and fame. Then Pindar composed his Epinikian, which was sung when the conqueror returned to his own

¹ Bergk, *Poetæ Lyrici*, p. 1301.

city. The ode would be repeated on successive anniversaries at banquets, sacrificial festivals, and processions in honour of the victory. The ninth Olympian, which has been already quoted, was, for example, sung at a banquet in honour of Epharmostus of Opus, after the altar of Ajax, son of Oileus, had been crowned. Pindar, as we find from frequent allusions in the odes, had such a press of work that he often delayed sending his poems at the proper time, and had to excuse himself for neglect. In the second Isthmian he records a delay of two years. We may add that he did not disdain to accept money for his toil. In the eleventh Pythian he says: "Muse, it is thy part, since thou hast contracted to give thy voice for gold, to set it going in various ways." In the Proëmium to the second Isthmian he somewhat bitterly laments the necessity that made him sell his songs:—

"The men of old, Thrasybulus, who climbed the chariot of the gold-crowned Muses, and received a famous lyre, lightly shot their arrows of honey-voiced hymns in praise of boys, of him whose beauty kept the summer bloom of youth, that sweetest souvenir of Aphrodite throned in joy. For the Muse as yet loved no gain, nor worked for hire, nor were sweet and tender songs with silvered faces sold by Terpsichore. But now she bids us keep the Argive's speech in mind; and verily it hits the truth; that Money, Money, Money makes the man. He spoke it when deserted of his riches and his friends."

Yet we must not suppose that Pindar sang slavishly the praise of every bidder. He was never fulsome in his panegyric. He knew how to mingle eulogy with admonition. If his theme be the wealth of a tyrant like Hiero, he reminds him of the dangers of ambition and the crime of avarice. Arcesilaus of Cyrene is warned¹ to remit his sentence of banishment in favour of a powerful exile. Victors, puffed up with the pride of their achievements, hear from him how variable is the life of man, how all men are mere creatures of a day. Handsome youths are admonished to beware of lawlessness and shun incontinence. Thus Pindar, while suiting his praises to the persons celebrated, always interweaves an appropriate precept of morality. There was nothing that he hated more than flattery and avarice, and grasping after higher honours than became his station. In him more than in any other poet were apparent the Greek virtues of *εὐκοσμία*, *σωφροσύνη* (orderly behaviour, self-restraint) and all the moral and artistic qualities which were summed up in the motto *μηδὲν ἄγαν* (nothing in excess).² Those who are curious to learn Pindar's opinions on these points may consult the following passages: ³—Nem. viii. 32; Nem. vii. 65; Pyth.

¹ Pyth. iv. 263.

² These pregnant words imply self-government and self-restraint in obedience to a high ideal of order and symmetry, as opposed to the perils and the uneomeliness of extravagance.

³ "Hateful of a truth, even in days of old, was treacherous blandishment, attendant of wily words, designing guile, mischief-making slander, which loves to wrest the splendour of fame and to maintain the unreal honours of ignoble men. Never may such be my temper, Zeus, our father! but may I follow the plain paths of life, that, dying, I may leave no foul fame to my children. Some pray for gold, and some for vast lands; but I to please my countrymen, and so to hide my limbs beneath the earth, praising where praise is due, and sowing blame for sinful men. Virtue grows and blooms, like a tree that shoots up under fostering dews,

xi. 50; Isthm. vii. 40; Isthm. v. 14; and lastly, Pyth. x. 22, which contains this truly beautiful description of a thoroughly successful life, as imagined by a Greek:—

“That man is happy and songworthy by the skilled, who, victorious by might of hand or vigour of foot, achieves the greatest prizes with daring and with strength; and who in his lifetime sees his son, while yet a boy, crowned happily with Pythian wreaths. The brazen heaven, it is true, is inaccessible to him; but whatsoever joys we race of mortals touch, he reaches to the farthest voyage.”

With this we may compare the story of happy lives told by Croesus to Solon, and the celebrated four lines of Simonides:—“Health is best for a mortal man; next beauty; thirdly, well-gotten wealth; fourthly, the pleasure of youth among friends.”

Closely connected with Pindar's ethical beliefs were his religious notions, which were both peculiar and profound. Two things with regard to his theology deserve especial notice—its conscious criticism of existing legends, and its strong Pythagorean bias, both combined with true Hellenic orthodoxy in all essentials. One of the greatest difficulties in forming an exact estimate of the creed of a philosophical Greek intellect, is to know how to value the admixture of scientific scepticism on the one hand, and of purer theism on the other. About Pindar's time the body of Hellenic mythology was being invaded by a double process of destructive and constructive criticism. Xenophanes, for example, very plainly denounced as absurd the anthropomorphic Pantheon made in the image of man, while he endeavoured to substitute a cult of the One God, indivisible and incognisable. Plato still further developed the elements suggested by Xenophanes. But there was some inherent incapacity in the Greek intellect for arriving at monotheism by a process of rarefaction and purification. The destructive criticism which in Xenophanes, Pindar, and Plato, had assailed the grosser myths, dwindled into unfruitful scepticism. The attempts at constructing a rational theosophy ended in metaphysics. Morality was studied as a separate branch of investigation, independent of destructive criticism and religious construction. Meanwhile the popular polytheism continued to flourish, though enfeebled, degenerate, and disconnected from the nobler impulses of poetry and art. In Pindar the process of decadence had not begun. He stood at the very highest point which it was possible for a religious Greek to reach—combining the æsthetically ennobling enthusiasm for the old Greek deities with

when skilled men and just raise it towards the liquid air.” . . . “Among my fellow-citizens I look with brightness in my eye, not having overstepped due bounds, and having removed from before my feet all violence. May future time come kindly to me.” . . . “May I obtain from heaven the desire of what is right, aiming at things within my powers in my prime of life. For finding, as I do, that the middle status in a city flourishes with more lasting prosperity, I deprecate the lot of kings.” . . . “Passing the pleasure of the days I gently glide towards old age and man's destined end: for all alike we die: yet is our fortune unequal; and if a man seek far, short is his strength to reach the brazen seat of the gods: verily winged Pegasus cast his lord Bellerophon, who sought to come into the dwellings of the heaven, unto the company of Zeus.” . . . “Seek not to be Zeus . . . mortal fortunes are for mortal men.”

so much critical activity as enabled him to reject the grosser myths, and with that moderate amount of theological mysticism which the unassisted intellect of the Greeks seemed capable of receiving without degeneracy into puerile superstition. The first Olympian ode contains the most decided passages in illustration of his critical independence of judgment:—

“Impossible is it for me to call one of the blessed ones a glutton : I stand aloof : loss hath often overtaken evil speakers.”

Again :—

“Truly many things are wonderful ; and it may be that in some cases fables dressed up with cunning fictions beyond the true account falsify the traditions of men. But Beauty, which is the author of all delicious things for mortals, by giving to these myths acceptance, ofttimes makes even what is incredible to be credible : but succeeding time gives the most certain evidence of truth ; and for a man to speak nobly of the gods is seemly ; for so the blame is less.”

These two passages suffice to prove how freely Pindar handled the myths, not indeed exposing them to the corrosive action of mere scepticism, but testing them¹ by the higher standard of the healthy human conscience. When he refuses to believe that the immortals were cannibals and ate the limbs of Pelops, he is like a rationalist avowing his disbelief in the savage doctrine of eternal damnation. His doubt does not proceed from irreligion, but from faith in the immutable holiness of the gods, who set the ideal standard of human morality. What seems to him false in the myths, he attributes to the accretions of ignorant opinion and vain fancy round the truth.

The mystical element of Pindar's creed, whether we call it Orphic or Pythagorean, is remarkable for a definite belief in the future life, including a system of rewards and punishments, for the assertion of the supreme tribunal of conscience,² and finally, for a reliance on rites of purification. The most splendid passage in which these opinions are expressed by Pindar is that portion of the second Olympian in which he describes the torments of the wicked and the blessings of the just beyond the grave:—

“Among the dead, sinful souls at once pay penalty, and the crimes done in this realm of Zeus are judged beneath the earth by one who gives sentence under dire necessity.

“But the good, enjoying perpetual sunlight equally by night and day, receive a life more free from woes than this of ours ; they trouble not the earth with strength

¹ Compare for a similar freedom of judgment Antigone's famous speech on the unwritten Laws.

² The conscience forms a strong point in the ethical systems of many of the ancients, especially of Plato, of Lucretius, of Persius—authors otherwise dissimilar enough as representing three distinct species of thought. In Mythology it receives an imperfect embodiment in the Erinyes, who, however, are spiritual forces acting from without, rather than from within, upon the criminal. Purifying rites belong to the Mysteries or *τελεται* ; they formed a prominent feature in the Ethics of Empedocles and Pythagoras, and an integral part of the cult of Apollo and the nether deities. Philosophers like Plato rejected them as pertaining to ceremonial superstition.

of hand, nor the water of the sea for scanty sustenance ; but with the honoured of the gods, all they who delighted in the keeping of their oath pass a tearless age : the others suffer woe on which no eye can bear to look. Those who have thrice endured on either side the grave to keep their spirits wholly free from crime, journey on the road of Zeus to the tower of Cronos : where round the islands blow breezes ocean-borne : and flowers of gold burn some on the land from radiant trees, and others the wave feeds : with necklaces whereof they twine their hands and brows, in the just decrees of Rhadamanthus, whom father Cronos has for a perpetual colleague, he who is spouse of Rhea throned above all gods.

“Peleus and Cadmus are numbered among these : and thither was Achilles brought by his mother when she swayed the heart of Zeus with prayer : he who slew Hector, the invincible firm pillar of Troy, and gave Cycnus to death and Eo’s Æthiopian son.”

The following fragments from Threnoi¹ translated by Professor Conington further illustrate Pindar’s belief in a future state of weal or woe :—

“They from whom Persephone
 Due atonement shall receive
 For the things that made to grieve,
 To the upper sunlight she
 Sendeth back their souls once more,
 Soon as winters eight are o’er.
 From those blessed spirits spring
 Many a great and goodly king,
 Many a man of glowing might,
 Many a wise and learned wight :
 And while after-days endure,
 Men esteem them heroes pure.”

And again :—

“Shines for them the sun’s warm glow
 When ’tis darkness here below :
 And the ground before their towers,
 Meadow-land with purple flowers,
 Teems with incense-bearing trees,
 Teems with fruit of golden sheen.
 Some in steed and wrestling feat,
 Some in dice take pleasure sweet,
 Some in harping : at their side
 Blooms the spring in all her pride.
 Fragrance all about is blown
 O’er that country of desire,
 Ever as rich gifts are thrown
 Freely on the far-seen fire,
 Blazing from the altar-stone.

But the souls of the profane,
 Far from heaven removed below,
 Flit on earth in murderous pain
 Neath the unyielding yoke of woe ;
 While pious spirits tenanting the sky
 Chant praises to the mighty one on high.”

For Pindar’s conception of the destinies of frail humanity, take this sublime but melancholy ending to an ode² which has been full

¹ Bunsen’s *God in History*, vol. ii. pp. 144 and 136.

² Pyth viii.

of triumphant exultation: "Brief is the growing-time of joy for mortals, and briefly too doth its flower fall to earth shaken by fell fate. Things of a day! what are we—and what are we not! A shadow's dream is man. But when the splendour that God gives descends, then there remains a radiant light and gladsome life for mortals." Compare with this the opening of the sixth Nemean:—

"One is the race of men, and one the race of gods; from one mother we both draw breath. But a total difference of force divides us, since man's might is nought, while brazen heaven abideth a sure seat for aye. Nevertheless, we are not all unlike immortals either in our mighty soul or strength of limb, though we know not to what goal of night or day fate hath written down for us to run."

Passing to the consideration of Pindar purely as an artist, we may first examine the structure of his odes, and then illustrate the qualities of his poetry by reference to some of the more splendid Proëmia and descriptions. The task which lay before him when he undertook to celebrate a victory at one of the Greek games, was this. Some rich man had won a race with his chariot and horses, or some strong man had conquered his competitors by activity or force of limb. Pindar had to praise the rich man for his wealth and liberality, the strong man for his endurance of training and personal courage or dexterity. In both cases the victor might be felicitated on his good fortune—on the piece of luck which had befallen him; and if he were of comely person or illustrious blood, these also offered topics for congratulation. The three chief commonplaces of Pindar, therefore, are ὄλβος, ἀρετή, εὐτυχία, wealth or prosperity, manliness or spirit, and blessings independent of both, god-given, not acquired. But it could not be that a great poet should ring the changes only on these three subjects, or content himself with describing the actual contest, which probably he had not witnessed. Consequently Pindar illustrates his odes with myths or stories bearing more or less closely on the circumstances of his hero. Sometimes he celebrates the victor's ancestry, as in the famous sixth Olympian, in which the history of the Iamidæ is given; sometimes his city, as in the seventh Olympian, where he describes the birthplace of Diagoras, the island Rhodes; sometimes he dwells upon an incident in the hero's life, as when in the third Pythian the illness of Hiero suggests the legend of Asclepius and Cheiron; sometimes a recent event, like the eruption of Etna, alluded to in the first Pythian, gives colour to his ode; sometimes, as in the case of the last Pythian, where the story of Medusa is narrated, the legendary matter is introduced to specialise the nature of the contest. The victory itself is hardly touched upon: the allusions to prosperity, excellence of manhood, advantages of fortune, though frequent and interwoven with the texture of the ode, are brief: the whole poetic fabric is so designed as to be appropriate to the occasion and yet independent of it. Therefore Pindar's odes have not perished with the memory of the events to which they owed their composition.

Pindar's peculiar treatment of the Epinikian ode may best be illustrated by analysing the structure of one or two of his poems. But first take this translation of one of the shorter and simpler of the series—the twelfth Pythian :—

“ To thee, fairest of earthly towns, I pray—
 Thou splendour-lover, throne of Proserpine,
 Piled o'er Girgenti's slopes, that feed alway
 Fat sheep !—with grace of gods and men incline,
 Great queen, to take this Pythian crown and own
 Midas ; for he of all the Greeks, thy son,
 Hath triumphed in the art which Pallas won,
 Weaving of fierce Gorgonian throats the dolorous moan.

“ She from the snake-encircled hideous head
 Of maidens heard the wailful dirges flow,
 What time the third of those fell Sisters bled
 By Perseus' hand, who brought the destined woe
 To vexed Seriphos. He on Phorkys' brood
 Wrought ruin, and on Polydectes laid
 Stern penance for his mother's servitude,
 And for her forceful wedlock, when he slew the maid

“ Medusa. He by living gold, they say,
 Was got on Danaë : but Pallas bore
 Her hero through those toils, and wrought the lay
 Of full-voiced flutes to mock the ghastly roar
 Of those strong jaws of grim Euryale :
 A goddess made and gave to men the flute,
 The fountain-head of many a strain to be,
 That ne'er at game or nation's feast it might be mute,

“ Sounding through subtle brass and voiceful reeds,
 Which near the city of the Graces spring
 By fair Cephisus, faithful to the needs
 Of dancers. Lo ! there cometh no good thing
 Apart from toils to mortals, though to-day
 Heaven crown their deeds : yet shun we not the laws
 Of Fate ; for times impend when chance withdraws
 What most we hoped, and what we hoped not gives for aye.”

Here it will be seen that Pindar introduces his subject with a panegyric of Girgenti, his hero's birthplace. Then he names Midas, and tells the kind of triumph he has gained. This leads him to the legend of Medusa. The whole is concluded with moral reflections on the influence of Fate over human destinies. The structure of the sixth Pythian is also very simple. “ I build an indestructible treasure-house of praise for Xenocrates (lines 1-18), which Thrasybulus, his son, gained for him ; as Antilochus died for Nestor (19-43), so Thrasybulus has done what a son could do for his father (44-46) ; wise and fair is he in his youth ; his company is sweeter than the honeycomb ” (47-54). One of the longest odes, the fourth Pythian, is constructed thus : “ Muse ! celebrate Arcesilaus (1-5). Cyrene, Arcesilaus' home ; its foundation and the oracle given to Battus (5-69). The tale of the Argonauts, ancestors of the founders of Thera and of Cyrene (69-262).

Advice to Arcesilaus in the interest of Demophilus" (263-299). Here the victory at Pytho is but once briefly alluded to (64). The whole ode consists of pedigree and political admonition, either directly administered at the end, or covertly conveyed through the example of Pelias. The sixth Olympian, which contains the pedigree of the Iamidæ, is framed on similar principles. The third Pythian introduces its mythology by a different method: "I wish I could restore Cheiron, the healer and the tutor of Asclepius, to life (1-7). The story of Coronis, her son Asclepius, and Hippolytus (7-58). Moral, to be content and submit to mortality (58-62). Yet would that Cheiron might return and heal Hiero (62-76)! I will pray; and do you, Hiero, remember that Heaven gives one blessing and two curses, and that not even Cadmus and Peleus were always fortunate (17-106). May I suit myself always to my fortune!" (107-115). The whole of this ode relates to Hiero's illness, and warns him of vicissitudes: even the episode of Coronis and Asclepius contains a covert warning against arrogance, while it gracefully alludes to Hiero's health.

The originality and splendour of Pindar are most noticeable in the openings of his odes—the Proëmia, as they are technically called. It would appear that he possessed an inexhaustible storehouse of radiant imagery, from which to draw new thoughts for the commencement of his poems. In this region, which most poets find but barren, he displayed the fullest vigour and fertility of fancy. Sometimes, but rarely, the opening is simple, as in the second Olympian: "Hymns that rule the lyre! what god, what hero, what man shall we make famous?" Or the ninth Pythian: "I wish to proclaim, by help of the deep-girdled Graces, brazen-shielded Telesicrates, Pythian victor," etc. Rather more complex are the following:—Nem. iv. "The joy of the feast is the best physician after toil; but songs, the wise daughters of the Muses, soothe the victor with their touch: warm water does not so refresh and supple weary limbs as praise attended by the lyre;" or again: Ol. xi. "There is a time when man have greatest need of winds; there is when heaven's showers of rain, children of the cloud, are sorest sought for. But if a man achieves a victory with toil, then sweet-voiced hymns arise at the beginning of future fame," etc. etc. But soon we pass into a more gorgeous region. "As when with golden columns reared beneath the well-walled palace-porch we build a splendid hall, so will I build my song. At the beginning of the work we must make the portal radiant."¹ Or again: "No carver of statues am I, to fashion figures stationary on their pedestal; but come, sweet song! on every argosy and skiff set forth from Ægina to proclaim that Pytheas, Lampon's son, by strength of might is victor in Nemean games, upon whose chin and cheek you see not yet the tender mother of the vine-flower, summer's bloom."² Or again: "Hallowed bloom of youth, herald of Aphrodite's ambrosial pleasures, who, resting on the eyelids of maidens and of boys, bearest one aloft

¹ Ol. vi.² Nem. v.

with gentle hands of violence, but another rudely !”¹ Or once again, in a still grander style :—

“ Listen ! for verily it is of beauty’s queen, or of the Graces, that we turn the glebe, approaching the rocky centre of the deep-voiced earth : where for the blest Emmenidæ and stream-washed Acragas, yea, and for Zenocrates is built a treasure-house of Pythian hymns in the golden Apollonian vale. This, no rain of winter, driving on the wings of wind, the pitiless army of the rushing cloud, no hurricane, shall toss, storm-lashed with pebbles of the upturn beach, into the briny ocean caves : but in pure light its glorious face shall speak the victory that brings a common fame on thy sire, Thrasybulus, and thy race, remaining in the windings of Crisæan valleys.”²

We have already seen how Pindar compares his odes to arrows, to sun-soaring eagles, to flowers of the Muses, to wine in golden goblets, to water, to a shrine which no years will fret away. Another strange figure³ may be quoted from the third Nemean (line 76) : “ I send to thee this honey mingled with white milk ; the dew of their mingling hangs around the bowl, a draught of song, flowing through the Æolian breath of flutes.” It will be perceived that to what is called confusion of metaphors Pindar shows a lordly indifference. Swift and sudden lustre, the luminousness of a meteor, marks this monarch of lyric song. He grasps an image, gives it a form of bronze, irradiates it with the fire of flame or down-poured sunlight.

To do justice to Pindar’s power of narrative by extracts and translations is impossible. No author suffers more by mutilation and by the attempt to express in another language and another rhythm what he has elaborately fashioned. Yet it may be allowed me to direct attention to the rapidity with which the burning of Coronis (Pyth. iii. 38), and the birth of Rhodes from the sea (Ol. vii. 54), are told in words the grandest, simplest, and most energetic that could be found. This is the birth of Iamos (Ol. vi. 39) :—

“ Nor could she hide from Æpytus the seed
 Divine : but he to Pytho, chewing care,
 Journeyed to gain for this great woe some rede :
 She loosening her crimson girdle fair,
 And setting on the ground her silver jar,
 Beneath the darksome thicket bare a son,
 Within whose soul flamed godhead like a star ;
 And to her aid the golden-haired sent down
 Mild Eleithuia and the awful Fates,
 Who stood beside, while from the yearning gates

“ Of childbirth, with a brief and joyous pain,
 Came Iamos into the light, whom she therewith
 Sore-grieving left upon the grass : amain
 By gods’ decree, two bright-eyed serpents lithe
 Tended, and with the harmless venom fed
 Of bees, the boy ; nor ceased they to provide

¹ Nem. viii.² Pyth. vi.³ Compare, too, Nem. vii. 11, 62, 77.

Due nurture. But the king, what time he sped
Homeward from rocky Pytho, to his side
Called all his household, asking of the son
Born of Evadne, for he said that none

“ But Phœbus was the sire, and he should be
Chief for his prophecy 'mid mortal men,
Nor should his children's seed have end. Thus he
Uttered the words oracular: and then
They swore they had not heard or seen the child,
Now five days old; but he within the reed
And thick-entangled woodland boskage wild,
His limbs 'mid golden beams and purple brede
Of gillyflowers deep-sunken, lay; wherefore
He by his mother's wish for all time bore

“ That deathless name. But when he plucked the flower
Of golden-wreathéd youth, he went and stood
Midmost Alphëus, at the midnight hour,
And called upon the ruler of the flood,
His ancestor Poseidon, and the lord
Of god-built Delos, praying that he might
Rear up some race to greatness. Then the word
Responsive of his sire upon the night
Sounded:—' Arise, my son, go forth and fare
Unto the land whereof all men shall share! '

“ So came they to the high untrodden mound
Of Cronion; and there a double meed
Of prophecy on Iamos was bound,
Both from the voice that knows no lie to heed
Immortal words, and next, when Heracles,
Bold in his counsels, unto Pisa came,
Founding the festivals of sacred peace
| And mighty combats for his father's fame,
Then on the topmost altar of Jove's hill,
The seat of sooth oracular to fill.”

After so much praise of Pindar's style it must be confessed that he has faults. One of these is notoriously tumidity—an overblown exaggeration of phrase. For example, when he wants to express that he cannot enlarge on the fame of Ægina, but will relate as quickly as he can the achievements of Aristomenes which he has undertaken, he says: “ But I am not at leisure to consecrate the whole long tale to the lyre and delicate voice, lest satiety should come and cause annoy: but that which is before my feet shall go at running speed—thy affair, my boy—the latest of the noble deeds made winged by means of my art.”¹ The imaginative force which enabled him to create epithets like *φιλάγλαος*, *παιμπόρφυρος* (splendour-loving, all-purple), and to put them exactly in their proper places, like blocks of gleaming alabaster or of glowing porphyry—for the architectural power over language is eminent in Pindar—the Titanic faculty of language which produced such phrases as *ἔξ ἀδάμαντος ἢ σιδάρου κεχάλκευται μέλαιναν καρδίαν*

¹ Pyth. viii. 30.

ψυχρῆ φλογί (from adamant or steel hath been forged in his dark heart with frigid fire) did also betray him into expressions as pompous and frigid as these—*ποικιλοφόρμιγγος ἀοιδᾶς . . . σχουοτενεῖα τ' ἀοιδὰ διθυράμβων* (song accompanied by varied notes of the stringed lyre . . . the linked long-drawn melodies of dithyrambic song). These, poured forth by Pindar in the insolence of prodigality, when imitated by inferior poets, produced that inflated manner of lyrical diction which Aristophanes ridicules in Kinesias. The same may be said about his mixed metaphors, whereof the following are fair examples :¹—

δόξαν ἔχω τιν' ἐπὶ γλώσῃσ' ἀκόνας λυγυρᾶς
 ἃ μ' ἐθέλοντα προσέλκει καλλιρβοῖσι πνοαῖς.—Ol. vi. 82.

Κῶπαν σχάσον ταχὺ δ' ἄγκυραν ἔρεισον χθονὶ
 πρῶταθε χοιράδος ἄλκαρ πέτρας.
 ἐγκωμίων γὰρ ἄνωτος ἕμνων
 ἐπ' ἄλλοτ' ἄλλον ὠτε μέλισσα θύνει λόγον.—Pyth. x. 51.

Nor are these the worst, perhaps, of the sort which might be chosen : for Pindar uses images like precious stones, setting them together in a mass, without caring to sort them, so long as they produce a gorgeous show. Apparent incoherences, involving difficulty to the reader, and producing a superficial effect of obscurity, constitute another class of his alleged faults—due partly to his allusive and elliptical style, partly to his sudden transitions, partly to the mixture of his images. Incapable of what is commonplace, too fiery to trudge, like Simonides, along the path of rhetorical development, infinitely more anxious to realise by audacity the thought that seizes him than to make it easy to his hearer, Pindar is obscure to all who are unwilling to assimilate their fancy to his own. La Harpe called the Divine Comedy *une amplification stupidement barbare* : what, if he had found occasion to speak the truth of his French mind, would he have said about the Odes of Pindar ? Another difficulty, apart from these of verbal style and imagination, is derived from the fact that the mechanism of Pindar's poetry, carefully as it is planned, is no less carefully concealed. He seems to take delight in trying to solve the problem of how slight a suggestion can be made to introduce a lengthy narrative. The student is obliged to maintain his attention at the straining point if an ode of Pindar's, even after patient analysis, is to present more than a mass of confused thoughts and images to his mind. But when he has caught the poet's drift, how delicate is the machinery, how beautiful is the art, which governs this most sensitive fabric of linked melodies ! What the hearers made of these odes—the athletes for whom they were written, the handsome youths praised in them, the rich men at whose tables

¹ "I seem to have upon my tongue the feeling as of a shrill-sounding whetstone, which draws me willingly along on gently-flowing airs."

"Check the oar, and quickly cast anchor from the prow to keep our ship from running on the sunken reef : for the flower of my encomiastic songs, like a bee, is darting from one theme to another."

they were chanted—remains an impenetrable mystery. Had the Greek race perceptions infinitely finer than ours? Or did the classic harmonies of Pindar sweep over their souls, ruffling the surface merely, but leaving the deeps untouched, as the soliloquies of *Hamlet* or the profound philosophy of *Troilus and Cressida* must have been lost upon the groundlings of Elizabeth's days, who caught with eagerness at the queen's poisoned goblet or the byplay of Sir Pandarus? That is a problem we cannot solve. All we know for certain is, that allowing for the currency of Pindar's language, and for the familiarity of his audience with the circumstances under which his odes were composed, as well as with their mythological allusions, these poems must at all times have been more difficult to follow than is Bach's fugue in G minor to a man who cannot play the organ.

CHAPTER XII

ÆSCHYLUS

Life of Æschylus—Nature of his Inspiration—The Theory of Art in the *Ion* of Plato—Æschylus and Sophocles—What Æschylus accomplished for the Attic Drama—His Demiurgic Genius—Colossal Scale of his Work—Marlowe—Oriental Imagery—Absence of Love as a Motive in his Plays—The Organic Vitality of his Art—Opening Scenes—Messenger—Chorus—His Theology—Destiny in Æschylus—The Domestic Curse—His Character-drawing—Clytemnestra—Difficulty of dealing with the *Prometheus*—What was his Fault?—How was Zeus justified?—Shelley's Opinion—The Lost Trilogy of *Prometheus*—Middle Plays in Trilogies—Attempt to reconstruct a *Prometheus*—The Part of Herakles—Obscurity of the Promethean Legend—The Free Handling of Myths permitted to the Dramatist—The *Oresteia*—Its Subject—The Structure of the Three Plays—The *Agamemnon*—Its Imagery—Cassandra—The Cry of the King—The Chorus—Iphigeneia at the Altar—Menelaus abandoned by Helen—The Dead Soldiers on the Plains of Troy—The *Persæ*—The Crime of Xerxes—Irony of the Situation—The Description of the Battle of Salamis—The Style of Æschylus—His Religious Feeling.

ÆSCHYLUS, son of Euphorion, was born at Eleusis, in 525 B.C. When he was thirty-five years of age, just ten years after the production of his first tragedy, he fought at Marathon. This fact is significant in its bearings on his art and on his life. Æschylus belonged to a family distinguished during the decisive actions of the Persian war by their personal bravery. Ameinias, his brother, gained the *aristeia*, or reward for valour, at the battle of Salamis; and there was an old picture in the theatre of Dionysus at Athens which represented the great deeds of the poet and his brother Cynægeirus at Marathon. Of his military achievements he was more proud than of his poetical success; for he mentions the former and is silent about the latter in the epitaph he wrote for his own tomb. Of his actual life at Athens, we only know this much, that he sided with the old aristocratic party. His retirement to Sicily after his defeat by Sophocles in 468 B.C. arose probably from the fact that Cimon, who adjudged the prize, was leader of the democratic opposition, and was felt to have allowed political leanings

to influence a purely critical decision. His second retirement to Sicily in 453 B.C., after the production of the *Oresteia*, in which he unsuccessfully supported the Areiopagus against Pericles, was due, perhaps, in like manner to his disagreement with the rising powers in the State. That at some period of his career he was publicly accused of impiety, because he had either divulged the mysteries of Demeter, or had offended popular taste by his presentation of the *Furies* on the stage, rests upon sufficient antique testimony. Such charges were not uncommon at Athens, as might be proved by the biographies of Anaxagoras and Socrates. But the exact nature of the prosecution directed against Æschylus is not known; we cannot connect it with any of his extant works for certain, or determine how far it affected his action. He died at Gela, in 456 B.C., aged sixty-nine, having spent his life partly at Athens and partly at the court of Hiero, pursuing in both places his profession of tragic poet and chorus-master.

Pausanias tells a story of his early vocation to dramatic art:—"When he was a boy he was set to watch grapes in the country, and there fell asleep. In his slumber Dionysus appeared to him, and ordered him to apply himself to tragedy. At daybreak he made the attempt, and succeeded very easily." There is no reason that this legend should not have been based on truth. It was the general opinion of antiquity that Æschylus was a poet possessed by the deity, working less by artistic method than by immediate inspiration. Athenæus asserts crudely that he composed his tragedies while drunk with wine (*μεθύων γοῦν ἔγραφε τὰς τραγωδίας*), and Sophocles is reported to have told him that, "He did what he ought to do, but did it without knowing." Longinus, in like manner, after praising Æschylus for the audacity of his imagination and the heroic grandeur of his conceptions, adds that his plays were frequently unpolished, unrefined, ill-digested, and rough in style. Similar expressions of opinion might be quoted from Quintilian, who describes his style as "sublime and weighty, and grandiloquent often to a fault, but in most of his compositions rude and wanting in order." He adds, that "the Athenians allowed later poets to correct his dramas and to bring them into competition under new forms, when many of them gained prizes." Æschylus seems, therefore, to have impressed critics of antiquity with the god-intoxicated passion of his genius rather than with the perfection of his style or the consummate beauty of his art. It is possible that he received less justice from his fellow-countrymen than we, who have been educated by the Shakespearean drama, can now pay him.

Æschylus might be selected to illustrate the artistic psychology of Plato. In the *Phædrus* Plato lays down the doctrine that poetic inspiration is akin to madness—an efflation from the Muses, a divine mania analogous to love. In the *Ion* he further develops this position, and asserts that "all good poets compose their beautiful poems not as works of art, but because they are inspired and possessed." The

analogy which he selects is drawn from the behaviour of Bacchantes under the influence of Dionysus. He wishes to distinguish between the mental operations of the poet and the philosopher, to show that the regions of poetry and science are separate, and to prove that rule and method are less sure guides than instinct when the work to be produced is a poem. "The poet is a light and winged and holy thing, and there is no invention in him until he has been inspired and is out of his senses, and the mind is no longer in him; when he has not attained to this state, he is powerless and is unable to utter his oracles." The final dictum of the *Ion* is, "inspiration, not art," *θεῖον καὶ μὴ τεχνικόν*. It is curious to find a Greek of the best age, himself in early days a poet, and throughout distinguished by genius allied to the poetic, thus boldly and roundly stating a theory which corresponds to the vulgar notion that poetry comes by nature, untutored and untaught, and which seems to contradict the practice and opinion of supreme authorities like Sophocles and Goethe. The truth is, that among artists we find two broadly differentiated types. The one kind produce their best work when all their faculties are simultaneously excited, and when the generative impulse takes possession of them. They seem to obey the dictates of a power superior to their ordinary faculties. The other kind are always conscious of their methods and their aims; they do nothing, as it were, by accident; they avoid improvisation, and subordinate their creative faculty to reason. The laws of art may be just as fully appreciated by the more instinctive artists, and may have equally determined their choice of form and their calculation of effects; but at the moment of production these rules are thrust into the background, whereas they are continually present to the minds of the deliberate workers. It may be said in passing, that this distinction enables us to understand some phrases which the Italians, acutely sensitive to artistic conditions, have reserved for passionate and highly-inspired workers; they speak, for instance, of painting a picture or blocking out a statue *con furia*, when the artist is a Tintoretto or a Michael Angelo. If there is any truth at all in this analysis, we are justified in believing that Æschylus belonged to the former, and Sophocles to the latter class of poets, and that this is the secret of the criticism passed by Sophocles upon his predecessor. The account which Æschylus himself gave of his tragedies throws no light upon his method; he is reported to have said that they were "fragments picked up from the mighty feasts of Homer." The value he attached to them is proved by his saying that he dedicated what he wrote to Time.

Though the ancients may have been right in regarding Æschylus as an enthusiastic writer, obeying the impulse of the god within him rather than the rules of reason, no dramatic poet ever had a higher sense of the æsthetic unity which tragedy demands. Each of his masterpieces presents to the imagination a coherent and completely organised whole; every part is penetrated with the dominant thought and passion

that inspired it. He had, moreover, the strongest sense of the formal requirements of his art. Tragedy had scarcely passed beyond the dithyrambic stage when he received it from the hands of Phrynichus. Æschylus gave it the form which, with comparatively unimportant alterations, it maintained throughout the brilliant period of Attic culture. It was he who curtailed the function of the Chorus and developed dialogue, thus expanding the old Thespian elements of tragedy in accordance with the true spirit of the drama. By adding a second actor, by attending diligently to the choric songs and dances, by inventing the cothurnus and the tragic mask, and by devising machinery and scenes adapted to the large scale of the Athenian stage, he gave its permanent form to the dramatic art of the Greeks. However god-possessed he may have been during the act of composition, he was therefore a wise critic and a potent founder in all matters pertaining to the theatre. Yet though Æschylus in this way made the drama, the style in which he worked went out of date in his own lifetime. So rapid was the evolution of intelligence at Athens that during a single generation his tragedies became, we will not say old-fashioned, but archaic. They were duly put upon the stage; a chorus at the public expense was provided for their representation, and the MS. which authorised their canon and their text was regarded as a public treasure. Yet the Athenians already had come to love and respect them in the same way as the English race love and respect the Oratorios of Handel. They praised them for their unapproachable magnificence; they knew that no man of the latter days could match them in their own kind; but they criticised their antique form and obsolete embellishments. The poet who in his youth had played the part of innovator, and who had shocked the public by his realistic presentation of the Furies, depended in the heyday of the fame of Aristophanes upon conservative support and favour.

Æschylus was essentially the demiurge of ancient art. The purely creative faculty has never been exhibited upon a greater scale, or applied to material more utterly beyond the range of feebler poets. He possessed in the highest degree the power of giving life and form to the vast, the incorporeal, and the ideal. In his dramas, mountains were made to speak; Oceanus received shape, conversing face to face with the Titan Prometheus, while his daughters, nurslings of the waves and winds, were gathered on the Scythian crags in groups to listen to their argument. The old intangible, half-mystical, half-superstitious, fears of the Greek conscience became substantial realities in his mind. Justice and Insolence and Até no longer floated, dreamlike, in the background of religious thought: he gave them a pedigree, connected them in a terrible series, and established them as ministers of supreme Zeus. The Eumenides, whom the Greeks before him had not dared to figure to their fancy, assumed a form more hideous than that of Gorgons or Harpies. Their symbolic torches, their snake-entwined tresses, their dreadful eyes, and nostrils snorting fiery breath, were

shown for the first time visibly in the trilogy of *Orestes*. It was a revelation which Greek art accepted as decisive. Thus the imagination of Æschylus added new deities to the Athenian Pantheon. The same creative faculty enabled him to inform elemental substances, fire, water, air, with personal vitality. The heaven, in his verse, yearns to wound the earth with love-embraces; the falling rain impregnates the rich soil. The throes of Ætna are a Titan's groaning. The fire that leaps from Ida to the Hermæan crags of Lemnos, from Ægiplanctus to the Arachnæan height, has life within it. There is nothing dead, devoid of soul, in the world of this arch-mythopoeet. Even the ghosts and phantoms, dreams and omens, on which he loves to dwell, are substantial. Their reality exists outside the soul they dominate.

As befits a demiurgic nature, Æschylus conceived and executed upon a stupendous scale. His outlines are huge; his figures are colossal; his style is broad and sweeping—like a river in its fulness and its might. Each of his plays might be compared to a gigantic statue, whereof the several parts, taken separately, are beautiful, while the whole is put together with majestic harmony. But as the sculptor in modelling a colossus, cannot afford to introduce the details which would grace a chimney ornament, so Æschylus was forced to sacrifice the working-out of minor motives. His imagination, penetrated through and through with the spirit of his subject as a whole, was more employed in presenting a series of great situations, wrought together and combined into a single action, than in elaborating the minutiae of characters and plots. The result has been that those students who delight in detail, have complained of a certain disproportion between his huge design and his insufficient execution. It has too frequently been implied that he could rough-hew like a Cyclops, but that he could not finish like a Praxiteles; that he was more capable of sketching in an outline than of filling up its parts. Fortunately we possess the means of laying bare the misconception upon which these complaints are founded. There still remains one, but only one, of his colossal works entire. The *Oresteia* is sufficient to prove that we gain no insight into his method as an artist if we consider only single plays. He thought and wrote in Trilogies. Sophocles, with whom it is usual to compare Æschylus, somewhat to the disadvantage of the latter, abandoned the large scale, the uncial letters, of the trilogy. Each separate Sophoclean drama is a studied whole. In order to do Æschylus the very barest justice, we ought therefore to contrast, not the *Agamemnon* alone, but the entire *Oresteia* with the *Œdipus* or the *Antigone*. It will then be seen that the one poet, designing colossi, gave to them the style and finish and the unity which suit a statue larger than life-size: the other, restricting himself within more narrow limits, was free to lavish labour on the slightest details of his model. Such elaboration, on the scale adopted by Æschylus, would have produced a bewildering and painful effect of complexity. The vast design which it was the artist's object

to throw into the utmost possible relief, would inevitably have suffered from excess of finish.

Few dramatists have ventured, like Æschylus, to wield the chisel of a Titan, or to knead whole mountains into statues corresponding to the superhuman grandeur of their thought. Few indeed can have felt that this was their true province, that to this they had the thews and sinews adequate. He stands alone in his triumphant use of the large manner, and this solitude is prejudicial to his fame with students whose taste has been formed in the school of Sophocles. Surveying the long roll of illustrious tragedians, there is but one, until we come to Victor Hugo, in whom the Æschylean spirit found fresh incarnation: and he had fallen upon days disadvantageous to his full development; his life was cut short in its earliest bloom, and the conditions under which he had to work, obscure and outcast from society, were adverse to the highest production. This poet is our own Christopher Marlowe. Like Æschylus, Marlowe's imagination was at home in the illimitable; like Æschylus, he apprehended immaterial and elemental forces—lusts, ambitions, and audacities of soul—as though they were substantial entities, and gave them shape and form; like Æschylus, he was the master of a "mighty line," the maker of a new celestial music for his race, the founder and creator of an art which ruled his century, the mystagogue of pomps and pageants and things terrible and things superb in shrines unvisited by earlier poets of his age and clime; like Æschylus, he stands arraigned of emptiness, extravagance, and "sound and fury," because the scale on which he wrought was vast, because he set no verbal limit to the presentation of the passion or the thought in view. Comparing Æschylus to Marlowe is comparing the monarch of the pine forest to the sapling fir, the full-grown lion to the lion's whelp, the achievement of the hero to the promise of the stripling. Yet Herakles in his cradle, when he strangled Hera's serpents, already revealed the firm hand and unflinching nerve of him who plucked the golden fruit of the Hesperides. Even so Marlowe's work betrays the style and spirit of a youthful Titan; it is the labour of a beardless Æschylus, the first-fruit of Apollo's laurel-bough untimely burned, the libation of a consecrated priest who, while a boy, already stood "chin-deep in the Pierian flood." If we contrast the *Supplices*, which Æschylus can hardly have written before the age at which Marlowe died, with *Tamburlaine*, which was certainly produced before Marlowe was twenty-six, the most immature work of the Greek with the most immature work of the English dramatist, we obtain a standard for estimating the height to which the author of *Faustus* might have grown if he had lived to write his *Oresteia* in the fulness of a vigorous maturity.

Much that has been described as Asiatic in the genius of Æschylus may be referred to what I have called his demiurgic force. No mere citation of Oriental similes will account for the impression of hugeness left upon our memory, for the images enormous as those of farthest

Ind, yet shaped with true Hellenic symmetry, for the visions vast as those of Ezekiel, yet conveyed withal in rich and radiant Greek. The so-called Asiatic element in Æschylus was something which he held in common with the poets and prophets of the East—a sense of life more mystic and more deep, a power to seize it and discover it more real and plastic than is often given to the nations of the West. This determination towards the hitherto invisible, unshaped, and unbelieved, to which he must give form, and for which he would fain win credence, may possibly help to explain the absence of human love as a main motive in his tragedies. There is plenty of Ares—too much, indeed, unless we recollect that the poet was a man of Marathon—but of Aphrodite nothing in his inspiration. It would seem that this passion, which formed the theme of Euripides' best work, and which Sophocles in the *Antigone* used to enhance the tragic situation brought about through the self-will of the heroine, had no attraction for Æschylus. Among the fragments of his plays there is, indeed, one passage in which he speaks of Love as a cosmical force, controlling the elemental powers of heaven and earth, and producing the flocks and fruits which sustain mortal life. The lines in question are put into the mouth of Aphrodite. The lost *Myrmidones*, again, described the love of Achilles for Patroclus, which Æschylus seems to have portrayed with a strength of passion that riveted the attention of antiquity. The plot of the *Supplices*, in like manner, implies the lawless desire of the sons of Ægyptus for the daughters of Danaus; and the adultery of Clytemnestra with Ægisthus lies in the background of the *Agamemnon*. But of love, in the more romantic modern sense of the word, we find no trace either in the complete plays or in the fragments of Æschylus. It lay, perhaps, too close at hand for him to care to choose it as the theme of tragic poetry; and, had he so selected it, he could hardly have avoided dwelling on its aberrations. The general feeling of the Greeks about love, as well as his own temper, would have made this necessary. It did not occur to the Greeks to separate love in its healthy and simple manifestations by any sharp line of demarcation from the other emotions of humanity. The brotherly, filial, and wifely feelings—those which owe their ascendancy to use and to the sanctities of domestic life—appeared in their eyes more important than the affection of youth for maid unwedded. When love ceased to be the expression on the one side of a physical need, and on the other the binding tie that kept the family together, the Greeks regarded it as a disease, a madness. Plato, who treated it with seriousness, classed it among the *μάνια*. Euripides portrayed it as a god-sent curse on Phædra. Viewed in this light, it may be urged that the love of Zeus for Io, in the *Prometheus*, is an example of a passion which became an unbearable burden and source of misery to its victim; but of what we understand by love there is here in reality no question. The tale of Io rather resembles the survival of some mystic Oriental myth of incarnation.

The organic vitality which Æschylus, by the exercise of his creative

power, communicated to the structure of his tragedies, is further noticeable in his power of conducting a drama without prologue and without narration. In Æschylus, the information that is necessary in order to place the spectators at the proper point of view is conveyed as part of the action. He does not, like Euripides, compose a formal and preliminary speech, or, like Shakespeare, introduce two or three superfluous characters in conversation. In this respect the openings of the *Agamemnon*, the *Prometheus*, and the *Eumenides* are masterpieces of the most consummate art. Not only are we plunged *in medias res*, without the slightest sacrifice of clearness; but the spectacle presented to our imagination is stirring in the highest degree. The fire has leapt from mountain peak to peak until at last it blazes on the watchman's eyes; Hephæstus and his satellites are actually engaged in nailing down the Titan to his bed of pain; the Furies are slumbering within the sacred Delphian shrine, and the ghost of Clytemnestra moves among them, rousing each in turn from her deep trance. Euripides, proceeding less by immediate vision than by patient thought, prefixed a monologue, which contained a programme of preceding events, and prepared the spectator for what would follow in the play. These narratives are often frigid, and not unfrequently are placed, without propriety, in the mouth of one of the actors. We feel that a wholly detached prologue would have been more artistic.

The same is true about the speeches of the Messenger. The art of Æschylus was far too highly organised to be obliged to have recourse to such rude methods. It is true that, when he pleased, as in the *Persæ*, he gave the principal part to the Messenger. The actors in that play are little better than spectators; and the same might be said about the *Seven against Thebes*. But the Messenger, though employed as here for special purposes, was no integral part of his dramatic machinery; nor did he ever commit the decisive event of the drama to narration. His master-stroke as a dramatic poet—the cry of Agamemnon, following close upon the prophecies of Cassandra, and breaking the silence like a clap of doom, in that awful moment when the scene is left empty and the Chorus tremble with the apprehension of a coming woe—would probably have yielded in the hands of Euripides to the speech of a servant. It was not that the later poet would not willingly have employed every means in his power for stirring the emotions of his audience; but he had not the creative imagination of his predecessor; he could not grasp his subject as a whole so perfectly as to dispense with artificial and mechanical devices. He fell back, therefore, upon narrative, in which he was a supreme master.

Equally remarkable from this point of view is the Æschylean treatment of the Chorus. It is never really separated from the action of the play. In the *Prometheus*, for example, the Oceanidæ actually share the doom of the protagonist. In the *Supplices* the daughters of Danaus may be termed the protagonist; for upon them converges the whole

interest of the drama. In the *Seven against Thebes* the participation of the Chorus in the fate of the chief actors is proved by half of them siding with Ismene and the other half with Antigone at the conclusion. In the *Persæ* they represent the nation which has suffered through the folly of Xerxes. In the *Agamemnon* the elders of Mycenæ assume an attitude directly hostile to Ægisthus and Clytemnestra. In the *Choëphoræ* the women who sympathise with Electra, further the scheme of Orestes by putting Ægisthus off the track of danger and sending him unarmed to meet his murderers. In the *Eumenides* the Furies play a part at least equal in importance to that of Orestes. They, like the protagonist, stand before the judgment-seat of Pallas and accept the verdict of the Areiopagus. Thus, in each of the extant plays of Æschylus, even the Chorus, which was subsequently so far separated from the action as to become a mere commentator and spectator, is vitally important in the conduct of the drama. Euripides, by formalising the several elements of the tragic art, by detaching the Chorus, introducing a prologue, and expanding the functions of the Messenger, sacrificed that higher kind of unity which we admire in the harmonious working of complex parts. What he gained was the opportunity of concentrating attention upon the conflict of motives, occasions for the psychological analysis of character, and scope for ethical reflection and rhetorical description.

I have hitherto been occupied by what appear to me the essential features of the genius of Æschylus—its demiurgic faculty of creativeness, and its capacity of dealing with heroic rather than merely human forms. To pass to the consideration of his theology would at this point be natural and easy. I do not, however, wish to dwell on what is called the prophetic aspect of his tragedy at present. It is enough to say that, here, as in the sphere of pure art, he was in the truest sense creative. Without exactly removing the old landmarks, he elevated the current conception of Zeus regarded as the supreme deity, and introduced a novel life and depth of meaning into the moral fabric of the Greek religion. Much as he rejoiced in the delineation of Titanic and primæval powers, he paid but slight attention to the minor gods of the Pantheon; his creed was monotheism detached upon a pantheistic background, to which the forms of polytheism gave variety and colour. Zeus was all in all for Æschylus far more than for his predecessors, Homer and Hesiod. The most remarkable point about the Æschylean theology is that, in spite of its originality, it seems to have but little affected the substance of serious Greek thought. Plato, for example, talks of Prometheus in the *Protagoras* as if no new conception of his character had been revealed to him by Æschylus. We are not, therefore, justified in regarding the dramatic poet as in any strict sense a prophet, and the oracles he uttered are chiefly valuable as indications of his own peculiar ways of thinking; nor ought we, even so, perhaps, to demand from Æschylus too much consistency. The *Supplices*, for instance, cannot without due reservation be used to illustrate the

Prometheus; since the dramatic situation in the two tragedies is so different as to account for any apparent divergence of opinion.

There is, however, one point in the morality of Æschylus concerning fate and freewill which calls for special comment, since we run a danger here of doing real violence to his art by overstating some one theory about his supposed philosophical intention. I allude, of course, to his conception of Destiny. If we adopt the fatalistic explanation of Greek tragedy propounded by Schlegel, we can hardly avoid coarsening and demoralising fables which owe their interest not to the asphyxiating force of destiny, but to the action and passion of human beings. If, on the other hand, we overstrain the theological doctrine of Nemesis, we run a risk of trying to find sermons in works of art, and of exaggerating the importance of details which support our favourite hypothesis. It should never be forgotten that whatever view we take of the moral and religious purpose of Greek tragedy has been gained by subsequent analysis. It was not in any case present to the consciousness of the poet as a necessary condition of his art as art. His first business was to provide for the dramatic presentation of his subject: his philosophy, whether ethical or theological, transpired in the heat and stress of production, not because he sought to give it deliberate expression, but because it formed an integral part of the fabric of his mind. Æschylus, in common with the Greeks of his age, firmly believed in the indissoluble connection between acts and consequences, and in the continuation of these consequences through successive generations. "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap," "the fathers have eaten a sour grape and the children's teeth are set on edge," formed the groundwork of his view of human life. This sort of fatalism he coloured with religious theories adopted from the antique theology of his race, but strongly moralised, and developed in the light of his own reason. The importance attributed by the Greeks to hereditary curses even in the common affairs of life, is proved by the familiar example of the proclamation by the Spartans against Pericles in the first year of the Peloponnesian War. Much of elder superstition, therefore, clings about his ethics, and an awful sense of guilt and doom attaches to acts in themselves apparently indifferent; nor can we fail to recognise a belief in fate as fate (*τὸ πεπρωμένον*) superior to all besides. The realm of tragic terror lies precisely in this borderland between inexorable reason and unreasoned fear. It has nothing to do with pure science or pure religion: they speak each for themselves, with their own voice; but it is not the voice of the dramatist. On the one hand, logical fatalism offers no freedom for the play of character, no turning-points of choice, no revolutions which may rouse our sympathy and stir us with the sense of self-determined ruin. On the other hand, theology, in its methodic form, supplies, indeed, the text of sermons, admonitions, and commandments, but not the subject-matter for a work of art. Where the necessity of circumstance or the will of the Deity is paramount, human action sinks into insignificance;

the canons of inevitable sequence and of obedience under pain of penalty supersede the casuistry of balanced motives, and the poet is swallowed up in the divine or the logician. Somewhere between the two, in the intermediate darkness, or *μεταίχμιος σκότος* (darkness between two armies), where all the ways of life are perilous, and where no clear light reveals the pitfalls of fate and the gins of religious duty, lies the track of the tragedian. His men and women are free; yet their action is overruled by destiny. They err against the law of heaven and flourish for a season; but the law pursues them and enacts its penalty. While terror and pity are stirred by the pervading sense of human helplessness, scope is still left for the exercise of the moral judgment; nor is the poet precluded from teaching his audience by precept and example. These remarks apply to the domestic curse which played so prominent a part in all Greek tragedy, and especially in the dramas of Æschylus. It was no mere avalanche of doom falling from above and crushing the innocent and the criminal alike; nor, again, can it justly be paralleled by what it most resembles, the taint of hereditary disease. It partook of the blind force of fate; it was propagated from generation to generation by laws analogous to those which govern madness; yet it contained another element, inasmuch as the transgression of each successive victim was a necessary condition of its prolongation. Sin alone, however, was not sufficient to establish its mysterious power; for all men are liable to offend against the divine law, and yet all families are not afflicted with a curse. In order to appreciate its nature, all these factors must be taken into account; their sum total, notwithstanding the exactitude of our calculation, remains within the realm of mystery. The undiscovered residuum, or rather the resolution of all these elements in a power which is all of them and more than all, is fate. Students who are curious to appreciate the value attached by the Greeks themselves to the several elements implicit in the notion of domestic Até, should attentively peruse the longer of the two arguments to the *Seven against Thebes*, while the play itself sets forth more energetically than any other the terrible lesson of the Æschylean Nemesis. The protagonist Eteocles is a curse-intoxicated man, driven by the doom of his race and by the imprecations of his father on a dreadful shoal of fate. He walks open-eyed to meet his destiny—to slay his brother and be slain. Still, helpless as he seems, he is not innocent. His own rebellious and selfish nature, by rousing the fury of Œdipus, kindles afresh the smouldering flame of the ancestral Até. Thus the fate which overwhelms him is compounded of hereditary guilt, personal transgression, and the courage-quelling terror of a father's curse. But it is more than all this: it is an irresistible compelling force. He cannot avoid it, since action has been thrust upon him by the strength of circumstance. The tragic horror of his situation arises from the necessity under which he labours of going forward, though he knows that the next step leads to a bottomless abyss.

In estimating the characters of Æschylus what has already been said about his art in general must be taken into account. He was occupied with the task of exhibiting a great action, a *δράμα* in the strictest sense of the Greek phrase; and this action was frequently so colossal in its relations as to preclude the niceties of merely personal character. Persons had to become types in order to play their part efficiently. The underlying moral and religious idea was blent with the æsthetic purpose of the poet, and penetrated with the interest pertaining to the clash of conflicting principles: the total effect produced sometimes seems to defy analysis of character in detail. The psychology of his chief characters is, therefore, inherent in their action, and is only calculable in connection with their momentary environments. We have to infer their specific quality less from what they say than from their bearing and their conduct in the crisis of the drama. Only after profound study of the situation of each tragedy, after steeping our imagination in the elementary conditions selected by the poet, can we realise the fulness of their individuality. In this respect Æschylus resembles Homer. Like Homer, he repeats the work of nature, and creates men and women entire. He does not strive to lay bare the conscious workings of the mind piecemeal. He has none of the long speeches on which Euripides relied for setting forth the flux and reflux of contending motives, or for making clear the attitude adopted by his *dramatis personæ*. There is no revelation of the anatomical method in his art; nor, again, can we detect the *ars celandi artem* (art of concealing art) to which poets of a more reflective age are forced to have recourse. Everything with Æschylus is organic; each part is subordinated to the whole which pre-existed in his mind, and which has been evolved in its essential unity from his imagination. Even the weighty sentences and gnomic judgments upon human affairs, uttered by his actors, are necessitated by the straits in which they find themselves. Severed from their context, they lose half their value; whereas the similar reflections in Euripides may be detached without injury, and read like extracts from a commonplace book. Perhaps sufficient stress has not been laid by critics upon this quality of absolute creativeness, which distinguishes the Homeric, Æschylean, and Shakespearean poets from those who proceed from mental analysis to artistic presentation. It is easy to render an account of characters that have first been thought out as ethical specimens, and then provided with a suitable exterior. It is very difficult to dissect those which started into being by an act of intuitive invention, and which, dissociated from the texture of circumstance woven round them, appear at first sight to elude our intellectual grasp. Yet the latter are found in the long run to be cast in the more vital mould. Once apprehended, they haunt the memory like real persons, and we may fancy, if we choose, innumerable series of events through which they would maintain their individuality intact. They are, in fact, living creatures, and not puppets of the poet's brain.

Of the characters of Æschylus, those which have been wrought with the greatest care, and which leave the most profound impression on the memory, are Clytemnestra and Prometheus. Considering how slight were the outlines of the Homeric picture of Clytemnestra, it may be said that Æschylus created her. What is still more remarkable than his creation of Clytemnestra, is that he should have realised her far more vividly than any of the men whom he has drawn. This proves that Æschylus, at least among the Attic Greeks, gave a full share to women in the affairs of the great world of public action. As a woman, she stands outside the decencies and duties of womanhood, supporting herself by the sole strength of her powerful nature and indomitable will. The self-sufficingness of Clytemnestra is the main point in her portrait. Her force of character is revealed by the sustained repression of her real feelings and the concealment of her murderous purpose, which enable her to compass Agamemnon's death. During the critical moments when she receives her husband in state, and leads him to the bath within the palace, she remains calm and collected. The deed that she has plotted must, if ever, be done at once. A single word from the Chorus, who are aware of her relations to Ægisthus, would spoil all her preparations. Yet she shows no fear, and can command the fairest flowers of rhetoric to greet the king with feigned congratulations. The same strength is displayed in her treatment of Cassandra, on whom she wastes no words, expends no irritable energy, although she hates and has the mind to murder her. Studied craft and cold disdain mark her bearing at the supreme crisis. When the death-blow has been given to Agamemnon, she breathes freely; her language reveals the exhilaration of one who expands his lungs and opens wide his nostrils to snuff the elastic air of liberty. The blood upon her raiment is as pleasant to her as a shower of rain on thirsty cornfields; she shouts like soldiers when the foemen turn to fly. Æschylus has sustained the impression of her force of character by the radiant speech with which he gifts her. This splendour of rhetoric belongs by nature to the magnificent and lawless woman, who rejoices in her shame. It is like the superb colours of a venomous lily. The contrast between the serpent-coils of her sophistic speech to Agamemnon at the palace-gate and the short sentences in which she describes his murder—true tiger-leaps of utterance—is a triumph of dramatic art. As regards her motive for killing the king, I see no reason to suppose that Æschylus intended to diverge from the Homeric tradition. Clytemnestra has lived in adultery with Ægisthus; she dares not face a public discovery of her fault, nor is she willing to forego her paramour. The passage in the *Choëphoræ*, where she argues with Orestes before her own murder, proves that she has no other valid reason to set forth. Her son tells her she shall be slain and laid by the side of Ægisthus, seeing that in life she preferred him to her lord. All her answer is: "Child, in your father's absence I was sorely tried." The same is clear from the allusions in the *Agamemnon* to the nerveless

lion, who tumbles in the royal couch, and is a sorry housekeeper for the departed king. Æschylus, however, with the instinct of a great poet, has not suffered our minds to dwell wholly upon this adulterous motive. He makes Clytemnestra put forth other pleas, and intends us to believe in their validity, as lending her self-confidence in the commission of her crime, and as suggesting reasons for our sympathy. Revenge for Iphigeneia's sacrifice, the superstitious sense of the Erinnys of the house of Atreus, jealousy of Chryseis and Cassandra, mingle with the master impulse in her mind, and furnish her with specious arguments. The solidity of Clytemnestra's character is impressed upon us with a force and a reality of presentation that have never been surpassed. She maintains the same *aplomb*, the same cold glittering energy of speech, the same presence of mind and unswerving firmness of nerve, whether she bandies words of bitter irony with the Chorus, or ceremoniously receives the king, or curls the lip of scorn at Cassandra, or defies the Argives after Agamemnon's death. She loves power, and despises show. When the deed is done, and fair words are no longer needed, her hypocrisy is cast aside. At the same time she defends herself with a moral impudence which is only equalled by her intellectual skill, and rises at last to the sublimity of arrogance when she asserts her right to be regarded as the incarnate dæmon of the house. Clytemnestra has been frequently compared to Lady Macbeth; nor is it easy to think of the one without being reminded of the other. Clytemnestra, however, is a less elastic character than Lady Macbeth: she is cast in metal of a tougher temper, and the springs which move her are more simple. Lady Macbeth has not in reality so much force and fibre: she does not design Duncan's death many months beforehand; she acts from overmastering impulse under the temptation of opportunity, and when her husband and herself are sunk chin-deep in blood she cannot bear the load of guilt upon her conscience. Shakespeare has conceived and analysed a woman more sensitive, and therefore more liable to nervous failure, than Clytemnestra. Clytemnestra never breaks down. Her sin feeds and nourishes her nature, instead of starving and palsyng it; her soul grows fat and prospers, nor does she know what conscience means. She is never more imposing in her pride of intellectual strength than when she receives the feigned news of Orestes' death. Just as the superior nature of Lady Macbeth is enhanced by contrast with her weaker husband, so Clytemnestra appears to the greatest advantage by the side of Ægisthus. Ægisthus in the last scene of the *Agamemnon* brags and blusters: Clytemnestra utters no superfluous syllable. Ægisthus insults the corpse of the king; Clytemnestra is satisfied with having slain him. Nothing shakes her courage or weakens her determination. When Orestes turns his sword against her in the *Choëphora* her first impulse is to call aloud: "Reach me with all speed an axe of weight to tire a man, that we may know at once the issue of this combat." She will measure weapons with her son. And when his blade is already at her breasts she has the nerve to bare them and

exclaim: "My son, behold where thou didst lie; these nipples gave thee milk." There is no groaning in her last life-struggle. She dies, as she lived, self-sustained and equal to all emergencies. This terrible personality endures even in the grave. When she rises in the *Eumenides*, a ghost from Hades, it is with bitter taunts and a most biting tongue that she stirs up the Furies to revenge. If we are to seek a parallel for Clytemnestra in our own dramatic literature, I should be inclined to look for it in the *Vittoria Corombona* of Webster. The modern poet has not developed his "white devil of Italy" with the care that Æschylus bestowed on Clytemnestra. Her portrait remains a sketch rather than a finished picture; and the circumstances of her tragedy are infinitely less impressive than those which place the Queen of Mycenæ on so eminent a pinnacle of crime. But Vittoria is cast in the same mould. Like Clytemnestra, she has the fascination and the force of sin, self-satisfied and self-contained to face the world with brazen arrogance, and browbeat truth before the judgment-seat of gods or men.

Of all the masterpieces of Greek tragedy which have been preserved to us, the *Prometheus* of Æschylus presents by far the greatest difficulty, and involves at the same time by far the most enticing problems. Its paramount interest lies in the fact that the dramatic action is removed beyond and above the sphere of humanity, and that the poet, who was also the chief prophet of Hellas in the very prime of Athenian culture, is dealing with the mystery of God's relation to the world and man. In the trilogy of the *Oresteia* he is concerned with heroes; in the *Prometheus* with gods, Titans, and demigods. The *dramatis personæ* are Prometheus, Hephæstus and his comrade Force, Hermes, the herald of Zeus, Io, the victim of the love of Zeus, and Oceanus, the ruler of the streams and seas. The Chorus is composed of Oceanides, the maiden daughters of the deep, cloud-bearing dewes and mists, who gather round the Scythian crags, where Prometheus lies, chained, and exposed to fiery heat by day and freezing cold by night. The only mortal who visits him is Io; and she bears within her the child of Zeus. Thus everything in the tragedy is conceived upon a vast and visionary scale. It is no episode of real or legendary history which forms the subject-matter of the play. The powers of heaven and earth are in action. The destinies of Olympian Zeus and of the whole human race are at stake. In this lofty region of the imagination the genius of Æschylus moves freely. The scenery of his drama is in harmony with its stupendous subject. Barren mountain summits, the sea outspread beneath, the sky with all its stars above, silently falling snowflakes and tempestuous winds, thunder, and earthquake, and riven precipices, are the images which crowd upon the mind. In like manner the duration of time is indefinitely extended. Not years, but centuries, measure the continuance of the struggle between the sovereign will of Zeus and the stubborn resistance of the Titan.

At the opening of the play Prometheus appears in the midst of

the desert which is destined for his prison-home. Hephæstus and his satellites chain him down with adamantine rivets, so that he may neither bend the knee nor rest in slumber, but must cling, crucified in wakeful torment, to the unyielding rock. While they are at their work, Prometheus utters not a word or groan. He is gifted with unerring foresight, and knows surely that his doom must be borne, and also that his doom must have an end. He defies the power of Zeus in frigid silence—not sullenly, because, when sympathy has loosed his lips, he proves that a warm heart beats within his breast—but proudly and indignantly. Hephæstus and Titanic Force leave him alone in his misery, when their task is finished. Then at last he speaks. It is to the kindred powers of elemental nature, to the Sun and Sea and nourishing Earth, his brethren and his mother, that he addresses his complaint: “See you how I, a god, suffer at the hands of God; and for what crime?—*for having given fire to mortal man.*”

This, then, is the sin of Prometheus. He found humanity abject and forsaken by the gods. Zeus, who had recently seized upon the empire of the universe, designed to extirpate men from the world, and to create a new race after his own heart. Prometheus took pity upon them, saved them from destruction, gifted them with fire, the mother of all arts, taught them carpentry and husbandry, revealed to them the stars, whereby they knew the order of the seasons and recurrences of crops, instructed them in letters, showed them how to tame the horse and ox, and how to plough the sea with ships, then taught them medicine and the cure of wounds, then divination and the sacrifice of victims to propitiate the gods, and lastly how to smelt the ore contained within the bowels of the earth. All these good things Prometheus gave to men. And here, in passing, we may notice how accurately Æschylus has sketched the primitive conditions of mankind in its emergence from the state of savagery. The picture is indeed poetical; but subsequent knowledge has only strengthened the outlines and filled them in with details, not altered or erased them.

Now, however, we ask, In what true sense was Prometheus criminal? What right had Zeus, who is invariably represented by Æschylus in all his other dramas as a just and wise ruler, to impose these trials on the benefactor of the human race? Æschylus, in this play, clearly desires to rouse our sympathy for Prometheus. He makes all the principal actors speak of Zeus as a forceful tyrant, newly come to power, which he abuses for his selfish ends, subverting the old order of the world, oppressing the old powers, who are his kindred, yet substituting nothing but his own ill-regulated and capricious will. On the other hand, Æschylus has indicated that Prometheus is in the wrong; that he regards his disobedience to Zeus as the cause of merited punishment. The Chorus points this moral by asserting, in spite of their tender feeling for the Titan, that they only are sane and righteous who bow to necessity and accept the law of their superior. Oceanus in like manner advises his kinsman to submit; and reminds him that, though

the rule of Zeus is a novelty, it is not intolerable, and that acquiescence is always prudent.

The chief difficulty of the play consists, therefore, in understanding the error of the protagonist, and in reconciling the character of Zeus, as here depicted, with the theology elsewhere expressed by Æschylus. The most probable solution of the problem is suggested by the ideal to which Greek tragedy aspired. It was the object of the Athenian dramatists not to represent a simple study of character, or to set forth a merely stirring action, but to depict a hero worthy of all respect and admirable, exposed to suffering or ruin by some fault of temperament. We are probably meant to look upon Prometheus as having erred, though nobly, through self-will, because he would not obey the ruler of the world for the time being, nor abide the working out of the law of fate in patience, but tried to take that law into his own hands, and to anticipate the evolution of events. At the same time the play seems to convict supreme Zeus himself of a tyrannical exercise of a forcefully acquired power; he also, through a like self-will, appears to be kicking against the pricks of immutable destiny; and it is prophesied that in his turn he will be superseded by a more righteous ruler. The secret of the revolution in Olympus, whereby Zeus will be deposed, is possessed by Prometheus and withheld by him from his tormentor. Thus the knowledge of the future enables the hero of the drama to endure, while Zeus upon his throne suffers through the consciousness that fate cannot be resisted. Therefore the *Prometheus*, as we possess it, presents the spectacle of two stubborn wills in conflict. The action is suspended. The conclusion cannot be foreseen. Owing to its very excellence as a work of art, it contains no indication of the ultimate solution; we are only told by Prometheus that, after he has been liberated, and not till then, he may reveal the means by which the ruin of Zeus shall be averted. We are left to conjecture that Æschylus intended to harmonise the wills of the Titan and his oppressor through the final submission of both alike to the laws of destiny which are supreme. Prometheus, when once his pride has given way, will reveal the secret which he holds, and Zeus, made acquiescent by the lapse of time, will accept it.

The chief obstacle to the satisfactory interpretation of the *Prometheus* springs, as I have hinted, from the difficulty of understanding how Prometheus was guilty and Zeus justified. The transgression of the hero, if it deserves the name at all, was eminently noble. His punishment appears extravagant in its severity. At first sight we can hardly avoid the conclusion that the final alliance between the two conflicting actors in this drama was a kind of political compromise, unworthy of the protagonist. To this judgment Shelley was led by his hatred of despotism, and by his inability to imagine a dignified termination to the dispute that enlisted his sympathies so strongly on the side of the disinterested hero. "I was averse," he says in the Preface to *Prometheus Unbound*, "from a catastrophe so feeble as that of recon-

ciling the Champion with the Oppressor of mankind. The moral interest of the fable, which is so powerfully sustained by the sufferings and endurance of Prometheus, would be annihilated if we could conceive of him as unsaying his high language and quailing before his successful and perfidious adversary." Those, however, who have learned to respect the lofty theosophy of Æschylus, no less than to admire his imperial artistic faculty, will be slow to accept the conclusion of Shelley, or to believe that the catastrophe prepared by the Greek poet was feeble. They will rather mistrust their powers of judgment, or suspect that the key to the riddle has been lost. The truth is, that we have no means of settling what the catastrophe really was; and at this point it is necessary to give some account of the relation of this drama to the entire scheme of Æschylus.

The *Prometheus Bound* (δεσμώτης) was probably the second of a trilogy, or series of three tragedies, of which the first was called *Prometheus the Fire-bearer* (πυρφόρος), and the third *Prometheus Unbound* (ἀλύμενος). *Prometheus the Fire-bearer* and *Prometheus Unbound* have disappeared; it seems that they were not even known to the Greek scholiast, for he does not mention them in his argument to the *Prometheus Bound*. At the same time the argument prefixed to the *Persæ* informs us that that play was the second in a series, of which the *Phineus* was first, the *Glaucus Potnieus* third, and a so-called *Prometheus* fourth. It has been conjectured that the *Prometheus*, which formed the fourth or satyric drama in this tetralogy, was distinguished by the title *Fire-kindler* (πυρκαεὺς), a name which is mentioned in an obscure passage of Pollux; and that consequently four plays altogether by Æschylus bore the title of *Prometheus*. It cannot, however, be proved beyond doubt that the *Fire-kindler* existed independent of the *Fire-bearer*; or, if so, that the former was the last play in the tetralogy of the *Persæ*, the latter the first in the trilogy of the *Prometheus Bound*. Both arguments to the only *Prometheus* we possess entire are unfortunately silent about the plays which accompanied it; and it is only from allusions to a lost tragedy called *Prometheus Unbound* that we are at all justified in assuming the disappearance of the first drama of the series, and in calling it the *Fire-bearer*. It should be added that the learned editor of the Greek Scenic Poets is inclined to identify the *Fire-bearer* and the *Fire-kindler*, and to regard this play as the satyric drama attached to the tetralogy of the *Persæ*. By so doing he leaves the *Prometheus Bound* and *Unbound* without a proper dramatic introduction.

In spite of the uncertainty which surrounds the criticism of this play, no students familiar with the style of Æschylus will fail to recognise in the *Prometheus Unbound* the second drama of a trilogy. It has the stationary character which belongs to the *Choëphoræ*, the *Persæ*, and the *Supplices*. The dramatic action is not helped forward in these second pieces; they develop the situation to which affairs have been brought by the events of a previous drama, and which in

its turn must lead to the conclusive action of the third piece. It was only in this way that a series of three dramas on the same subject could be connected into true artistic unity. The catastrophe of the first play produced a combination of events, which required such expansion in a second that a new action, involving a final catastrophe, should be unfolded in the third, and the whole series should in the end be seen to have coherence. Now the *Prometheus Unbound* is unintelligible, except as the result of a preceding action, while its conclusion leaves the fate of the hero still undetermined: the events which brought the hero to his dreadful doom, and the events which will deliver him, are alluded to as things of the past and of the future; in the present there is no drama, no doing, but only a development of the intermediate and transitional situation. We have, therefore, the right to assume the antecedence of a play which must, according to the data given in our extant tragedy, have turned upon the hero's theft of fire.¹

We may now attempt to reconstruct the whole trilogy, and see if, having done so, any new conditions are supplied for the solution of the difficulty as originally stated. In the *Fire-bearer*, for the subject-matter of which we have to rely on the allusions of the *Bound*, Zeus has recently acquired the empire of the universe by imprisoning his father Cronos, and by defeating the giants who rose up in arms against him. Prometheus, knowing, through the inspiration of his mother Earth, or Themis, that Zeus will prevail, has taken his side, and has materially helped him in the conflict. But the sympathies of Prometheus are less with Zeus than with the race of men who, at that primitive period of the world's history, existed in the lowest state of wretchedness. Zeus, intent on getting his new kingdom into order, entertains the notion of destroying mankind, and planting a better stock of mortal beings on the earth. Prometheus opposes this design, and enables men to raise themselves above their savage condition into comparative power and comfort. It is just at this point that the lost drama would probably have revealed the true nature of his offence, or *ἀμαρτία*. In the Hesiodic legend he is punished for having taught men to deceive the powers of heaven; and though it is clear that Æschylus did not closely follow that version of the myth, we may conjecture that he represented the benefactor of humanity as a rebel against the ruler of Olympus. Against the express command of Zeus, Prometheus gave men fire; and though this act seems innocent enough, we must remember that, according to Genesis, Adam lost Eden by merely plucking an apple. Satisfied with his own sense of justice, and hardened in his pride by the foreknowledge of the future, Prometheus resisted a power that he regarded as tyrannical, and had to be treated by Zeus with the same severity as Atlas or Typhœus.

In the *Prometheus Bound* we see the beginning of his punishment. The Titan, in whose person, as it were, the whole race of mortals suffer, is crucified on a barren cliff of Scythia. Meanwhile he makes two

¹ See line 107.

prophecies—first, that a descendant of Io is destined to deliver him ; and, secondly, that Zeus will marry and beget a son, who shall sway the universe in his place. At the same time he declares that he knows how Zeus may avoid this danger. Zeus, anxious to possess this secret, sends down Hermes, and endeavours to wrest it from his prisoner with threats ; but Prometheus abides, scornful and unyielding ; his pain may be increased, yet it cannot last for ever ; he is immortal, and Zeus will in the end be humiliated. To requite his contumacy, Zeus rends the mountains, hell is opened, and Prometheus descends to the lowest pit of Tartarus.

It is clear that, whatever may have been the fault of Prometheus in the *Fire-bearer*, the poet has done all in his power to excite our sympathy for him in the second drama of the trilogy. He draws the character of Oceanus as a trimmer and time-server, who inspires contempt. He introduces Io suffering as a wretched victim of the selfish love of her almighty master. He makes the Oceanides willing in the end to share the doom of the Titan ; while all the human sympathies of the audience are powerfully affected by the spectacle of a martyrdom incurred for their sake. This play is, therefore, the triumph of the protagonist ; his offence is hidden ; his heroic resistance is idealised ; we are made to feel sure that, when at last he is reconciled with Zeus, it will be through no unworthy weakness on his part.

In the third drama of the trilogy, parts of which, translated into Latin by Cicero, have been preserved to us, Prometheus has been raised from Tartarus, and is again crucified on Caucasus. A vulture sent by Zeus daily gnaws his liver, which daily growing, supplies continually fresh food for the tormentor. The tension of the situation is still protracted. Prometheus has not given way. Zeus has not relented. Meanwhile the seasons have revolved through thirteen generations of the race of men, and the deliverer appears. It is Herakles who cuts the Gordian knot. He destroys the vulture, and persuades his father Zeus to suffer Cheiron, the Centaur, whom he had smitten with a poisoned arrow, and who is weary of continued life, to take the place of the Titan in Hades. Then Prometheus is liberated. He declares that Zeus, if he would avoid the coming doom, must refrain from marriage with Thetis. He binds the willow of repentance round his forehead, and places the iron ring of necessity upon his finger. His will is made at last concordant with that of his enemy. Thetis is given in wedlock to the mortal Peleus, and Achilles is born.¹

From this last drama of the trilogy it would appear that the honours of the whole series were reserved for Herakles. Herakles is the offspring of Zeus by a mortal woman. He occupies, therefore, a middle place between the two contending parties, and is able to effect their reconciliation. We may fairly conclude that herein lay the solution designed by

¹ It should be said that the subject-matter of the *Prometheus Unbound* has to be gathered partly from fragments of the play, partly from prophecies in the *Prometheus Bound*, and partly from later versions of the legend.

Æschylus. In order to mediate between Zeus and Prometheus, a third agency was imperatively demanded. The heroic demi-god, who is the son of the Olympian, and at the same time a scion of oppressed humanity, prompted by no decree of his father, but following the instincts of his generous humanity, will not allow the torments of Prometheus to continue. By killing the vulture, he resolves the justice of Zeus in an act of mercy; at the same time, he touches the heart of the Titan, and draws his secret from him, working a revolution in the stubborn nature of Prometheus similar to that which Neoptolemus effected in Philoctetes by his humane uprightness. It is thoroughly in accordance with the spirit of Greek tragedy that the scales should thus have fallen from the eyes of Prometheus. He saw at last that Zeus, though severe, was really justified; and, as a makepeace-offering, he rendered up the secret which brought the ruler into harmony with the immutable laws of fate. According to this solution of the plot the final concession of Prometheus would have been as noble as his intermediate resistance; the *περιπέτεια*, or revolution, which was imperatively required before the drama could have been conducted to an issue, would have taken place within the protagonist's soul, while Herakles, by introducing a new element into the action, furnished the efficient cause of its conclusion. It may be argued on the other hand that Prometheus foreknew the advent of Herakles, and prophesied of him to Io in the second drama of the trilogy. To this I should answer that he could not then have calculated on the change which would be wrought in his own character by the deliverer.

How Æschylus handled the subject-matter of the *Prometheus Unbound* we cannot say. It seems, however, certain that, unless he falsified his otherwise consistent conception of Zeus, as the just and wise, though stern, lord of the universe, and unless he satisfied himself with a catastrophe which Shelley would have been justified in calling "feeble," he must, through Herakles, have introduced a factor capable of solving the problem, by revealing to Prometheus the nature of his original offence, and thus rendering it dignified for him to bow to Zeus.

If this reading of the *Prometheus* be accepted, it will be seen that the whole trilogy involved the deepest interests, the mightiest collision of wills, the most pathetic situations, and the most sublime of reconciliations. Zeus, in the second drama of the series, is purposely exposed to misrepresentation in order that his true character in the climax as

τὸν φρονεῖν βροτοὺς ὀδώσαντα, τὸν πάθη μᾶθος
θέντα κυρίως ἔχειν¹

may be established. The divine justice personified in Zeus is displayed irreconcilably opposed to the natural will personified in Prometheus, until the hero who partakes of both, the active and unselfish Herakles,

¹ "Him who leads men in the ways of wisdom, who has ordained that suffering should teach."

atones them. We are even justified in conjecturing that, as Prometheus occupied the foreground of the second drama, so Zeus must have been paramount in the first, and that the two antithetical propositions having thus been stated, the chief part of the third play was assigned to Herakles. What strengthens the interpretation now advanced is the peculiar nature of the punishment of Prometheus. The liver, according to antique psychology, was the seat of the passions; consequently Prometheus suffered through the organ of his sin.

That Æschylus intended to describe the protagonist of his trilogy as a transgressor, though offending in a noble cause, while Zeus was acting in accordance with real justice, however hard to comprehend, is further indicated by the series of events which are supposed to have taken place between the termination of the *Fire-bearer* and the climax of the *Unbound*. All this while Prometheus in his obstinacy is suffering on Caucasus and in the depth of Tartarus; but the way of salvation is meantime being wrought out on earth. By the commerce of the Olympian deities with the daughters of men the heroic race is generated; and not only is the deliverer and reconciler, Herakles, sent forth to purge the world of monstrous wrong, but the better age of equity and justice, foreseen by the Titan and ordained by the Fates, is being prepared. The marriage of Thetis to Peleus is the proper inauguration of the heroic age; it not only confirms Zeus in his sovereignty, but it also provides for humanity the greatest actor in the drama of the Trojan war—the first historical event of Hellas.

If the character ascribed to Zeus in the *Prometheus Bound* still seems to offer difficulties; if, in other words, we are not satisfied with assuming that his conduct must have been justified by the evolution of events in the *Prometheus Unbound*, the following considerations may be adduced by way of further explanation. In the first place, at the supposed time of the *Prometheus Bound*, Zeus was but just seated on his throne, and had to deal with unruly and insurgent powers. The punishment of Prometheus was an episode in the Titanomachy. It was the business, therefore, of Æschylus to exhibit the firmness and force of government of the new ruler, not to draw the picture of a kind paternal monarch. In the second place, the speakers who describe Zeus as despotic, belonged by kinship to the old order of the Titans, or were closely related through friendship to Prometheus. Dramatic propriety required that they should calumniate the new king, or at least misunderstand his motives. In the third place, Io, whose fate appeared so hard, became the mother of a mighty nation, and received tenfold for all her sufferings at the hand of Zeus.¹ Here, therefore, his inscrutable ways were in the end proved righteous; nor is it probable that if Æschylus justified Zeus in his dealings with the unoffending Io, he would leave his treatment of Prometheus unexplained. In the fourth place, the theology of the Greeks was not absolute, like that to which we are accustomed through Christianity. The power

¹ See *Supplices*, 524-599.

ascribed to their deities was political and economical. Fate and necessity determined the action of even Zeus, who was himself an outgrowth from an earlier and ruder order. They also imagined a gradual development in the moral order of the universe. The intellectual powers of Olympus had superseded the old nature-forces of the Titanic cosmogony. There was, therefore, nothing ridiculous to the Greek mind in the notion that Zeus might be conceived as growing in wisdom and in righteousness. In the fifth place, we must remember that the Athenian audience, familiar with the Hesiodic legend of Prometheus, were better prepared than we are, after listening to the invectives against Zeus in the second drama of the trilogy, to accept his triumphant justification in the third.

Not only is the trilogy of Æschylus—if, indeed, he composed a Promethean trilogy at all—now irrecoverable except by hazardous conjecture, but what is more unfortunate, the whole mythus on which it was based has descended to us in hopelessly mutilated fragments. We can clearly perceive that it enshrined the deepest speculations of the Greeks concerning the origin of humanity, the relation of deified intelligence to material nature and to abstract necessity, the kinship between the human soul and the divine spirit, and the consciousness of sin, which implies a division between the will and the reason. Furthermore, there are hints implied in it of purification through punishment, of ultimate reconciliation, and of vicarious suffering. But the fabric of the legend is so ruined that to reconstruct these elements of a theological morality is now impossible. Moreover, the very conditions under which the mythus flourished, tended to divert the minds of the Greeks themselves away from the underlying meaning to the romantic presentation. The story could not fail to usurp upon the doctrine. Like the Glaucus of Greek mythology, whom Plato used as a parable in the *Republic*, the idea which takes shape in a legend during the first ages of human speculation, gathers an accretion of the sea-weeds and the shells of fancy round it, lying at the bottom of the ocean of the human mind through centuries, so that, when it emerges into the light of critical inquiry, the original lineaments of the conception are deformed and overgrown, and to strip it bare and see it clearly is no easy matter. Far more difficult is the task when only the maimed fragments, the *dissecta membra*, of the myth remain to us.

However freely Æschylus may have dealt with the tale of Prometheus, however he may have employed it as a vehicle for rational theology, he cannot have wholly eliminated those qualities which belonged to it as a Saga rather than as an episode of religious tradition. Indeed, by dramatising, he was probably impelled to accentuate the legendary outline at the expense of philosophical coherence. This consideration may explain some of the apparent incongruities in his fable, to which attention has not been yet directed in this chapter. One of these concerns the position of the human race between Zeus,

their apparent oppressor, and Prometheus, their avowed champion. It was for the sake of mankind that Prometheus disobeyed Zeus; it was through severity towards mankind that Zeus placed himself at variance with justice. Yet we find Zeus seeking a mortal bride among the daughters of the men he had sought to destroy; nor is there any reason why, when he could crucify their champion, he should not have annihilated the whole race outright. Perhaps, however, we ought to conjecture that, at this point, the episode of Deucalion and his restoration of mankind after the deluge was understood to have intervened.

Other discrepancies may be stated briefly. In the elder version of the fable presented by Hesiod, Prometheus is almost identified with humanity, while some later fragments of the legend make him the father of Deucalion. In Æschylus he is an immortal god, whose sympathy with men proceeds from generosity and pity. Hesiod describes him as the son of the Titan Iapetos by Asia. Æschylus places him in the first rank of Titanic agencies, by making him the son of Earth or Themis; he is married to Hesione, daughter of Oceanus. Hesiod names his brother Epimetheus; and herein we trace the remnants of an antique psychological analysis, whereof Æschylus has made no use. It is clear, therefore, that the Attic poet dealt freely with the mythus, selecting for artistic purposes only such points in the Hellenic fable as would fit the framework of his drama.

The only sure ground, amid so much that is both shifting and uncertain, is that the race of men had sinned against God, and that Prometheus was a responsible co-agent in their crime. This in itself is a strong argument in favour of the view which has been urged throughout this chapter. This view may be resumed in the following positions. First, it is probable that the *Prometheus Bound* is only the second drama of a trilogy. Secondly, the vilification of Zeus as a despot must be understood in a dramatic sense; it was appropriate to the situation of the actors, and intended to enhance the pathos of the protagonist's suffering. Thirdly, if we possessed the trilogy entire, we should see that Prometheus had been really and gravely in the wrong, and that his obstinacy was in the highest sense tragic according to the Greek conception, inasmuch as it displayed the aberration of a sublime character. Fourthly, the occasion of a worthy reconciliation between Zeus and Prometheus, wherein the former should forego his anger and the latter bend the proud neck of his will, was furnished by Herakles, who held an intermediate position between God and men, and who was recognised as the redresser of wrongs and saviour by the Greeks at large.

The Trilogy of the *Oresteia* is at the same time the masterpiece of Æschylus as a dramatic poet, and also the surest source that we possess for forming a theory of his theological opinions. I do not propose to consider it from the second of these points of view, but rather to concentrate attention upon its greatness as a connected poem in three stupendous parts—as “the majestic image of a high and stately

tragedy, shutting up and intermingling her solemn scenes and acts with a sevenfold chorus of hallelujahs and harping symphonies." In the *Oresteia* Æschylus plucked the last fruit upon the Upas-tree of crime which flourished in the palace of Mycenæ. The murder of Agamemnon, after his return in pomp and power from Troy, forms the subject of the first play. By selecting this point for the overture to the series, the poet was able to allude in choric songs to the ancestral curse of the house, and also to the special crimes of Agamemnon, in his sacrifice of Iphigeneia, in the protracted sufferings of the Argives before Troy, and in his fatal pride. The vaticinations of Cassandra opened a terrific vista of the horrors accumulated upon the family of Thyestes. Thus the past was connected with the present, and the intolerable account of guilt which Orestes, the chief actor, was destined in the end, by the help of Heaven, to discharge, was vividly presented to the minds of the audience. Agamemnon is murdered, and the tragedy closes with Clytemnestra's pæan of triumph and defiance. She glories in her act, pretending that she has duly revenged the death of Iphigeneia, and suppressing her own adultery with Ægisthus—a criminal motive more than enough to vitiate its character of retributive justice.

The Chorus, who are hostile to her and her paramour, call upon her, if she really slew her husband for Iphigeneia's sake, to leave the palace and seek purification. This was her duty according to Greek etiquette. But she refuses; and no Furies haunt her for her crime, seeing that the Furies take account of none but kindred blood, and Clytemnestra killed a man who was no relative by birth, but only by marriage. Such is the strange doctrine which the Eumenides themselves, in the third play of the series, propound before the judgment-seat of Pallas. In a deeper sense it was artistically fitting that Clytemnestra should remain unvisited by the dread goddesses. They were the deities of remorse, and she had steeled her soul against the stings of conscience. Neither from the blood of a slain husband could they rise; nor was there in her own heart harbourage for their grim choir. But though Clytemnestra escaped the spiritual visitings of the Erinnyes, she knew what fear was. Orestes, as the Chorus told her, was still living.

The *Choëphoræ* continues the tale of blood and vengeance. Orestes returns to Mycenæ. He recognises his sister Electra by their father's tomb, deludes Clytemnestra with a false tale of his own death, and then succeeds in killing her together with Ægisthus on the spot where they had murdered Agamemnon. Once more the palace is thrown open; instead of Agamemnon and Cassandra, Clytemnestra and Ægisthus lie prostrate before the desecrated altars, and Orestes exhibits to the Argives the robe in which his father had been caught and tangled ere the axe descended on his head. Then, when the song of joy is rising from Electra and the Chorus, while they are crying that the ancient Fury of the house has been appeased, at that very moment

the eyes of Orestes dilate with horror, his hair bristles, and he trembles with madness. He sees what none around him may discern. The Erinyes of his mother are upon him, and he flies. Like all the middle plays of a trilogy, the *Choëphoræ* is somewhat stationary in its action. But this closing scene is tremendous. It powerfully affected the imagination of the Greeks, and continued, through the period of Græco-Roman art, to form a favourite subject for sepulchral bas-reliefs. Some of these have been preserved to us, the finest being one in the Capitoline Museum.

By the termination of the *Choëphoræ* we are prepared for yet another tragedy, the last of the series. The *Eumenides* opens with a scene which represents the temple of Phœbus at Delphi. Orestes has taken refuge with the god who bade him slay his mother, and who must now purify him. He lies breathless at the altar-steps, with the branch of suppliant wool-enwoven olive in his hand. Not far away are stretched the Furies, hideous, and snorting in their slumber. Phœbus, while they yet sleep, bids his client rise and speed to Athens, to await the verdict of Pallas in his case. So much we learn, partly from the speech of the Pythia, and partly from the lips of the god himself. Then, when Orestes has started on his way, the phantom of Clytemnestra appears and bids the sleeping Furies rise. One by one they start, and groan like hounds disturbed in the midst of dreamings of the chase. When they see their prey has escaped, they break into full cry—a brazen-throated chorus, accompanied by brazen-footed tramlings. Phœbus, however, drives them forth with scorn from his sun-bright shrine. Why linger they in those hypæthral temple-chambers, resonant with song, and gladdened by the feet of youths and maidens bearing bays? Their haunts should rather be the charnel-house, the shambles, the gallows, the torture-chamber of barbarians. The scene is now changed to Athens, where Pallas presides over the court of the Areiopagus assembled to decide between the Furies who prosecute Orestes, and Phœbus who defends his suppliant. There is no doubt about the deed: Clytemnestra was slain by her own son; the question to settle is, whether circumstance could justify so unnatural an act. The Furies represent the blind instinct of repulsion for the shedding of maternal blood, which no *primâ facie* argument can excuse, and which cannot be covered. Phœbus is the holy and pure power, who will not suffer moral abominations, like the unpunished insolence of the murderess Clytemnestra, to abide. Pallas stands for reason, capable of weighing motives, of disengaging a necessary act of retributive justice from brute murder. In the breasts of the human judges, these three faculties—the instinct which condemns matricide, the instinct which sanctions under any circumstance the punishment of crime, and the reason which holds the balance of impulses—are active. After much angry pleading by the advocates on both sides, the votes are taken. Half decide against Orestes; half acquit him. Pallas, by her casting vote, determines the verdict in his favour. The Eumenides,

disappointed of their prey, threaten vengeance against Athens; but Pallas appeases them, and assigns them a place of honour in her city for ever.

It is clear that the three plays of this trilogy are closely bound together, and that their connection is that of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. The *Agamemnon* sets forth the crime of Clytemnestra; the *Choëphoræ* exhibits the exceptional conduct of Orestes with regard to that crime; the *Eumenides* contains his exculpation. The third play offers a reconciliation of the agencies at warfare in the first and second; the curse of the house of Atreus is worked out and set at rest by the hero whose awful duty it was to revenge a father's murder on a mother. His justification lay in his submission to the divine will. Had he taken the matricidal office on himself in haste or anger, he must have added another link to the chain of crime that hitherto had bound his family through generations. What he did, however, was done with a clear conscience; and, though he suffered the maddening anguish of so terrible an act, he found rest and peace for his soul at last. Thus a new power, unrealised in the *Agamemnon* and the *Choëphoræ*, was needed for the solution presented in the *Eumenides*.

Passing from the internal structure of these dramas to their form, we may notice how Æschylus provided theatrical variety consistent with the varying subject. It was requisite that the action of the two first should take place at Mycenæ; so the scene was not altered, but the Chorus was changed, in order that the pathos of Electra's situation might be made more clear in the *Choëphoræ*. The *Eumenides* admitted not only of a new Chorus, but also of a total change of scene; it may be added that this third drama violates the unities alike of place and time.

Of the three plays of the trilogy, the *Agamemnon* is unquestionably the noblest. It is the masterpiece of Æschylus, and to one who has conquered its difficulties and imbibed its spirit it offers a spectacle of tragic grandeur not to be surpassed, hardly to be equalled, by anything which even Shakespeare produced. What some modern critics might regard as defects—the lengthy choric passages, abstract in their thought, though splendid in their imagery—the concentration of the poet's powers on one terrific climax—for each word that Agamemnon, Clytemnestra, and Cassandra utter, leads up to the death-cry of the King—contribute to the excellence of a drama of this style. If we lack the variety and subtlety that charms us in a work like *Hamlet*; if, after reading the play over and over again, and testing it in many crucibles of critical analysis, we do not, as in the case of Shakespeare's tragedies, discover new and delicate beauties in the minor parts, but learn each time, and by each process, to admire the vigour of the poet's main conception, the god-like energy with which he has developed it; that may be taken as the strongest proof of its perfection as a monument of classic art.

There is, in the *Agamemnon*, an oppressive sense of multitudinous

crimes, of sins gathering and swelling to produce a tempest. The air we breathe is loaded with them. No escape is possible. The marshalled thunderclouds roll ever onward, nearer and more near, and far more swiftly than the foot can flee. At last the accumulated storm bursts in the murder of Agamemnon, the majestic and unconscious victim felled like a steer at the stall; in the murder of Cassandra, who foresees her fate, and goes to meet it with the shrinking of some dumb creature, and with the helplessness of one who knows that doom may not be shunned; in the lightning-flash of Clytemnestra's arrogance, who hitherto has been a glittering hypocrite, but now proclaims herself a fiend incarnate. As the Chorus cries, the rain of blood, that hitherto has fallen drop by drop, descends in torrents on the house of Atreus. But the end is not yet. The whole tragedy becomes yet more sinister when we regard it as the prelude to ensuing tragedies, as the overture to fresh symphonies and similar catastrophes. Wave after wave of passion gathers and breaks in these stupendous scenes; the ninth wave mightier than all, with a crest whereof the spray is blood, falls foaming; over the outspread surf of gore and ruin the curtain drops, to rise upon the self-same theatre of new woes.

The imagery of the *Agamemnon* most powerfully contributes to heighten the tragic impression of the plot. At one time the ancestral Fury of the doomed house is likened to a dæmon leaping on it from above, by a metaphor which vividly suggests Blake's design of Satan pouring flame upon the dwelling of Job's sons. At another it is compared to a cormorant brooding upon its battlements; and yet again, by a stroke of irony peculiarly impressive to the Greeks, it is likened to a band of revellers. The repetition of the same class of metaphors, the frequent references to the net in which Agamemnon was to be caught, to the axe with which he and Cassandra were to be slaughtered, to the smoke and scent of blood which was to bathe the altar of the household Zeus with sacrifice unhallowed, assail the imagination with portentous monotony.

Of all the terrors in this tragedy none is so awful in itself, or so artistically heightened, as Cassandra's prophecy. Accompanying her lord and master, she has approached the palace of Mycenæ. Clytemnestra has greeted the King with a set oration, admirable for its rhetoric, covering by dark innuendoes her foul thought. Spreading upon the threshold purple raiment and mantles suited to the service of the gods—such embroidered garments, we may fancy, as Athenian ladies wrought for Pallas—she exclaims: "Descend from this thy chariot; nor set on earth, dread monarch, thy foot that trampled upon Troy." It is as though a mediæval wife should bid her lord, returning from the East, to tread on altar-cloths and sacerdotal vestments. Agamemnon shrinks from the sacrilege, but she overrules his scruples, and he complies. All this while Cassandra is seated, patient, in her car. Like a statue sculptured in monumental alabaster, with hands upon her knees, and head bowed on her breast, she waits unmoved. Then the

conqueror is led in to his doom—a doom which the Chorus, in one of their wild eddying hymns of woe, seem almost to anticipate. Still Cassandra tarries; and now Clytemnestra comes again, with taunts and dreadful irony: “Happy are you, princess though you be, to have such rich and prosperous masters; enter the palace, the sacrifice is ready at the altar, and to this, as a slave of the house, you too are bidden.” But Cassandra will not move. In her soul, where, though a slave, she still retains the gift of oracular vision, she foresees her doom. She knows what the riches of the house of Atreus mean, what the prosperity of Agamemnon really is, what the sacrifice to which she too is bidden will be. Clytemnestra leaves her, half in scorn and half in anger. Then, at length, Cassandra lifts her head, and stirs herself, and groans. The first word she utters is, “Apollo! oh! Apollo!” This rouses the Chorus, and they ask: “What cry of wailing hast thou shrieked about Apollo? He is not a god to be greeted with dirges.” Phœbus was, in truth, the deity of brightness and music, not of the funeral groan or death-lament. Still Cassandra, with the same ill-omened utterance, reverberates the name: “Apollo! ah, Apollo! lo, a second time hast thou undone me!” To Phœbus she had promised her virginity; the promise was not kept, and he requited her with prophecy that none might heed or understand. No tragic portion is more piteous than this of her who was the clear-eyed seer of coming woes, the unwilling mouthpiece of dread oracles, doomed alike to knowledge worse than ignorance, and to the scorn that falls on idle babblers. Now, once again, descending on her with the might of prophecy, the god compels her to predict her own swift-coming fate. Little by little, at the intercession of the Chorus, Cassandra becomes more articulate. She calls the house before her “the shambles of a man, a pavement blood-bedabbled.” There stands the stately palace-front; its marble steps are covered with tapestry, the statues of its protective gods are crowned with flowers; while the lonely prophetess is shuddering at so fair a frontispiece to a tragedy within so frightful, now to be accomplished on her master and herself. Meantime the Chorus also wait, involved in their own anxiety; the mysterious anguish of the weird woman, whom they know to have the hand of God laid heavily upon her, makes them tremble. “What mean you,” they exclaim, “by scenting like a dog for blood upon this royal threshold?” Cassandra only answers: “Are not these children wailing for their death enough? Is not their flesh, tasted by their father at their uncle’s board, my witness?” She points to phantoms which the Chorus cannot see, the ghosts of the children of Thyestes. They reply sullenly, for they know the story of the house: “We want no soothsayers.” Then Cassandra breaks forth afresh, this time vaticinating imminent calamity: “What is she plotting, what doom unbearable? and there is none to aid!” The Chorus take up their strain: “Here indeed you are a riddler; what you meant before was common talk.” But Cassandra heeds them not. Her second-sight pierces the

palace-walls, and she shrieks: "Mad woman, are you decking your husband for the bath? The end draws near. Hand stretches forth to hand. Is it a net of Hell? Keep the ox from the heifer! she hath caught him in her robe and slays him. I tell you he is falling, falling in the trough of death." The Chorus are puzzled by these hurried and ecstatic exclamations; but their very fear seems to keep them from the apprehension of the truth. Then Cassandra changes her tone, and bewails her own misfortunes, her coming death, and the crime of Paris which brought her to this doom, employing throughout these prophecies a lyric metre suited to their pregnant brevity. At last, when she has well-nigh worn out the patience of the Chorus, she assumes the regular iambic of common speech: "Now, then, at length shall the oracle gaze upon you free from veils like a bride. The Furies are in this house; blood-surfeited, but not assuaged, they hold perpetual revel here. It is the crime of Atreus and of Thyestes which they hunt, and woe will fall on woe." The Chorus can only wonder that she, a foreign princess, should know the secrets of the fated race; but she tells them the story of Apollo's love, and how she deceived him, and what he wrought to punish her. Then, even as she speaks, the pang of inspiration thrills her. Perhaps the speech that follows, through its ghastly blending of visions evoked from the past with insight piercing into the immediate future, affects the imagination more intensely than any other piece of tragic declamation. Even the sleep-mutterings of Lady Macbeth, though they form a curious modern counterpart to the broken exclamations of Cassandra, are less appalling; for hers reveal a guilty conscience maddened by one crime, while Cassandra's outcry sums up the history of a whole accursed race, and expresses at the same time the agony of an innocent victim:—

"Woe, woe! Ah, ah! what pain!
 Again the dreadful pangs oracular
 Shoot through me, tempesting my soul with preludes.
 See you those children seated on the house-roof?
 Babes are they, like unto the shapes of dreams;
 Yea, children seem they, slaughtered by their kin,
 Whose hands are filled with meat of their own flesh;
 Their very hearts and entrails, piteous load,
 I see them bear, whereof their father tasted!
 Wherefore I say, vengeance for this is plotting
 A lion, thewless, amid pillows lapped,
 House-guard, alas! for my returning master—
 Mine: for I needs must bear the yoke, a slave.
 But he, the admiral, Ilion's overthrower,
 Knows not what things the tongue of that lewd bitch
 With speeches and with long-drawn fawning fairness, like
 A lurking Até, by ill-luck will do.
 Thus, then, she dares: she, woman, slays a man;
 Yea, slays. What loathsome reptile can I name her,
 Nor miss my mark?—foul amphisbæna, Scylla
 That dwells in rocks, the ship-borne seaman's bane,
 Raging mother of Hell, a truceless strife
 Belching on friend and kindred! How she shouted

With daring swollen, as when the foemen scatter !
 Now of these things I care not if I gain
 No credence. What ? What will be, comes ; and thou
 Wilt stand and pity and call me too true prophet."

No translation can do justice to the appalling fury of the original, since it is only in Greek—a language usually sedate and harmonised by sense of beauty—that such phrases as *θύουσαν Ἀΐδου μητέρ'* have their full value. The Chorus are shaken from their incredulity, as much by the intensity of Cassandra's conviction as by the desperate calm of her last words. Is Agamemnon really to be slain ? Yes, she answers, and, pray or not as you may choose, they there inside the house are slaying. Then once more the rage of divination seizes her, and the scene of her own death, like that of Agamemnon's, flames upon her soul. The second speech has more of pathos than the first, less of fury ; but it is scarcely less awful :—

" Ah, ah ! the fire ! lo, how it comes upon me !
 Phœbus Lyceæan, ho ! Ah, woe is me !
 She, too, this two-foot lioness that couches
 With the wolf, what time the lion is away,
 Will slay me, slay me ! Like a poison-brewer
 She'll mix my death-wage with her broth of hell ;
 Yea, and she swears, sharpening the knife to slay him,
 Her lord shall pay with blood for bringing me.
 Why wear I, then, these gauds to laugh me down—
 This rod, these necklace-wreaths oracular ?
 You, ere my death, at least I will destroy :—
 Go ; fall ; away, and perish : I shall follow.
 Make rich some other curse of men than me.
 Lo, you ! Apollo's self is stripping me
 Of this prophetic raiment—he who saw me
 Even in these robes jeered at 'mid friends by foemen,
 Who scorned in chorus with one voice of vain scorn.
 Yea, when I was called beggar, vagabond,
 Poor, wretched, starveling, speechless, I endured :
 Now he who made me prophetess, the prophet,
 Himself hath brought me to these straits of death.
 No altar of my fathers waits for me,
 But that red block where I must reeking wallow.
 Nay, but not unavenged of heaven we perish !
 For yet another in our cause shall come,
 Avenger, matricide, his father's champion :
 Though exiled, wandering from this land a stranger,
 He shall return to crown the curse of kindred :
 For gods in heaven have sworn a mighty oath
 That the sire's prostrate corse shall bring him home.
 Why wait I, then, lamenting thus, an alien ?—
 I, who beheld of old proud Iliion
 Fare as she fared, and they who dwelt therein
 Receive such measure from the gods of judgment,
 I, too, will rise and dare, myself, to perish.
 Therefore I greet these gates as gates of Hades,
 Praying a full fair stroke may be my due,
 That thus with blood that gently flows to waste,
 Torn by no death-pangs, I these eyes may close."

The draught of prophecy is now drained to the very dregs. Nothing remains but for Cassandra to enter the palace-doors of Hades. She approaches them step by step, bewailing, after the fashion of Greek tragedy, her own woes, and those of Priam's family. Suddenly she starts. The scent of blood assails her nostrils, and, like a steer that shivers at the gory shambles, she draws back. The Chorus say, "It is only the smell of sacrifice upon the hearth." But the weird woman discovers a very different odour of coming slaughter: "To me the reek is like the breath of charnels." Still forward, though shrinking from the unseen, unavoidable doom, she must advance, invoking the avenger of herself and Agamemnon, and calling on the all-seeing sun. Her last words are uttered in the same spirit as Macbeth's soliloquy upon the point of battle; they intensify and elevate the tragic moment by drawing the whole destiny of mortals into harmony with her own doom:—

" Ah, lives of men ! When prosperous, they glitter
Like a fair picture ; when misfortune comes,
A wet sponge at one blow hath blurred the painting."

Thus, at the last, tranquil and stately, she touches the door, enters, and it shuts behind her. For a while the Chorus stand alone, and sing a low, brief chant of terror. The scene is empty, and the palace-front towers up into calm light. Then, when our nerves have been strained to the cracking-point of expectation by Cassandra's prophecy and by the silence that succeeds it, from within the house is heard the deep-chested cry of Agamemnon: "O me, I am stricken with a stroke of death!" This shriek is the most terrible incident in all tragedy, owing to its absolute and awful timeliness, its adequacy to the situation. The whole dramatic apparatus of the play has been, as it were, constructed with a view to it; yet, though we expect it, our heart stops when at last it comes. The stillness, apparently of home repose, but really of death, which broods upon the house during those last moments, while every second brings the hero nearer to his fate, has in it a concentrated awfulness that surpasses even the knocking at the gate in *Macbeth*. Then comes the cry of Agamemnon, and the whole structure of terror descends upon us. It is as though an avalanche had been gathering above our heads and gradually loosening—loosening with fearfully accelerated ratio of movement as the minutes fly—until a single word will be enough to make it crumble. That word, uttered from behind the stately palace-walls, startling the guilty and oppressive silence, intimating that the workers have done working, that the victim has been taken in their toils, is nothing less than the shriek of the smitten King. It sounds once for the death-blow given; and once again it sounds, to mark a second stroke. Then shriek and silence are alike forgotten in the downfall of the mass of dread. The Chorus are torn asunder by hurried and conflicting counsels, eddying like dead leaves caught and tossed in the clutches of a tempest. Horror

huddles upon horror, as the spectacle of slaughter is itself revealed—the King's corpse smoking in the silver bath, Cassandra motionless in death beside him. Above them stands Clytemnestra, shouldering her murderous axe, with open nostrils and dilated eyes, glorying in her deed, cherishing the blood-drops on her arms and dress and sprinkled bosom; while, invisible to mortal eyes, the blood-swilled dæmon of the house sits eyeing her as its next victim. Ægisthus—craven, but spiteful—slinks forth, hyena-like, after the accomplished act, to trample on the hero and insult his grave.

Some such spectacle as this was revealed to the Athenians by the rolling forward of the eccyclema at the end of the *Agamemnon*. The triumph of adulterous Clytemnestra and cowardly Ægisthus would, however, have been far from tragic in its utter moral baseness, did we not know that this drama was to be succeeded by another which should right the balance. Perhaps this is the reason why the *Oresteia* is the only extant trilogy. Its three parts are so closely interlinked that to separate them was impossible. The preservers of the *Agamemnon* were forced to preserve the *Choëphoræ*; the preservers of the *Choëphoræ* could not dispense with the *Eumenides*.

The Chorus of the *Agamemnon* demands separate criticism. The Chorus in all Greek tragedy performs, it has been often said, the part of an ideal spectator. It comments on the plot, not daring so much actively to interfere, as uttering reflections on the conduct of the *dramatis personæ*, and referring all obscure events to the arbitrament of Heaven. Thus the Chorus is a mirror of the poet's mind, an index to the moral which he inculcates, an inspired critic of each movement in the play. The choric odes, introduced at turning-points in the main action, are lyrical interbreathings that connect the past and future with the present. In the plays of Æschylus the Chorus, as I have already shown, is, moreover, personally interested in the drama. In the case of the *Agamemnon* the fortunes of the burghers of Mycenæ are engaged in the success or failure of Clytemnestra's scheme. At the same time, knowing the whole dark history of the house of Atreus, they foresee the perils which their master, as a member of that family, must run. It follows that their songs embody the moral teaching of the tragedy itself without lapsing into mere sententiousness. Their sympathies, antipathies, and interests add vital importance to their utterance. The burden of all these odes is that punishment for crime, however long delayed or tortuous in its operation, is inevitable. The grandeur of the whole work depends in a great measure on the force with which this idea is wrought out lyrically, sometimes by bold images, sometimes by dark innuendoes, repeated like a mystic rede, or tossed upon the eddies of a wizard chaunt. From beginning to ending these ancient men are adverse to the sons of Atreus, gloomily conscious that they cannot prosper. While recognising the justice of their cause against Paris, who had transgressed the laws of hospitable Zeus, they yet remember Agamemnon's swiftness to shed his daughter's

blood, the old Erinnys which pursues the race, the wholesale slaughter of Achaian citizens before Troy's walls. These recollections inspire them with uneasiness before the Messenger appears. Their doubts are confirmed by his news that the altars of the Trojans had been dishonoured, while their mistrust of Clytemnestra adds yet a deeper hue to their alarm. Then comes the scene with Cassandra. No more doubt remains; and the only question is how to act. Even at the last moment the Chorus do not lose their faith. They defy Clytemnestra, telling her to her face that her crime must be avenged, that the curse must be worked out to the full, and that justice cannot fail to triumph. At the very end they rise to prophecy: you, yourself, unfriended in the end shall fall; the doer, when Zeus wills, shall suffer for his deed; remember, therefore, that Orestes lives.

The Choric interludes of the *Agamemnon*, though burdened with the mystery of sin and fate, and tuned to music stern and lofty, abound in strains of pathetic and of tender poetry, deep-reaching to the very fount of tears, unmatched by aught else in the Greek language. The demiurge who gave a shape to Titans and to Furies, mingled tears with the clay of the men he wrought, and star-fire with the beauty of his women; while even for the birds of the air and the wild creatures of the woods he felt a sympathy half human, half divine. In the first Chorus, Æschylus compares the Atreidæ to eagles robbed of their young, whose cries are answered by Zeus, Phœbus, or Pan. "Hearing the shrill clamour of these airy citizens, he sendeth after-vengeance on the robbers." And, again, Artemis exacts penalty for the hare whom the eagles bore off to their nests, a prey. "So kindly disposed is the fair goddess to the tender young of fierce lions, and to the suckling brood of all beasts that range the field and forest." Thus the large philosophy of the poet includes justice for all living things, and even dumb creatures have their rights, which men may not infringe.

The depth of his human pathos no mere plummet-line of scholarship or criticism can fathom. Before the vision of Iphigeneia at the altar we must needs be silent: "Letting fall her saffron-coloured skirts to earth, she smote each slayer with a piteous arrow from her eyes, eloquent as in a picture, desiring speech, since oftentimes beside the well-spread board within her father's hall she sang, and maidenly, with chaste voice, honoured the pæan raised in happy times at festal sacrifice of her dear sire." We do not need the sententious moral of Lucretius uttered four centuries later, *tantum religio potuit suadere malorum* (so many evils has religion been able to instil into the human breast) to point the pathos which Æschylus, with a profounder instinct, draws by one touch from the contrast between then and now. In the same strain is the description of Menelaus abandoned in his home by Helen: "She, leaving to her fellow-citizens the din of shielded hosts, and armings of the fleet with spears, bringing to Ilion destruction for a dower, went lightly through the doors, dishonourably brave; and many a sigh was uttered by the bards of the palace, while they sang,

—O house! O house, and rulers! O marriage bed, and pressure on the pillows of her head who loved her lord!—He stands by in silence, dishonoured, but without reproaches, noting with anguish of soul that she is fled. Yea, in his longing after her who is beyond the sea, a phantom will seem to rule his house. The grace of goodly statues hath grown irksome to his gaze, and in his widowhood of weary eyes all beauty fades away. But dreams that glide in sleep with sorrow, visit him, conveying a vain joy; for vain it is, when one hath seemed to see good things, and lo, escaping through his hands, the vision flies apace on wings that follow on the paths of sleep.”

To read the Greek aright in this wonderful lyric, so concentrated in its imagery, and so direct in its conveyance of the very soul of passion, is no light task; but far more difficult it is to render it into another language. Yet, even thus, we feel that this poem of defrauded desire and everlasting farewell, of vain outgoings of the spirit after vanished joy, is written not merely for Menelaus and the Greeks, but for all who stretch forth empty hands to clasp the dreams of dear ones, and then turn away, face-downward on the pillow, from the dawn, to weep or strain hot eyes that shed no tears. Touched by the same truth of feeling, which includes all human nature in its sympathy, is the lament, shortly after uttered by the Chorus, for the numberless fair men who died before Troy town. Ares, the grim gold-exchanger, who barter the bodies of men, sends home a little dust shut up within a narrow urn, and wife and father water this with tears, and cry—Behold, he perished nobly in a far land, fighting for a woman, for another’s wife. And others there are who come not even thus again to their old home; but barrows on Troy plain enclose their fair young flesh, and an alien soil is their sepulchre. This picture of beautiful dead men, warriors and horsemen, in the prime of manhood, lying stark and cold, with the dishonour of the grave upon their comely hair, and with the bruises of the battle on limbs made for love, is not meant merely for Achæians, but for all—for us, perchance, whose dearest moulder on Crimean shores or Indian plains, for whom the glorious faces shine no more; but at best some tokens, locks of hair, or books, or letters, come to stay our hunger unassuaged. How truly and how faithfully the Greek poet sang for all ages, and for all manner of men, may be seen by comparing the strophes of this Chorus with the last rhapsody but one of the chaunts outpoured in America by Walt Whitman, to commemorate the events of the great war. The pathos which unites these poets, otherwise so different in aim and sentiment, is deep as nature, real as life; but from this common root of feeling springs in the one verse a spotless lily of pure Hellenic form, in the other a mystical thick growth of fancy, where thoughts brood and nestle amid tufted branches; for the powers of classic and of modern singers upon the same substance of humanity are diverse.

The *Persæ* is certainly one of the earliest among the extant tragedies of Æschylus, since it was produced upon the stage in 473 B.C., seven

years after the battle of Salamis. This drama can scarcely be called a tragedy in the common sense of the word. It is rather a tragic show, designed to grace a national festival and to preserve the memory of a great victory. That purpose it fulfilled effectively; the events it celebrates were still recent; the author of the play had fought himself at Salamis, and the whole Athenian people were glowing with the patriotic impulse that had placed them first among the States of Hellas. Æschylus was, however, too deeply conscious of the spirit of his art to let the *Persæ* sink into the rank of pageantry or triumph. The defeat of Xerxes and his host supplied him with a splendid tragic instance of pride humbled, and greatness brought to nothing, through one man's impiety and pride. The moral that the poet wished to draw is put into the mouth of Darius, whose ghost, evoked by Atossa and the Chorus, completes the tale of Persian disasters by predicting the battle of Plataea. "Swiftly are the oracles accomplished. I looked for length of days; but when a man hastes, God helps to urge him on. It was my son's insolence, in chaining the holy Hellespont, and thinking he could stay the Bosphorus, the stream divine, from flowing, which brought these woes. He thought to make a path for his army, to hold Poseidon and the powers of heaven in bondage—he a mortal, and they gods! Few of his great host shall return again to Susa. In Hellas they must pay the penalty of arrogance and godless hearts. Coming to that land, they thought it no shame to rob the statues of the gods and burn the shrines; the altars were cast down, the temples overthrown. Therefore, as they did evil, evil shall they suffer. Heaps of dead upon Plataea's plain shall tell to the third generation, by speechless signs appealing to the eyes of men, that no man mortal may dare raise his heart too high. For insolence blooms forth and bears the crop of disaster, whence one reaps a harvest of tears. Seeing which payment for these crimes, remember Hellas and Athens. Nor let a man, in scorn of his own lot, desire another's good, and spill much wealth; for Zeus, in sooth, stands high above, a grievous school-master, to tame excessive lifting-up of hearts." Nowhere else, it may be said, has Æschylus thought fit so decidedly to moralise his dramatic motive, or so clearly to state in simple words his philosophy of Nemesis. The ghost of Darius, as may be conjectured from this address, does not belong to the same race as the Banquos and Hamlets of our stage. He is a political phantom, a monarch evoked from his mausoleum to give sage counsel, and well informed about the affairs of his empire.

By laying the scene of this drama at Susa, the ancient capital of the Persian kings, Æschylus was enabled to adopt a style of treatment peculiarly flattering to his Greek audience. The Persians are made to bewail their own misfortunes, to betray the rottenness of their vast empire, and to lament the wretchedness of nations subject to the caprice of irresponsible and selfish princes. Inured to slavery, they hug their chains; and, though in rags, Xerxes is still to them a demigod. The servility of Oriental courtiers, the pomp and pride of

Oriental princes, the obsequious ceremonies and the inflated flatteries of barbarians, are translated for Greek ears and eyes into gorgeous forms by the poet, whose own genius had something Asiatic in its tone and temper. Many occasions for grim irony are afforded by this mode of handling; whereof the famous speech of Atossa on the clothes of Xerxes, if that, indeed, be genuine, and the inability of the Chorus, through servile shyness, to address the ghost of Darius, furnish the most obvious examples. A finer and subtler note is struck in the dialogue between Atossa and the Chorus just before the news of the defeat at Salamis arrives. She asks where Athens may be found:—

κεῖνα δ' ἐκμαθεῖν θέλω,
ὦ φίλοι, ποῦ τὰς Ἀθήνας φασὶν ἰδρῦσθαι χθονός;

“ And this I fain would learn,
Friends, where on earth is Athens said to be ? ”

This offers the poet an opportunity for putting into the mouth of the Persian coryphæus a flattering account of his own nation: No monarch have they, few are they, but all men of might, and strong enough to rout the myriad bowmen of the Persian host with spear and shield. The *naiweté* of the description—in itself highly complimentary to the Athenians—must have made it effective on the stage. We may fancy how the cheering of the men of Marathon re-echoed from the Dionysian theatre, and filled Athene's hill “song-wise” with sound, as each triumphant trochaic leapt forth from the Persian lips. At the same time the tragic irony is terrible, for the queen is on the point of hearing from the Messenger that this mere handful of spearmen crushed her son's host, countless as the stars, in one day upon sea and shore. The real point of that fierce duel of two nations, which decided the future of the human race—the contrast between barbarians and men in whom the spirit was alive, between slaves driven to the fight like sheep, and freemen acting consciously as their own will determined, between the brute force of multitudes and the inspired courage of a few heroes—has never been expressed more radiantly than in this play. No language of criticism can do justice to the incomparable brilliancy and vigour with which the tale of Salamis is told. We must remember, in reading the speeches of the Messenger, that this is absolutely the first page of Greek history. It came before Herodotus, and the soldier-poet, who had seen what he narrated, was no less conscious than we are, after all our study, of the real issues, of the momentous interests at stake. Never elsewhere has contemporary history been written thus. In these triumphant declamations Æschylus did not choose to maintain a bare dramatic propriety. The herald is relating disaster after disaster; yet the elation of the poet pulses through his speech, and he cannot be sad. We feel that, while he is dinning into the ears of the barbarian empress and her courtiers this panegyric of Hellenic heroism, he is really speaking to an Attic audience.

The situation is, however, sufficiently sustained for theatrical purposes by the dignity wherewith Atossa meets her ruin. She shows herself a queen in spite of all, and the front she presents to "the sea of troubles" (*κακῶν πέλαγος*) breaking over the whole Asian empire is fully adequate to the magnitude of the calamity. It is difficult to believe that the speech written for her by Æschylus, when she returns with the libations for Darius, was not intended, by its grandly decorative style, to convey the impression of calmness in the midst of sorrow. Atossa is great enough to be self-possessed, and to dwell with tender thoughtfulness upon the gifts of nature beloved by the powers of darkness. The lines are these: ¹—

βοός τ' ἀφ' ἀγνῆς λευκὸν εἶποτον γάλα,
 τῆς τ' ἀνθεμουργοῦ στάγμα, παμφαῆς μέλι,
 λιβάσαν ὑδρηλαῖς παρθένου πηγῆς μέτα·
 ἀκῆρατόν τε μητρὸς ἀγρίας ἀπο
 ποτόν παλαιᾶς ἀμπέλου γάνος τόδε·
 τῆς δ' αἰὲν ἐν φύλλοισι θαλλούσης ἴσον
 ξανθῆς ἐλαίας καρπὸς εὐώδης πάρα,
 ἀνθη τε πλεκτὰ παμφόρου γαίας τέκνα.

This passage is a fair example of the "mighty line" of Æschylus, employed for purposes of pure adornment. The pomp and circumstance of tragic style, which he so well knew how to use, gave unrivalled dignity to his narration. Yet this style, even in the days of Aristophanes, had come to sound extravagant, while its occasional bombast, as in the famous periphrasis for dust,

κῶσις
 πηλοῦ ξύνουρος διψία κόνις,

"Thirsty dust twin-brother of mud,"

reminds a modern reader too much of the padding of the actors' chests, the cothurnus, brazen mouthpiece, and heightened mask required by the huge size of the Athenian theatre. The phrases invented in the *Frogs* to express the peculiarities of the Æschylean exaggeration, *κομποφακελορρήμονα*, or *ἵππολόφων λόγων κορυθαίολα νείκη*, or, again,

φρίξας δ' αὐτοκῆμον λοφίᾶς λασιαύχενα χαίταν
 δεινὸν ἐπισκύνιον ξυνάγων βρυχώμενος ἦσει
 ῥήματα γομποπαγῆ πινακηδὸν ἀποσπῶν
 γηγενεῖ φυσήματι

very cleverly parody the effect of the more tumid passages.² Yet when Æschylus chose to be simple he combined majesty with grace,

¹ "White delicious milk drawn from an unsullied cow, and the blossom-worker's distillation, translucent honey, with watery tricklings from a virgin spring; also the unblemished liquor gushing from a rustic mother, this quickening draught of the old vine; nor lacks there fragrant fruit of her, the fair-haired olive-tree, whose foliage flourishes alike the whole year round, together with wreaths of flowers, the children of all-generating earth."

² It is idle to attempt a translation of these Aristophanic lines, which owe the whole of their force to the exactitude with which the peculiar qualities of the style of Æschylus are reproduced.

strength with beauty, and speed with volume, in a style which soars higher and reaches farther than the polished perfection of Sophocles or the artistic elegance of Euripides. The descriptions of Ionia and Doria drawing Xerxes' chariot in Atossa's dream, and of the education of mankind in the *Prometheus*, belong to his more pure and chastened manner. The famous speech in which Clytemnestra tells of the leaping up of watchfire after watchfire from Troy to Mycenæ, of Ida flashing the flame to the Hermæan cliff of Lemnos, of Athos taking it up and sending it with joy across the gulf to far Makistus, of the Messapian warders lighting their dry heath and speeding the herald-blaze in brightness like the moon to Cithæron, and thence, by peak and promontory, over fen and plain and flickering armlet of the sea, onward to Agamemnon's palace-tower—this brilliant picture, glittering with the rarest jewels of imaginative insight, can only be coupled with the Salaminian speeches of the *Persæ*. They stand in a place apart. Purity, lucidity, rapidity, energy, elevation, and fiery intensity of style are here divinely mingled. There is no language and no metre equal to the Greek and the iambic for such resonant, elastic, leaping periods as these. The firm grasp upon reality preserved by Æschylus, even in his most passionate and most imaginative moments, adds force unrivalled to these descriptive passages.

At the same time he surpassed all the poets of his nation in a certain Shakespearean concentration of phrase. The invectives uttered by Cassandra against Clytemnestra, and her broken exclamations, abound in examples of energetic, almost grotesque, imagery, not to be paralleled in Greek literature. The whole of the *Seven against Thebes*, and in particular that choric ode which describes the capture and sack of a town, might be cited with a similar intention. But perhaps the strongest instance of this more than Greek vehemence of expression is the denunciation hurled by Phœbus at the Furies in his Delphian shrine:—

“ Away, I bid you ! Leave my palace halls :
 Quit these pure shrines oracular with speed !
 Lest haply some winged glistening serpent sent
 From the gold-twisted bow-wire bite your flesh,
 And ye, pain-stricken, vomit gory froth,
 The clotted spilth of man's blood ye have supped.
 Nay, these gates are not yours ! *There* is your dwelling,
 Where heads are chopped, eyes gouged in savage justice,
 Throats cut, and bloom of boys unnameably
 Is mangled ; there where nose and ears are slithered,
 With stonings, and the piteous smothered moan
 Of slaves impaled. Hence ! Hear ye not whereby,
 Loving like ghouls these banquets, ye're become
 To gods abominable ? Lo, your shape
 Bewrays your spirit. Blood-swilled lions' dens
 Are fit for you to live in, not the seat
 Of sooth oracular, which you pollute.
 Go, heifers grazing without herdsmen, go !
 To herd like yours no face of god is kindly.”

Another Shakespearean quality in the Æschylean use of language and of imagery might be illustrated from his metaphors. He calls the ocean a forest—πόντιον ἄλσος or ἀλίρρυτον ἄλσος (sea-forest, or wood of the surging wave)—as though he would remind us of the great sea-beasts that roam like wolves or lions down beneath the waves. The gryphons are δξύστομοι Ζηνὸς ἀκραγεῖς κύνες (sharp-voiced dogs of Zeus that bark not). The eagle is Διὸς πτηνὸς κύων δαφουῖός (the winged blood-boltered hound of Zeus). The Furies of Clytemnestra are μητρὸς ἔγκοτοι κύνες (a mother's vengeful sleuth-hounds). The Argives who poured forth from the Wooden Horse to plunder Troy are called Ἀργεῖον δάκος, ἵππου νεοσσός, ἀσπιδηφόρος λεώς (the savage beast of Argos, youngling of the horse, the lion charged with shields). The flame of the thunderbolt becomes πυρὸς ἀμφήκης βόστρυχος (the forked tress of fire). The beacon-flame on Ægiplanctus is a huge beard, φλογὸς μέγαν πώγωνα (great beard of fire). In all these metaphors we trace an imaginative energy which the Greek poets usually sought to curb. When we speak of the mighty line of Æschylus, we naturally remember verses like these:—

ἀλλ' οὐ καρανιστῆρες ὀφθαλμωρύχοι,

and,

φαιοχίτωνες καὶ πεπλεκτανημένα
πυκνοῖς δράκουσιν,

which carry with them a massive weight not only of sound and words, but also of meaning and of imagery.¹ No wonder that Aristophanes jestingly compared the gravity of the style of Æschylus with that of Euripides in balances. A single phrase of the former's causes a score of the latter's to kick the beam; and as the sonorous nouns, flanked by their polysyllabic epithets, advance, the earth is seen to shake as though battalions were hurrying to the charge, and squadrons of cavalry with thundering horses' hoofs and waving plumes were prancing on the plain.

The difficulty of Æschylus, when it is not due, as in the *Suppliants* and in the choric odes of the *Agamemnon*, to a ruined text, may be ascribed to the rapidity of his transition from one thought to another, to the piling up of images and metaphors, and to the remote and mystic nature of the ideas he is seeking for the first time to express in language. Where even simple prose could scarcely convey his meaning, he presents a cloud of highly poetic figures to our mind. This kind of difficulty, however, like that which the student has to meet in Pindar, is straightforward. You know when you are at fault, and why, and how alone you can arrive at a solution of the problem. The difficulty of Sophocles is more insidious. It is possible to think you understand him, when you really do not; to feel his drift, and yet to find it hard to construe his language. In this case the difficulty

¹ These lines lose their force in translation, it being impossible to reproduce the effect of their ponderous polysyllabic words.

arises from the poet's desire to convey his meaning in a subtle, many-sided, pregnant, and yet smooth style. The more you think over it, the more you get from it. Euripides belonged to an age of facile speech, fixed phraseology, and critical analysis; it therefore follows that he presents fewer obvious difficulties to the reader; and this, perhaps, was one reason for his popularity among the early scholars of the modern age. At any rate, he does not share with Æschylus the difficulty that arose when a poet of intense feeling and sublime imagination strove to grapple with deep and intricate thoughts before language had become a scientific instrument.

In conclusion I would once again return to that doctrine of *παθήματα μαθήματα* (to learn by suffering), connected with a definite conception of the divine government, and based upon a well-considered theory of human responsibility, which may be traced throughout the plays of Æschylus. To this morality his drama owes its unity and vigour, inasmuch as all the plots constructed by the poet both presuppose and illustrate it. The conviction that what a man sows he will reap, and that the world is not ruled by blind chance, is, in one sense or another, the most solid ethical acquisition of humanity. Amid so much else that seems to shift in morals and in religion, it affords firm ground for action. This vital moral faith the Greeks held as securely, at least, as we do; and the theology with which their highest teachers—men like Æschylus, Pindar, Plato—sought to connect it, tended to weaken its effect far less than any other systems of divinity have done. We are too apt to forget this, while we fix our attention upon the unrivalled beauty of Greek art. In reality there are few nations whose fine literature combines so much æsthetic splendour with direct, sound, moral doctrine; and this, not because the poets strove to preach, but because their minds were healthily imbued with human wisdom. Except in the works of Milton, we English, for example, can show no poetical exposition of a moral theory at all equal to that of Æschylus. But while Milton sets forth his doctrine as a portion of divine revelation, and vitiates it with the dross of dogmatism, Æschylus shows the law implicit in the history of men and heroes: it is inferred by him intuitively from the facts of spiritual life, as apprehended by the consciousness of the Greeks in their best age.

CHAPTER XIII

SOPHOCLES

The Personal Beauty of Sophocles—His Life—Stories about Him—Athens in the Age of Pericles—Antique Criticism on his Style—Its Perfect Harmony—Aristotle's Respect for Sophocles—Character in Greek Tragedy—Sophocles and Æschylus—The Religious Feeling of Sophocles—His Ethics—Exquisite Proportion observed in his Treatment of the *Dramatis Personæ*—Power of using Motives—The *Philoctetes*—Comparison of the *Choëphoræ* and the *Electra*—Climax of the *Œdipus Coloneüs*—How Sophocles led onward to Euripides—The *Trachiniæ*—Goethe's Remarks on the *Antigone*—The Tale of Thebes—*Œdipus Tyrannus*, *Œdipus Coloneüs*, and *Antigone* do not make up a Trilogy—Story of Laius—The Philosophy of Fate contained in it—The Oracles—Analysis of *Œdipus Tyrannus*—Masterly Treatment of the Character of *Œdipus*—Change of Situation in the *Coloneüs*—Emergence of *Antigone* into Prominence—Analysis of the *Antigone*—The Character of *Antigone*—Its Beauty—Contrast afforded by Ismene and by Creon—Fault in the Climax of the *Antigone*—The Final Solution of the Laian Curse—*Antigone* is not subject to Nemesis.

SOPHOCLES, the son of Sophilus, was born at Colonus, a village about one mile to the north-west of Athens, in the year 495 B.C. This date makes him thirty years younger than Æschylus, and fifteen older than Euripides. His father was a man of substance, capable of giving the best education, intellectual and physical, to his son; and the education in vogue at Athens when Sophocles was a boy was that which Aristophanes praised so glowingly in the speeches of the *Dikaios Logos*. Therefore, in the case of this most perfect poet, the best conditions of training (*τροφή*) were added to the advantages of nature (*φύσις*), and these two essential elements of a noble manhood, upon which the theorists of Greece loved to speculate, were realised by him conjointly in felicitous completeness. Early in life Sophocles showed that nature had endowed him with personal qualities peculiarly capable of conferring lustre on a Greek artist of the highest type. He was exceedingly beautiful and well-formed, and so accomplished in music and gymnastics that he gained public prizes in both these

branches of a Greek boy's education. His physical grace and skill in dancing caused him to be chosen, in his sixteenth year, to lead the choir in celebration of the victory of Salamis. According to Athenian custom, he appeared on this occasion naked, crowned, and holding in his hand a lyre :—

*εἶθε λύρα καλὴ γενομένη ἐλεφαντίνῃ,
καὶ με καλοὶ παῖδες φέροιεν Διονύσιον ἐς χορόν.*¹

These facts are not unimportant, for no Greek poet was more thoroughly, consistently, and practically *εὐφυής*, according to the comprehensive meaning of that term, which denotes physical, as well as moral and intellectual, distinction. The art of Sophocles is characterised above all things by its faultless symmetry, its grace and rhythm, and harmonious equipoise of strength and beauty. In his own person the poet realised the ideal combination of varied excellences which his tragedies exhibit. The artist and the man were one in Sophocles. In his healthful youth and sober manhood, no less than in his serene poetry, he exhibited the pure and tempered virtues of *εὐφύια* (essential goodness of nature). We cannot but think of him as specially created to represent Greek art in its most refined and exquisitely balanced perfection. It is impossible to imagine a more plastic nature, a genius more adapted to its special function, more fittingly provided with all things needful to its full development, born at a happier moment in the history of the world, and more liberally endowed with physical qualities suited to its intellectual capacity.

In 468 B.C. Sophocles first appeared as a tragic poet in contest with Æschylus. The advent of the consummate artist was both auspicious and dramatic. His fame, as a gloriously endowed youth, had been spread far and wide. The supremacy of his mighty predecessor remained as yet unchallenged. Therefore the day on which they met in rivalry was a great national occasion. Partly feeling ran so high that Apsephion, the Archon Eponymus, who had to name the judges, chose no meaner umpires than the general Cimon and his colleagues, just returned from Scyros, bringing with them the bones of the Attic hero, Theseus. Their dignity and their recent absence from the city were supposed to render them fair critics in a matter of such moment. Cimon awarded the victory to Sophocles. It is greatly to be regretted that we have lost the tragedies which were exhibited on this occasion; we do not know, indeed, with any certainty, their titles. As Welcker has remarked, the judges were called to decide, not so much between two poets as between two styles of tragedy; and if Plutarch's assertion, that Æschylus retired to Sicily in consequence of the verdict given against him, be well founded, we may also believe that two rival policies in the city were opposed, two types of national character in collision. Æschylus belonged to the old order. Sophocles was essentially a man

¹ "Fain would I be a fair lyre of ivory, and fair boys carrying me to Dionysus' choir."

of the new age, of the age of Pericles, and Pheidias, and Thucydides. The incomparable intellectual qualities of the Athenians of that brief blossom-time have so far dazzled modern critics that we have come to identify their spirit with the spirit itself of the Greek race. Undoubtedly the glories of Hellas, her special genius in art, and thought, and statecraft, attained at that moment to maturity through the felicitous combination of external circumstances, and through the prodigious mental greatness of the men who made Athens so splendid and so powerful. Yet we must not forget that Themistocles preceded Pericles, while Cleon followed after; that Herodotus came before Thucydides, and that Aristotle, at a later date, philosophised on history; that Æschylus and Euripides have each a shrine in the same temple with Sophocles. And all these men, whose names are notes of differences deep and wide, were Greeks, almost contemporaneous. The latter and the earlier groups in this triple series are, perhaps, even more illustrative of Greece at large; while the Periclean trio represent Athenian society in a special and narrow sense at its most luminous and brilliant, most isolated and artificial, most self-centred and consummate point of *αὐταρκεία*, or internal adequacy. Sophocles was the poet of this transient phase of Attic culture, unexampled in the history of the world for its clear and flawless character, its purity of intellectual type, its absolute clairvoyance, and its plenitude of powers matured, but unimpaired, by use.

From the date 468 to the year of his death, at the age of ninety, Sophocles composed one hundred and thirteen plays. In twenty contests he gained the first prize; he never fell below the second place. After Æschylus he only met one formidable rival, Euripides. What we know about his life is closely connected with the history of his works. In 440 B.C., after the production of the *Antigone*, he was chosen, on account of his political wisdom, as one of the generals associated with Pericles in the expedition to Samos. But Sophocles was not, like Æschylus, a soldier; nor was he in any sense a man of action. The stories told about his military service turn wholly upon his genial temperament, serene spirits, unaffected modesty, and pleasure-loving personality. So great, however, was the esteem in which his character for wisdom and moderation was held by his fellow-citizens that they elected him in 413 B.C. one of the ten commissioners of Public Safety, or *πρόβουλοι*, after the failure of the Syracusan expedition. In this capacity he gave his assent to the formation of the governing council of the Four Hundred two years later, thus voting away the constitutional liberties of Athens. It is recorded that he said this measure was not a good one, but the best under bad circumstances. It should, however, be added that doubt has been thrown over this part of the poet's career; it is not certain that the Sophocles in question was in truth the author of *Antigone*.

One of the best-authenticated and best-known episodes in the life of Sophocles is connected with the *Œdipus Coloneüs*. As an old

man, he had to meet a lawsuit brought against him by his legitimate son Iophon, who accused him of wishing to alienate his property to the child of his natural son Ariston. This boy, called Sophocles, was the darling of his later years. The poet was arraigned before a jury of his tribe, and the plea set up by Iophon consisted of an accusation of senile incapacity. The poet, preserving his habitual calmness, recited the famous chorus which contains the praises of Colonus. Whereupon the judges rose and conducted him with honour to his house, refusing for a moment to consider so frivolous and unwarranted a charge.

Personally Sophocles was renowned for his geniality and equability of temper; *εὐκόλος μὲν ἐνθάδ' εὐκόλος δ' ἐκεῖ* (good-natured in the world above, and good-natured here below) is the terse and emphatic description of his character by Aristophanes. That he was not averse to pleasures of the sense, is proved by evidence as good as that on which such biographical details of the ancients generally rest. To slur these stories over because they offend modern notions of propriety is feeble, though, of course, it is always open to the critic to call in question the authorities; and in this particular instance the witnesses are far from clear. The point, however, to be remembered is that, supposing them true to fact, Sophocles would himself have smiled at such unphilosophical partisanship as seeks to overthrow them in the interest of his reputation. That a poet, distinguished for his physical beauty, should refrain from sensual enjoyments in the flower of his age, is not a Greek, but a Christian notion. Such abstinence would have indicated in Sophocles mere want of inclination. The words of Pindar are here much to the purpose—

*χρῆν μὲν κατὰ καιρὸν ἐρώτων δρέπεσθαι, θυμέ, σὺν ἀλικίᾳ.*¹

All turned upon the *κατὰ καιρόν* (in due season), and no one had surely a better sense of the *καιρός*, the proper time and season for all things, than Sophocles. He showed his moderation—which quality, not total abstinence, was virtue in such matters for the Greeks—by knowing how to use his passions, and when to refrain from their indulgence. The whole matter is summed up in this passage from the *Republic* of Plato: “How well I remember the aged poet Sophocles, when, in answer to the question, ‘How does love suit with age, Sophocles—are you still the man you were?’ ‘Peace,’ he replied; ‘most gladly have I escaped from that, and I feel as if I had escaped from a mad and furious master.’”

A more serious defect in the character of Sophocles is implied in the hint given by Aristophanes, that he was too fond of money. The same charge was brought against many Greek poets. We may account for it by remembering that the increased splendour of Athenian life, and the luxuriously refined tastes of the tragedian, must have tempted him to do what the Greeks very much disliked—make profit by the

¹ “Soul of mine, in due season it is meet to gather love, when life is young.”

offspring of his brain. To modern notions nothing can sound stranger than the invectives of the philosophers against sophists who sold their wisdom ; it can only be paralleled by their deeply-rooted misconceptions about interest on capital, which even Aristotle regarded as unnatural and criminal. That Sophocles was in any deeper sense avaricious or miserly we cannot believe : it would contradict the whole tenor of the tales about his geniality and kindness.

Unlike Æschylus and Euripides, Sophocles never quitted Athens, except on military service. He lived and wrote there through his long career of laborious devotion to the highest art. We have, therefore, every right, on this count also, to accept his tragedies as the purest mirror of the Athenian mind at its most brilliant period. Athens, in the age of Pericles, was adequate to the social and intellectual requirements of her greatest sons ; and a poet whose earliest memories were connected with Salamis may well have felt that even the hardships of the Peloponnesian War were easier to bear within the sacred walls of the city than exile under the most favourable conditions. No other centre of so much social and political activity existed. Athens was the Paris of Greece, and Sophocles and Socrates were the Parisians of Athens. At the same time the stirring events of his own lifetime do not appear to have disturbed the tranquillity of Sophocles. True to his destiny, he remained an artist ; and to this immersion in his special work he owed the happiness which Phrynichus recorded in these famous lines :—

μάκαρ Σοφοκλεῖς ὃς πολλὸν χρόνον βιοῦς
ἀπέθανεν εὐδαιμῶν ἀνὴρ καὶ δεξιός·
πολλὰς ποιήσας καὶ καλὰς τραγωδίας
καλῶς ἐτελεύτησ' οὐδὲν ὑπομείνας κακόν.

“Thrice happy Sophocles ! in good old age,
Blessed as a man, and as a craftsman blessed,
He died : his many tragedies were fair,
And fair his end, nor knew he any sorrow.”

The change effected by Sophocles in tragedy tended to mature the drama as a work of pure art, and to free it further from the Dionysiac traditions. He broke up the Trilogy into separate plays, exhibiting three tragedies and a satyric drama, like Æschylus before him, but undoing the link by which they were connected, so that he was able to make each an independent poem. He added a third actor, and enlarged the number of the Chorus, while he limited its function as a motive force in the drama. These innovations had the effect of reducing the scale upon which Æschylus had planned his tragedies, and afforded opportunities for the elaboration of detail. It was more easy for Sophocles than it had been for Æschylus to exhibit play of character through the interaction of the *dramatis personæ*. Tragedy left the remote and mystic sphere of Æschylean theosophy, and confined herself to purely human arguments. Attention was concentrated on the dialogue, in which the passions of men in action were displayed. The dithyrambic element was lost ; the choric odes providing a relief

from violent excitement, instead of embodying the very soul and spirit of the poet's teaching. While limiting the activity of the Chorus, Sophocles did not, like Euripides, proceed to disconnect it from the tragic interest, or pay less attention than his predecessors to its songs. On the contrary, his choric interludes are models of perfection in this style of lyric poetry, while their subject-matter is invariably connected with the chief concerns and moral lessons of the drama.

All the extant plays of Sophocles belong to a date later than the year 440 B.C. They may safely be said to represent the period of his finished style; or, in the language of art criticism, his third manner. What this means will appear from a valuable passage in Plutarch: "Sophocles used to say that, when he had put aside the tragic pomp of Æschylus, and then the harsh and artificial manner of his own elaborate style, he arrived in the third place at a form of speech which is best suited to portray the characters of men, and is the most excellent." Thus it would appear that Sophocles had begun his career as a dramatist by the study of the language of Æschylus; finding that too turgid and emphatic, he had fallen into affectation and refinement; and finally had struck the just medium between the rugged majesty of his master and the mannered elegance which was in vogue among the sophists. The result was that peculiar mixture of grace, dignity, and natural eloquence which scholars know as Sophoclean. It is interesting to notice that the first among the extant tragedies of Sophocles, the *Antigone*, is more remarkable for studied phrase and verbal subtleties than his later plays. The *Œdipus Coloneüs*, which is the last of the whole series, exhibits the style of the poet in its perfect purity and freedom. A curious critical passage in Plutarch seems to indicate that the ancients themselves observed the occasional euphuism of the Sophoclean style as a blemish. It runs thus: μέμψαιτο δ' ἂν τις Ἀρχιλόχου μὲν τὴν ὑπόθεσιν . . . Εὐριπίδου δὲ τὴν λαλιάν, Σοφοκλέους δὲ τὴν ἀνωμαλίαν.¹ "One might censure the garrulity of Euripides and the inequality of Sophocles." I am not, however, certain whether this or "linguistic irregularity" is the right meaning of the word ἀνωμαλία. Another censure, passed by Longinus upon Sophocles, points out a defect which is the very last to be observed in any of the extant tragedies:—"Pindar and Sophocles at one time burn everything before them in their fiery flight, but often strangely lack the flame of inspiration, and fall most grievously to earth."² Then he adds: "Certainly no wise critic would value all the plays of Ion put together at the same rate as the single tragedy of *Œdipus*." The importance of these critiques is to prove that the ancients regarded Sophocles as an unequal, and in some respects a censurable poet, whence we may infer that only masterpieces belonging to his later style have been preserved to us, since nothing, to a modern student, is more obvious than the uniform sustained perfection of our seven inestimably precious tragedies. A certain tameness in the *Trachiniæ*, and a relaxation of dramatic interest

¹ *De Aud. Poet.* p. 16 C.

² *De Subl.* xxxiii. 5.

in the last act of the *Ajax*, are all the faults it is possible to find with Sophocles.

What Sophocles is reported to have said about his style will apply to his whole art. The great achievement of Sophocles was to introduce regularity of proportion, moderation of tone, and proper balance into tragedy. The Greek phrases *συμμετρία*, *σωφροσύνη*, *μετριότης*—proportion of parts, self-restraint, and moderation—sum up the qualities of his drama when compared with that of Æschylus. Æschylus rough-hewed like a Cyclops, but he could not at the same time finish like Praxiteles. What the truth of this saying is, I have already tried to show.¹ Sophocles attempted neither Cyclopean nor Praxitelean work. He attained to the perfection of Pheidias. Thus we miss in his tragedies the colossal scale and terrible effects of Æschylean art. His plays are not so striking at first sight, because it was his aim to put all the parts of his composition in their proper places, and to produce a harmony which should not agitate or startle, but which upon due meditation should be found complete. The *σωφροσύνη*, or moderation, exhibited in all his work, implies by its very nature the sacrifice of something—the sacrifice of passion and impetuosity to higher laws of equability and temper. So perfect is the beauty of Sophocles, that, as in the case of Raphael or Mozart, it seems to conceal the strength and fire which animate his art.

Aristotle, in the *Poetics*, observes that "Poetry is the proper affair of either artistic or enthusiastic natures," *εὐφροῦς ἢ μανικοῦ*. Now Æschylus exactly answers to the notion of the *μανικός*, while Sophocles corresponds to that of the *εὐφύης*. To this distinction between the two types of genius we may refer the partiality of Aristotle for the younger dramatist. The work of the artistic poet is more instructive, and offers more matter for profitable analysis, for precept and example, than that of the divinely inspired enthusiast. Where creative intelligence has been used consciously and effectively to a certain end, critical intelligence can follow. It is clear that in the *Poetics*, which we may regard as a practical text-book for students, the philosopher is using the tragedy of Sophocles, and in particular the *Œdipus Tyrannus*, as the standard of perfection. Whatever he has to say about the handling of character, the treatment of the fable, the ethics of the drama, the catastrophes and recognitions (*περιπέτεια* and *ἀναγνωρίσεις*), that absorbed so large a part of his dramatic analysis, he points by references to *Œdipus*. In Sophocles Aristotle found the *μεσότης*, or intermediate quality, between two extremes, which, in æsthetics as in morals, seemed to his Greek mind most excellent. Consequently he notes all deflections from the Sophoclean norm as faulty; and since in his day Euripides led the taste of the Athenians, he frequently shows how tragic art had suffered by a deviation from the principles Sophocles illustrated. The chief point on which he insists is the morality of the drama. "The tragedies of the younger poets for the most part are unethical." With

¹ See above, chap. xii.

his use of the word *ἦθος*, we must be careful not to confound the modern notion of morality: *ἦθος* means, indeed, with Aristotle as with us, the determination of the character to goodness or badness; but it also includes considerations of what is appropriate to sex and quality and circumstance in the persons of a work of fiction. The best modern equivalent for *ἦθος*, therefore, is character. Since tragedy is an imitation of men acting according to their character, *ἦθος*, in this wide sense, is the whole stuff of the dramatist, and a proper command of *ἦθος* implies real knowledge of mankind. Therefore, when Aristotle accuses the tragedies of Euripides and his school of being "unethical," he does not merely mean that they were prejudicial to good manners, but also that they were false to human nature, unscientific, and therefore inartistic; exceptional or morbid, wavering in their conception and unequal in their execution. The truly great poet, Sophocles, shows his artistic tact and taste by only selecting such characters as are suitable to tragedy. He depicts men, but men of heroic mould, men as they ought to be.¹ When Sophocles said that he portrayed men as tragedy required them to be, whereas Euripides drew them just as they are, he indicated the real solution of the tragic problem.² The point here raised by Aristotle has an intimate connection with its whole theory of tragedy. Tragic poetry must purify the passions of fear and pity; in other words, it must teach men not to fear when fear is vile, or to pity where pity would be thrown away. By exhibiting a spectacle that may excite the fear of really dreadful calamity, and compassion for truly terrible misfortune, tragedy exalts the soul above the ordinary miseries of life, and nerves it to face the darker evils to which humanity in its blindness, sin, and self-pride is exposed. Now this lesson cannot be taught by drawing men as they exist around us. That method drags the mind back to the trivialities of every day.

What Aristotle says about the *ἦθος* of tragedy may be applied to point the differences between Sophocles and Æschylus. He has not himself drawn the comparison; but it is clear that, as Euripides deflects on the one hand from the purely ethical standard, so also does Æschylus upon the other. Æschylus keeps us in the high and mystic region of religious fatalism. Sophocles transports us into the more human region of morality. His problem is to exhibit the complexities of life—"whatsoever has passion or admiration in all the changes of that which is called fortune from without, or the wily subtleties and reflexes of man's thoughts from within"—and to set forth men of noble mental stature acting in subjection to the laws appointed for the order of the world. His men and women are like ourselves, only larger and better in so far as they are simpler and more beautiful. Like the characters of Æschylus, they suffer for their sins; but we feel that the justice that

¹ Notice the phrases *βελτίους* (better) in *Poet.*, Cap. ii., as compared with *καθ' ἡμᾶς* (after our sort), and again *ὁμοίους ποιοῦντες, καλλίους γράφουσιν* (while making them resemblant, paint them fairer) in Cap. xv., together with the whole analogy of painting in both of these places.

² Cap. xxvi.

condemns them is less mystic in its operation, more capable of philosophical analysis and scientific demonstration.

It must not be, therefore, thought that Sophocles is less religious than Æschylus. On the contrary, he shows how the will and passion of men are inevitably and invariably related to divine justice. Human affairs can only be understood by reference to the deity; for the decrees of Zeus, or of that power which is above Zeus, and which he also obeys, give their moral complexion to the motives and the acts of men. Yet, while Æschylus brings his theosophy in detail prominently forward, Sophocles prefers to maintain a sense of the divine background. He spiritualises religion, while he makes it more indefinite. By the same process it is rendered more impregnable within its stronghold of the human heart and reason, less exposed to the attacks of logic or the changes of opinion. The keynote to his tragic morality is found in these two passages: ¹—

“ Oh! that my lot may lead me in the path of holy innocence of word and deed, the path which august laws ordain, laws that in the highest empyrean had their birth, of which heaven is the father alone, neither did the race of mortal men beget them, nor shall oblivion ever put them to sleep. The power of God is mighty in them, and growth not old.”

The second is like unto the first in spirit:—

“ It was no Zeus who thus commanded me,
Nor Justice, dread mate of the nether powers,—
For they, too, gave these rules to govern men.
Nor did I fondly deem thy proclamations
Were so infallible that any mortal
Might overleap the sure unwritten laws
Of gods. These neither now nor yesterday,
Nay, but from everlasting without end,
Live on, and no man knows when they were issued.”

The religious instinct in Sophocles has made a long step toward independence since the days of Æschylus. No more upon Olympus or at Delphi alone will the Greek poet worship. He has learned that “ God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.” The voice that speaks within him is the deity he recognises. At the same time the Chorus of the *Œdipus*, part of which has just been quoted, and that of the *Antigone*, which bewails the old doom of the house of Labdacus, might, but for their greater calmness, have been written by Æschylus. The moral doctrine of Greek tragedy has not been changed, but humanised. We have got rid in a great measure of ancient dæmons, and brass-footed Furies, and the greed of earth for blood in recompense for blood. We have passed, as it were, from the shadow cast by the sun, into the sunlight itself. And, in consequence of this transfiguration, the morality of Sophocles is imperishable. “ Not of to-day nor of yesterday, but fixed from everlasting,” are his laws. We may all learn of him now, as when Antigone

¹ *Œd.* *Tyr.* 863; *Ani.* 450. The first translation is borrowed from Mr. M. Arnold.

first stood before the throne of Creon on the Attic stage. The deep insight into human life, that most precious gift of the Greek genius, which produced their greatest contributions to the education of the world, is in Sophocles obscured no longer by mystical mythology and local superstition. His wisdom is the common heritage of human nature.

The moral judgments of Æschylus were severe. Those of Sophocles, implicit in his tragic situations rather than expressed, are not less firm; but he seems to feel a more tender pity for humanity in its weakness and its blindness. The philosophy of life, profoundly sad upon the one side, but cheerful on the other, which draws lessons of sobriety and tempered joy from the consideration of human impotence and ignorance, is truly Greek. We find it nowhere more strongly set forth than by Sophocles and Aristophanes—by the comic poet in the Parabasis of the *Birds*, and in the songs of the Mystæ in the *Frogs*, by the tragic poet in his choruses, and also in what is called his irony.

All that has been said about the art of Sophocles up to this point has tended to establish one position. His innate and unerring tact, his sense of harmony and measure, produced at Athens a new style of drama, distinguished for finish of language, for careful elaboration of motives, for sharp and delicate character-drawing, and for balance of parts. If we do not find in Sophocles anything to match the passion of Cassandra, the cry of Agamemnon, or the opening of the *Eumenides*, there is yet in his plays a combination of quite sufficient boldness and inventiveness with more exquisite workmanship than Æschylus could give. The breadth of the whole is not lost through the minuteness of the details. Unlike Æschylus, Sophocles opens very quietly, with conversations, for the most part, which reveal the characters of the chief persons or explain the situation. The passion grows with the development of the plot, and it is only when the play is finished that justice can be done to any separate part. Each of the seven tragedies presents one person, who dominates the drama, and in whom its interest is principally concentrated. Œdipus in his two plays, Antigone in hers, Philoctetes in his, Deianeira in the *Trachiniæ*, Electra in her play, and Ajax in his, stand forth in powerful and prominent relief. Then come figures on the second plane, no less accurately conceived and conscientiously delineated, but used with a view to supporting the chief personages, and educing their decisive action.¹ A rôle of this kind is given to Orestes in the *Electra*, to Neoptolemus in the *Philoctetes*, to Teucer in the *Ajax*, to Creon in the *Antigone*, to Teiresias in the *Œdipus*. Clytemnestra and Tecmessa, Odysseus and Theseus, play similar parts. Again, there is a third plane for characters still more subordinate, but no less artistically important, such as Jocasta, Ismene, Chrysothemis, Ægisthus, Hyllus. Then follow the numerous accessory persons—*instrumenta dramatis*—the guardian of the corpse of Poly-

¹ See what Goethe says about the importance of Creon and Ismene in the *Antigone* (Eckermann, vol. i.).

neices, the shepherd of Laius, the tutor of Orestes, messengers and servants, all of whom receive their special physiognomy from the great master. In this way Sophocles made true æsthetic use of the three agonistæ. The principle on which these parts were distributed in his tragedies will be found to have deep and subtle analogies with the laws of bas-relief in sculpture. Poetry, however, being a far more independent art than sculpture, may employ a greater multiplicity of parts, and produce a far more complex effect than can be realised in bas-relief.

The *Philoctetes* might be selected as an example of the power in handling motives possessed by Sophocles. The amount of interest he has concentrated by a careful manipulation of one point—the contest for the bow of Herakles—upon so slight and stationary a plot, is truly wonderful. Not less admirable is the contrast between the youthful generosity of Neoptolemus and the worldly wisdom of Odysseus—the young man pliant at first to the crafty persuasions of the elder, but restored to his sense of honour by the compassion which Philoctetes stirs, and by the trust he places in him. Nothing more beautiful can be conceived than this moral revolution in the character of Neoptolemus. It suited the fine taste and exquisite skill of Sophocles not only to exhibit changes in circumstance and character, but also to compel a change of sympathy and of opinion in his audience. Thus, in the *Ajax*, he contrives to reverse the whole situation, by showing in the end Ajax sublime and Odysseus generous, though at first the one seemed sunk below humanity, and the other hateful in his vulgar scorn of a fallen rival. The art which works out psychological problems of the subtle kind, and which invests a plot like that of the *Philoctetes* with intense interest, is very far removed from the method of Æschylus. The difference between the two styles may, however, be appreciated best by a comparison of the *Electra* with the *Choëphoræ*. In these two tragedies very nearly the same motives are employed; but what was simple and straightforward in Æschylus, becomes complex and involved in Sophocles. Instead of Orestes telling the tale of his own death, we have the narrative of his tutor, confirmed and ratified by himself in person. Instead of Electra at once recognising her brother, she is brought at first to the verge of despair by hearing of his death. Then Chrysothemis informs her of the lock of hair. This, however, cannot reassure Electra in the face of the tutor's message. So the situation is admirably protracted. Æschylus misses all that is gained for the development of character by the resolve of Electra, stung to desperation by her brother's death, to murder Ægisthus, and by the contrast between her single-hearted daring and the feebler acquiescent temper of Chrysothemis. Also the peripeteia whereby Electra is made to bewail the urn of Orestes, and then to discover him alive before her, is a stroke of supreme art which was missed in the *Choëphoræ*. The pathos of the situation is almost too heart-rending; at one moment its intensity verges upon discord; but the resolution of the discord comes in that

long cadence of triumphant harmony when the anagnorisis at length arrives. Nor is the ingenuity of Sophocles, in continuing and sustaining the interest of this one set of motives, yet exhausted. While the brother and sister are rejoicing together, the action waits, and every moment becomes more critical, until at last the tutor reappears and warns them of their perilous imprudence. To take another point: the dream of Clytemnestra is more mysterious and doubtful in the *Electra* than in the *Choëphoræ*; while her appearance on the stage at the beginning of the play, her arguments with Electra, her guarded prayers to Phœbus, and her reception of the tutor's message, enable Sophocles fully to develop his conception of her character. On the other hand, Sophocles has sacrificed the most brilliant features of the *Choëphoræ*—the dreadful scene of Clytemnestra's death, than which there is nothing more passionately piteous and spirit-quelling in all tragedy, and the descent of his mother's furies on the murderer. It was the object of Sophocles not so much to dwell upon the action of Orestes, as to exhibit the character of Electra; therefore, at the supreme moment, when the cry of the queen is heard within the palace, he shows his heroine tremendous in her righteous hatred and implacable desire for vengeance. Such complete and exhaustive elaboration of motives, characters, and situations, as forms the chief artistic merit of the *Electra*, would, perhaps, have been out of place in the *Choëphoræ*, which was only the second play in a trilogy, and had therefore to be simple and stationary, according to the principles of Æschylean art. The character of Clytemnestra, for example, needed no development, seeing that she had taken the first part in the *Agamemnon*. Again, it was necessary for Æschylus to insist upon the action of Orestes more than Sophocles was forced to do, in order that the climax of the *Choëphoræ* might produce the subject of the *Eumenides*. In comparing Sophocles with his predecessor, we must never forget that we are comparing single plays with trilogies. This does not, however, make the Sophoclean mastery of motives and of plots the less admirable; it only fixes our attention on the real nature of the innovations adopted by the younger dramatist.

Another instance of the art wherewith Sophocles prepared a tragic situation, and graduated all the motives which should conduct the action to a final point, may be selected from the *Œdipus Coloneüs*. It was necessary to describe the death of Œdipus, since the fable selected for treatment precluded anything approaching to a presentation on the stage of this supreme event. Œdipus is bound to die alone mysteriously, delivering his secret first in solitude to Theseus. A Messenger's speech was therefore imperatively demanded, and to render that the climax of the drama taxed all the resources of the poet. First comes thunder, the acknowledged signal of the end. Then the speech of Œdipus, who says that now, though blind, he will direct his steps unhelped. Theseus is to follow and to learn. Œdipus rises from his seat; his daughters and the king attend him. They quit the stage, and the Chorus is

left alone to sing. Then comes the Messenger, and gives the sublime narration of his disappearance. We hear the voice that called—

ὦ οὗτος οὗτος Οἰδίπους τί μέλλομεν
χωρεῖν; πάλαι δὴ τὰπὸ σοῦ βραδύνεται.¹

We see the old man descending the mysterious stairs, Antigone and Ismene grouped above, and last, the kneeling king, who shrouds his eyes before a sight intolerable. All this, as in a picture, passes before our imagination. To convey the desired effect otherwise than by a narrative would have been impossible, and the narrative, owing to the expectation previously raised, is adequate.

To compare Sophocles with Euripides, after having said so much about the points of contrast between him and Æschylus, and to determine how much he may have owed in his later plays to the influence of the younger poet, would be an interesting exercise of criticism. That, however, belongs rather to an essay dealing directly with the third Greek dramatist in detail. It is sufficient here to notice a few points in which Sophocles seems to have prepared the way for Euripides. In the first place he developed the part of the Messenger, and made far more of picturesque description than Æschylus had done. Then, again, his openings suggested the device of the prologue by their abandonment of the eminently scenic effects with which Æschylus preferred to introduce a drama. The separation of the Chorus from the action was another point in which Sophocles led onward to Euripides. So also was the device of the *deus ex machinâ* in the *Philoctetes*, unless, indeed, we are to regard this as an invention from adopted Euripides.² Nor, in this connection, is it insignificant that Aristotle credits Sophocles with the invention of *σκηνογραφία*, or scene-painting. The abuse of scenical resources to the detriment of real dramatic unity and solidity was one of the chief defects of Euripidean art.

It may here be noticed that Sophocles in the *Trachiniæ* took up the theme of love as a main motive for a drama. By doing so he broke ground in a region that had been avoided, as far as we can judge from extant plays, by Æschylus, and in which Euripides was destined to achieve his greatest triumphs. It is, indeed, difficult to decide the question of precedence between Sophocles and Euripides in the matter. Except on this account the *Trachiniæ* is the least interesting of his tragedies. The whole play seems like a somewhat dull, though conscientious, handling of a fable, in which the poet took but a slight interest. Compared with *Medea* or with *Phædra*, *Deianeira* is tame and lifeless. She makes one fatal and foolish mistake through jealousy, and all is over. *Hyllus*, too, is a mere *silhouette*, while the contention between him and *Herakles* about the marriage with *Iole*, at the end,

¹ "Ho, Œdipus, Œdipus! why linger we from going? Long, long have you already kept us waiting."

² Our imperfect knowledge of the Attic drama prevents our forming any opinion as to the employment of the *deus ex machinâ* by the earlier tragedians.

is frigid. Here, if anywhere, we detect the force of the critique quoted above from Longinus. At the same time the *Trachiniae* offers many points of interest to the student of Greek sentiment. The phrase *ταύτης ὁ δεινὸς ἕμερος* (the grievous yearning after her) is significant, as expressing the pain and forceful energy which the Greeks attributed to passion: nor is the contrast drawn by Deianeira between *πόσις* (lawful husband) and *ἀνήρ* (paramour) without value. The motive used by Sophocles in this tragedy was developed by Euripides with a comprehension so far deeper, and with a fulness so far more satisfactory, that the *Hippolytus* and the *Medea* must always take rank above it.

The deepest and most decisive quality in which the tragic art of Sophocles resembled that of Euripides is rhetoric. Sophocles was the first to give its full value to dramatic casuistry, to introduce sophistic altercations, and to set forth all that could be well said in support of a poor argument. A passage on this subject may be quoted from "Eckermann's Conversations with Goethe":¹—

"That is the very thing," said Goethe, "in which Sophocles is a master; and in which consists the very life of the dramatic in general. His characters all possess this gift of eloquence, and know how to explain the motives for their action so convincingly that the hearer is almost always on the side of the last speaker. One can see that in his youth he enjoyed an excellent rhetorical education, by which he became trained to look for all the reasons and seeming reasons of things. Still, his great talent in this respect betrayed him into faults, as he sometimes went too far."

The special point selected by Goethe for criticism is the celebrated last speech of Antigone:—

"At last, when she is led to death, she brings forward a motive which is quite unworthy, and almost borders on the comic. She says that if she had been a mother she would not have done either for her dead children or for her dead husband what she has done for her brother. 'For,' says she, 'if my husband died I could have had another, and if my children died I could have had others by my new husband. But with my brother the case is different. I cannot have another brother; for since my mother and father are dead there is none to beget one.' This is at least the bare sense of the passage, which, in my opinion, when placed in the mouth of a heroine going to her death, disturbs the tragic tone, and appears to me very far-fetched—to savour too much of dialectical calculation. As I said, I should like a philologist to show us that the passage is spurious."

In truth this last speech of Antigone is exactly what the severer critics of Euripides would have selected in a play of his for condemnation. It exhibits, after all allowance for peculiar Greek sentiments, the rhetorical development of a sophistic thesis. In the simple thought there is pathos. But its elaboration makes it frigid.

Sophocles, though he made the subsequent method of Euripides not only possible but natural by the law of progressive evolution, was very far indeed from disintegrating the tragic structure as Euripides

¹ English Translation, vol. i. p. 371.

was destined to do. The *deus ex machinâ* of the *Philoctetes*, for example, was only employed because there was absolutely no other way to solve the situation. Rhetoric and wrangling matches were never introduced for their own sake. The choric odes did not degenerate into mere musical interludes. Description and narration in no case took the place of action, by substituting pictures to the ear under conditions where true art required dramatic presentation. It remains the everlasting glory of Sophocles that he realised the mean between Æschylus and Euripides, sacrificing for the sake of his ideal the passionate and enthusiastic extremities of the older dramatist, without imperilling the fabric of Greek tragedy by the suicidal innovations of Euripides. He and he alone knew how to use all forms of art, to express all motives, and to hazard all varieties, with the single purpose of maintaining artistic unity.

What remains to be said about Sophocles, and in particular about his delineation of character, may be introduced in the course of an analysis of his tragedies upon the tale of Thebes.

These three plays do not, like the three plays of Æschylus upon the tale of the Atreidæ, form a trilogy. That is to say, they are not so connected in subject as to form one continued series. A drama, for example, similar to the *Seven against Thebes* might be interpolated between the *Œdipus Coloneüs* and *Antigone*; while the *Œdipus Tyrannus* might have been followed by a tragedy upon the subject of the king's expulsion from Thebes. Nor, again, are they artistically designed as a trilogy. There is no change of form, suggesting the beginning, middle, and ending of a calculated work of art, like that which we notice in the *Oresteia*. Moreover, the protagonist is absent from the *Antigone*, and therefore to call the three plays an *Œdipodeia* is impossible. Finally, they were composed at different periods: the *Antigone* is the first extant tragedy of Sophocles; the *Œdipus Coloneüs* is the last.

So much it was necessary to premise in order to avoid the imputation of having treated the three masterpieces of Sophocles as in any true sense a trilogy. The temptation to do so is at first sight almost irresistible; for they are written on the same legend, and the same characters are throughout sustained with firmness, proving that, though Sophocles composed the last play of the series first and the second last of all, he had conceived them in his brain before he undertook to work them out in detail. Or, if this assumption seem unwarranted, we may at least affirm with certainty that at some point of time anterior to the production of the *Antigone*, he had subjected the whole legend of the house of Laius to his plastic imagination, and had given it coherence in his mind. In other words, it was impossible for him to change his point of view about this mythus in the same way as Euripides when he handled that of Helen according to two different versions. It so happens, moreover, that the climax of the *Œdipus Tyrannus* prepares us, by the revolution in the character of the protagonist,

for the *Œdipus Coloneüs*, while the last act of the second tragedy, by the prominence given to Antigone, serves as a prelude to the third and final play.

The house of Laius was scarcely less famous among the Greeks than the house of Atreus for its overwhelming disasters, the consequences of an awful curse which rested on the family. Laius, the son of Labdacus, was supposed to have introduced an unnatural vice into Hellas; and from this first crime sprang all the subsequent disasters of his progeny. He took in marriage Jocasta, the sister of Prince Creon, and swayed the State of Thebes. To him an oracle was given that a son of his by Jocasta should kill him. Yet he did not therefore, in obedience to the divine warning, put away his wife or live in chastity. A boy was born to the royal pair, who gave him to one of their shepherds, after piercing his feet and tying them together, and bound the hind to expose him on Cithæron. Thus they hoped to defeat the will of Heaven. The shepherd, moved by pity, saved the baby's life and handed him over to a friend of his, who used to feed his master's sheep upon the same hill-pastures. This man carried the infant, named Œdipus because of his wounded and swollen feet, to Polybus of Corinth, a childless king, who brought him up as his own son. Œdipus, when he had grown to manhood, was taunted with his obscure birth by his comrades in Corinth. Thereupon he journeyed alone to Delphi to make inquiry concerning his parentage from Phœbus. Phœbus told him nought thereof, but bade him take heed lest he slay his father and wed his mother. Œdipus, deeming that Polybus was his father and Merope his mother, determined to return to Corinth no more. At that time Thebes was troubled with the visitation of the Sphinx, and no man might rede her riddle. Œdipus, passing through the Theban land, was met in a narrow path, where three roads joined, by an old man on a chariot attended by servants. The old man spoke rudely to him, commanding him to make way for his horses, and one of the servants struck him. Whereupon Œdipus slew the master, knowing not that he was his own father Laius, and the men too, all but one, who fled. Thereafter he passed on to Thebes, and solved that riddle of the Sphinx, and the Thebans made him their king, and gave him the lady Jocasta to be his wife. Thus were both the oracles accomplished, and yet Œdipus and Jocasta remained ignorant of their doom. For many years Œdipus ruled Thebes like a great and warlike prince; and to him and Jocasta in wedlock were born two daughters and two sons—Antigone and Ismene, Polyneices and Eteocles. These grew to youth, and a seeming calm of fair weather and prosperity abode upon their house. Yet the gods were mindful of the abomination, and in course of time a plague was sent, which ravaged the people of Thebes. Sorely pressed by calamity, Œdipus sent his brother-in-law Creon to inquire at Delphi of the causes of the plague and of the means of staying it. This brings us to the opening of *Œdipus the King*. At this point something should be said about the mythus itself

and about the position of the several persons at the commencement of the tragedy.

The fable is obviously one of those which Max Müller and his school describe as solar. Œdipus, who slays his father and weds his mother, may stand for the sun, who slays the night and is married to the dawn. We know how all legends can fall into this mould, and how easy it is to clap the Dawn on to the end of every Greek tale, like the *ληκύθιον ἀπώλεσεν* (lost a little oil-flask) of the *Frogs*. This, however, is nothing to our purpose; for Sophocles had never heard of solar myths. The tale of Thebes supplied him with the subject of three dramas; he used it as a story well suited for displaying passions in their strongest and most tragic workings. As usual, he was not contented with merely following the traditional version of the legend, nor did he insist upon its superstitious elements. That the gods had a grudge against the Labdacidæ, that the oracles given to Laius and Œdipus were not warnings so much as sinister predictions of a doom inevitable, that the very powers who uttered them were bent on blinding the victims of fate to their true import, were thoroughly Greek notions, consistent with the divine *φθόνος* or envy of Herodotus, and not wholly inconsistent with the gloomy theology of Æschylus. But it was no part of the method of Sophocles to emphasise this horrible doctrine of destiny. On the contrary, he moralised it. While preserving all the essential features of the myth, he made it clear that the characters of men constitute their fatality.

As our own Fletcher has nobly written :—

“ Man is his own star, and the soul that can
Render an honest and a perfect man,
Commands all light, all influence, all fate ;
Nothing to him falls early or too late ;
Our acts our angels are, or good or ill,
Our fatal shadows that walk by us still.”

What to the vulgar apprehension appears like doom, and to the theologian like the direct interposition of the deity, is to the tragic poet but the natural consequence of moral, physical, and intellectual qualities. These it is his function to set forth in high and stately scenes, commingling with his psychological analysis and forcible dramatic presentation somewhat of the old religious awe.

It may be urged that this is only shifting the burden of necessity, not removing it. It is, perhaps, impossible scientifically to avoid a fatalistic theory of some sort, since in one sense it is true that

“ A fishwife hath a fate, and so have I—
But far above your finding.”

Yet practically we do not act upon such theories, and, from the point of view of ethics, there is all the difference in the world between showing how the faults and sins of men must lead them to fearful

ends, and painting them in the grip of a remorseless and malignant deity.

Laius was warned that his son by Jocasta would kill him. Yet he begat a son; and in his presumptuous disregard of heaven, thinking, forsooth, that by mere barbarity a man may cheat the omnipotent, and that the all-seeing cannot save a child of prophecy and doom, he exposed this son upon Cithæron. The boy lived. Thus the crime of Laius is want of self-restraint in the first instance, contempt of God in the second, and cruelty in the third. After this, Œdipus appears upon the theatre of events. He, too, receives oracular warning—that he will slay his sire and wed his mother. Yet, though well aware of the doubt which rests upon his own birth—for it was just on this account that he went to Delphi—he is satisfied with avoiding his supposed parents. The first man whom he meets, while the words of the oracle are still ringing in his ears, he slays; the first woman who is offered to him in marriage, though old enough to be his mother, he weds. His crime is haste of temper, heat of blood, blind carelessness of the divine decrees. Jocasta shows her guilty infatuation in another form. Not only does she participate in the first sin of Laius; but she forgets the oracle which announced that Laius should be slain by his own son. She makes no inquiry into the causes of his death. She does not investigate the previous history of Œdipus, or observe the marks upon his feet, but weds him heedlessly. Here, indeed, the legend itself involves monstrous improbabilities—as, for instance, that Jocasta, while a widow of a few days, should have been thus wedded to a stranger young enough to be her son, that the Thebans should have made no strict search for the murderer of their king, that Œdipus himself should have heard nothing about the death and funeral of Laius, but should have stepped incuriously into his place and sat upon his throne without asking further questions either of his wife or of his subjects. Previous to the opening of *Œdipus the King* there is, therefore, a whole tissue of absurdities; and to these Aristotle is probably referring when he says: ἀλογον δὲ μηδὲν εἶναι ἐν τοῖς πράγμασιν, εἰ δὲ μή, ἔξω τῆς τραγωδίας, οἷον τὰ ἐν τῷ Οἰδίποδι τῷ Σοφοκλέους.¹

Granting this, the vigorous logic wherewith the conclusions are wrought out by Sophocles leaves nothing to be desired on the score of truth to nature. There is, indeed, no work of tragic art which can be compared with the *Œdipus* for the closeness and consistency of the plot. To use the critical terms of the *Poetics*, it would rank first among tragedies for its *μῦθος* (plot), and for the *σύστασις πραγμάτων* (construction), even were its *ἥθη* (characters) far less firmly traced. The triumph of Sophocles has been, however, so to connect the *ἥθη* of his persons with the *πράγματα*, characters with plot, as to make the latter depend upon

¹ "There ought to be nothing irrational in the events, or at any rate only outside the action of the tragedy itself, as is the case with those in the *Œdipus* of Sophocles."

the former ; and in this kind of ethical causality lies the chief force of his tragic art.

If questioned concerning the situation of events previous to the play of *Œdipus*, it is possible that Sophocles would have pointed out that the *ἀμαρτία* or error common to all the *dramatis personæ* was an unwarrantable self-confidence. One and all they consult the oracle, and then are satisfied with taking the affairs they had referred to Phœbus into their own hands. Unlike the Orestes of Æschylus, they do not endeavour to act up to the divine commands, and, having done so, place themselves once more beneath the guidance of the god. The oracle is all-important in the three plays on the tale of Thebes, and Sophocles seems to have intended to inculcate a special lesson with regard to the submission of the human will. Those who inquire of a god, and who attempt to thwart his decrees by human skill and foresight, will not prosper. The apparent success of their shifty schemes may cause them to exclaim : "The oracle was false ; how weak are those who look for its accomplishment !" Thus they are lured by their self-conceit into impiety. In the end, too, the oracle is found to be fearfully exact. Those, therefore, who take the step of consulting Phœbus, must hold themselves responsible to him, must expect the fulfilment of his prophecy ; or if they seek to avert the promised evils, they must, at all events, not do so by criminal contrivances and petty lawlessness, such as man thinks that he may practise upon man. It was thus that Sophocles conceived of the relation of human beings to the deity. He delights in exhibiting the blindness of arrogance and self-confidence, and in showing that characters determined by these qualities rush recklessly to their own doom. At the same time he draws a clear distinction between the man who is hardened in godless folly and one who errs through simple haste. The impiety of Jocasta ends in suicide. Œdipus, who has been impetuous and self-willed, finds a place for repentance, and survives his worst calamities, to die a god-protected and god-honoured hero.

The opening scene of the *Œdipus* serves a double purpose. While it places the spectators at the exact point in the legend selected by the poet for treatment, it impresses them with the greatness and the majesty of the King. Thebes is worn out with plague. The hand of heaven lies heavily upon the citizens. Therefore the priest of Zeus approaches the hero who once before had saved them from the Sphinx, and who may now—fit representative of God on earth—find out a remedy for this intolerable evil. Œdipus appears upon the stage, a confident and careful ruler, sublime in the strength of manhood and the consciousness of vast capacity, tender for the afflictions of his people, yet undismayed by their calamity. He is just the man to sustain a commonwealth by his firm character and favouring fortune. Flawless in force of will and singleness of purpose, he seems incapable of failure. To connect the notions of disgrace or guilt or shame with such a king is utterly impossible. Yet, even so, Sophocles has hinted

in the speech of Œdipus a something overmuch of confidence and courage :—

“ Well I know
That ye all suffer, yet, thus suffering, I
More than you all in overmeasure suffer :
For that which wounds you strikes at each man singly,
At each and not another ; while my soul
For Thebes, for me, for you, feels one huge sorrow.”

Even here the irony, for which the play is famous, begins to transpire. Œdipus believes that his grief is sympathy for a vexed people committed to his charge. Little does he know that, while he is pluming himself upon his watchful care for others, he himself is the head and front of all offending. In the word *καμέ* (me too), almost negligently uttered, lies the kernel of the future revelation. While he is informing the suppliants that Creon has gone to Delphi for advice, the prince arrives. A garland of good augury is on his brow ; and in this sign of an auspicious embassy we discern another stroke of tragic irony. Phœbus has declared that the presence in Thebes of the hitherto unpunished, unregarded murderer of Laius is the cause of the plague. Œdipus, when he fully understands the matter, swears to discover the offender. The curse which he pronounces on this guilty man is terrible—terrible in its energy of interdiction and excommunication from all rites of hospitality, from human sympathy, from earth and air and water and the fruits of the field—but still more terrible through the fact that all these maledictions are uttered on his own head. The irony of the situation—if we are justified in giving this word to the contrast between what seems and what really is—between Œdipus as he appears to the burghers, and Œdipus as he is known to us—rises in the emphatic eloquence of his denunciation to a truly awful height. At the same time his obvious sincerity enlists our sympathy upon his side. We feel beforehand that the man who speaks thus, will, when his eyes are opened, submit to his self-imprecated doom. It now remains to detect the murderer. Thinking that his faculty of divination may be useful, Œdipus has already sent for the blind seer Teiresias. Teiresias is one of the great creations of Sophocles. Twice he appears, once in this play, once in the *Antigone*, each time in conflict with infatuated kings. He is so aged, and the soul within him is so fixed on things invisible, that he seems scarcely human. We think of him as of one who dwells apart, not communing in ordinary social ways with men, but listening to the unspoken words of God, and uttering his wisdom in dark parable to those who heed him not. The Greek poets frequently exhibited the indifference of prosperous persons to divine monitions. Cassandra's prophecies were not attended to ; the Delphic oracle spoke in vain ; and Teiresias is only honoured when it is too late. Sophocles, while maintaining the mysterious fascination of the soothsayer, has marked his character by some strong touches of humanity. He is proud and irritable to excess. His power of sarcasm

is appalling, and his indignation is inexorable. Between two stubborn and unyielding natures like the seer and King, sparks of anger could not fail to be struck; the explosion that follows on their meeting serves to display the choleric temper of Œdipus, which formed the main trait of his character, the pith of his *ἀμαρτία* (fault).

Œdipus greets Teiresias courteously, telling him that he, the King, is doing all he can to find the murderer of Laius, and that the soothsayer must spare no pains. To this generous patronage and protective welcome, Teiresias, upon whose sightless soul the truth has suddenly flashed, answers with deep sighs, and requests to be led home again. This naturally nettles Œdipus. The hastiness that drew him into his first fault renders him now ungovernable. Teiresias keeps saying it will be better for the King to remain ignorant, and the King retorts that he is only a blind dotard; were he not blind, he, and no other, might be suspected of the murder. This provokes an oracular response:—

“Ay! Is it so? I bid thee, then, abide
By thy first ordinance, and from this day
Join not in converse with these men or me,
Being thyself this land's impure defiler.”

Thus the real state of affairs is suddenly disclosed; and were Œdipus of a submissive temper he would immediately have proceeded to the discovery of the truth. This would, however, have destroyed the drama, and have prevented the unfolding of the character of the King. Instead, therefore, of heeding the seer's words, Œdipus rushes at once to the conclusion that Creon and Teiresias are plotting to overthrow him in his tyranny. The quarrel waxes hot. Each word uttered by Teiresias is pregnant with terrific revelation. The whole context of events, past, present, and future, is painted with intense lucidity in speech that has the trenchant force of oracular conviction; yet Œdipus remains so firmly rooted in his own integrity and in the belief which he has suddenly assumed of Creon's treason, that he turns deaf ears and a blind soul to the truth. At last the seer leaves him with this denunciation:—

“I tell thee this: the man whom thou so long
Seekest with threats and mandates for the murder
Of Laius, that very man is here,
By name an alien, but in season due
He shall be shown true Theban, and small joy
Shall have therein; for, blind, instead of seeing,
And poor, who once was rich, he shall go forth,
Staff-guided, groping, o'er a foreign land.
He shall be shown to be with his own children
Brother and sire in one, of her who bore him
Husband at once and offspring, of his father
Bedmate and murderer. Go; take now these words
Within, and weigh them; if thou find me false,
Say then that divination taught me nothing.”

The next scene is one of altercation between Œdipus and Creon. Œdipus, full of rage, still haunted by the suspicion of treason, yet stung to the quick by some of the dark speeches of the prophet, vehemently assails the prince, and condemns him to exile. Creon—who, of course, is innocent, but who is not meant to have a generous or lofty soul—defends himself in a dry and argumentative manner, until Jocasta comes forth from the palace and seeks to quell their conflict. Œdipus tells her haughtily that he is accused of being the murderer of Laius. She begins her answer with a frivolous and impious assertion that all oracles are nonsense. The oracle uttered against Laius came to nothing, for his son died on Mount Cithæron, and robbers slew him near Thebes long afterwards, where three ways meet. These words, *ἐν τριπλαῖς ἀμαξιοῖς* (at the meeting of three roads), stir suspicion in the mind of Œdipus. He asks at once: "Where was the spot?" "In Phokis, where one goes to Delphi and to Daulia." "What was Laius like?" "Not unlike you in shape," says Jocasta, "but white-haired." "Who were with him?" "Five men, and he rode a chariot." "Who told you all this?" "One who escaped, and who begged me afterwards to send him from the palace, and who now keeps a farm of ours in the country." Each answer adds to the certainty in the mind of Œdipus that it was Laius whom he slew. The only hope left is to send for the servant, and to find out whether he adheres to his story of there having been more robbers than one. If he remains firm upon this point, and does not confess that it was one solitary man who slew his master and his comrades, then there is a chance that he, the King, may not be guilty. Jocasta, with her usual levity, comforts him by insisting that he spoke of robbers in the plural, and that he must not be suffered to retract his words.

While they are waiting for the servant, a messenger arrives from Corinth with good news. Polybus, the king, is dead, and Œdipus is proclaimed his successor. "Where now," shouts impious Jocasta, "are your oracles—that you should slay your father? See you not how foolish it is to trust to Phœbus and to auguries of birds? Chance is the lord of all. Let us, therefore, live our lives as best we can." Awful is the irony of these short-sighted jubilations; and awful, as Aristotle has pointed out,¹ is the irony which makes this messenger of apparently good tidings add the last link to the chain of evidence that will overwhelm Œdipus with ruin. Œdipus exclaims: "Though my father is dead, I may not return to Corinth: Merope still lives." "What," says the messenger, "do you fear her because she is your mother? Set your mind at ease. She is no mother of yours, nor was Polybus your father. I gave you to them as a gift when you were yet an infant." "Where did you find me?" cries the King. "Upon Cithæron: a shepherd of the house of Laius gave you to me; your feet were pierced, and I believe that you were born in the royal household." Terrible word, Cithæron! It echoes through this tragedy

¹ *Poetics*, xi.

with horror—its scours and pastures, the scene of the first crime. And now those two hinds, who had met there once apparently by chance with the child of doom between them, are being again, as though by chance, brought face to face with the man of doom between them, in order to make good the words of Teiresias :—

*βοῆς δὲ τῆς σῆς ποῖος οὐκ ἔσται λιμήν,
ποῖος Κιθαιρῶν οὐχὶ σύμφωνος τάχα ;¹*

Jocasta is struck dumb by the answers of the messenger. She, and she alone, knows now at last the whole truth ; but she does not speak, while Œdipus continues asking who the shepherd of the house of Laius was. Then she utters words of fearful import, praying the King to go no farther, nor to seek what, found, will plunge his soul into despair like hers. After this, finding her suit ineffectual, she retires into the palace. The Chorus are struck by the wildness of her gestures, and hint their dread that she is going to her doom of suicide. But Œdipus, not yet fully enlightened, and preoccupied with the problem which interests himself so deeply, only imagines that she shrinks from the possible proof of his base birth. As yet he does not suspect that he is the own son of Laius ; and here, it may be said in passing, the sole weakness of the plot transpires. Neither the oracle first given to him at Delphi, nor the plain speech of Teiresias, nor the news of the Corinthian messenger, nor the pleadings of Jocasta, are sufficient to suggest the real truth to his mind. Such profundity of blindness is dramatically improbable. He is, however, soon destined to receive illumination. The servant of Laius, who gave Jocasta intelligence of the manner of her husband's death, is now brought upon the stage ; and in him the Corinthian messenger recognises the same shepherd who had given him the infant on Cithæron. Though reluctant to confess the truth so long concealed, the shepherd is at last forced to reveal all he knows ; and in this supreme moment Œdipus discovers that he is not only the murderer of his own father, but also that Jocasta is his mother. In the madness of this revelation he rushes to the palace. The Chorus are left alone to moralise upon these terrible events. Then the dramatic Messenger arrives. Jocasta has hanged herself within her bedchamber. Œdipus, breaking bars and bolts in the fire of his despair, has followed her. Around him were the servants, drawn together by the tumult. None, however, dared approach him. Led by an inner impulse, he found the place where his wife and mother hung, released the corpse, and tearing from her dress the golden buckles, cut out both his eyes, crying aloud that no longer should they look upon the light or be witness to his woe, seeing that when they might have aided him they were as good as blind. Thus one day turned the prosperity of Œdipus to "wailing, woe, death, disgrace, all evils that have name—not one is absent." The speech of the

¹ "What place shall not re-echo to thy cries, what Cithæron shall not soon be ringing with thy lamentations?"

Messenger narrating these events is a splendid instance of the energy of Sophocles, when he chooses to describe a terrible event appallingly. It does not convey the Æschylean mystery of brooding horror; but the scene is realised in all its incidents, briefly, vividly, with ghastly clearness. Meanwhile, the voice of Œdipus himself is heard. He bids the palace-doors be opened, in order that all Thebes may see the parricide, the monster of unhallowed indescribable abominations. So the gates are rolled asunder: and there lies dead Jocasta; and sightless Œdipus, with bloody cheeks and beard, stands over her, and the halls are filled with wailing women and woe-stricken men.

Here, if this had been a modern tragedy, the play of *Œdipus Tyrannus* might have ended; but so abrupt and scenical a conclusion did not suit the art of Sophocles. He had still further to develop the character of Œdipus, and to offer the prospect of that future reconciliation between the fate and the passions of his hero which he had in store. For this purpose the last two hundred lines of the drama, though they do not continue the plot, but rather suggest a new and secondary subject of interest, are invaluable. Hitherto we have seen Œdipus in the pride of monarchy and manhood, hasty, arrogant, yet withal a just and able ruler. He is now, through a *περιπέτεια*, or revolution of circumstances, more complete than any other in Greek tragedy, revealed in the very depths of his calamity, still dignified. There is no resistance left in the once so strong and stubborn man. The hand of God, weighing heavily upon him, has bowed his head, and he is humble as a little child. Yet the vehemence that marked his former phase persists. It finds vent in the passionate lucidity wherewith he examines all the details of the pollution he has unwittingly incurred, and in the rage with which he demands to have his own curse carried out against him. Let him be cast from the city, sent forth to wander on the fells of Cithæron—*οὐμός Κιθαίρων οὖτος* (that Cithæron which is my own place). It was the highest achievement of tragic art to exhibit so suddenly and by so sharp a transition this new development of the King's nature. Saul of Tarsus, when blinded by the vision, was not more immediately converted from one mood into another, more contrite in profound sincerity of sorrow. Still in the altered Œdipus we see the same man, the same temperament; though all internal and external circumstances have been changed, so that henceforward he will never tread the paths of life as once he did. The completeness of his self-abandonment appears most vividly in the dialogue with Creon, upon whose will his immediate fate depends. When Creon, whom he had lately misjudged and treated with violent harshness, comes and greets him kindly, the wretched King tastes the very bitterness of degradation, yet he is not abject. He only prays once more, with intensest urgency of pleading, to have the uttermost of the excommunication he had vowed, executed upon his head. Thinking less of himself than of the miserable beings associated with him in disaster, he beseeches Creon to inter the Queen, and, for his

boys, to give them only a fair chance in life—they will be men, and may carve out their own fortunes in the world ; but for his two poor girls, left desolate, a scorn and mockery to all men, he can only pray that they may come to him, be near him, bear the burden of their misery by their father's side. The tenderness of Œdipus for Ismene and Antigone, his yearning to clasp them, is terribly—almost painfully—touching, when we remember who they were, how born, the children of what curses. The words with which the King addresses them are even hazardous in their directness. Yet it was needful that humanity should by some such strain of passion be made to emerge from this tempest of soul-shattering woes ; and thus, too, a glimpse of that future is provided which remained for Œdipus, if sorrowful, assuaged at least by filial love. In reply to all his eloquent supplications Creon answers that he will not take upon himself the responsibility of dealing with his case. Nothing can be done without consulting the oracle at Delphi. Œdipus has, therefore, to be patient and endure. The strong hero, who saved Thebes from the Sphinx and swayed the city, is now in the hands of tutors and governors awaiting his doom. He submits quietly, and the tragedy is ended.

The effect of such a tragedy as *Œdipus the King* is to make men feel that the earth is shaken underneath them, and that the heavens above are big with thunder. Compassion and fear are agitated in the highest degree ; old landmarks seem to vanish ; the mightiest have fallen, and the most impious, convinced of God, have been goaded to self-murder. Great indeed is the tragic poet's genius who can make us feel that the one sure point amid this confusion is the firmness of its principal foredestined victim. That is the triumph of Sophocles. Out of the chaos of the *Œdipus Tyrannus* springs the new order of the *Œdipus Coloneüs* : and here it may be said that perhaps the most valid argument in favour of the Æschylean trilogy as a supreme work of dramatic art is this—that such a tragedy as the first Œdipus demanded such another as the second. The new motives suggested in the last act were not sufficiently worked out to their conclusion ; much that happened in the climax of the *Tyrannus* seemed to necessitate the *Coloneüs*.

The interest of the *Œdipus Tyrannus* centres in its plot, and that is my only excuse for having dwelt so long on the structure of a play familiar to every student. That of the *Œdipus Coloneüs* is different. It has, roughly speaking, no plot. It owes its perfect, almost super-human, beauty to the atmosphere which bathes it, as with peace after tempest, with the lucid splendours of sunset succeeding to a storm-vexed and tumultuous day. The scene is laid, as the name indicates, in the village birthplace of the poet. Years are supposed to have elapsed since the conclusion of the former tragedy ; Œdipus, after being detained in Thebes against his will at first, has now been driven forth by Creon, and has wandered many miles in blindness, led by his daughter's hand. The ethical interest of the play, so far as it is not

absorbed by Œdipus himself, centres principally in Antigone, whereby we are prepared for her emergence into fullest prominence in the tragedy which bears her name. Always keeping in mind that these three plays are not a trilogy, I cannot but insist again that much is lost, especially in all that concerns the unfolding of Antigone's character, by not reading them in the order suggested by the fable. At the same time, though Antigone engrosses our sympathy and attention, Sophocles has varied the drama by a more than usual number of persons. The generous energy of Theseus forms a fine contrast to the inactivity forced upon Œdipus by the conditions of the drama, and also to the meanness of Creon ; while the episodes of Ismene's arrival, of Antigone's abduction, and of the visit of Polyneices, add movement to what might else have been too stationary. It should also be said that all these subsidiary sources of interest are used with subtle art by Sophocles for enhancing the dignity of Œdipus, for arousing our sympathy with him, and for bringing into prominence the chief features of his character. None can, therefore, be regarded as superfluous, though, strictly speaking, they might have been detached without absolute destruction of the drama, which is more than can be said about the slightest incidents of *Œdipus Tyrannus*. As regards Œdipus himself, that modification of his fiery temperament which Sophocles revealed at the end of the first tragedy, has now become permanent. He is schooled into submission ; yet he has not lost the old impetuosity that formed the groundwork of his nature. He is still quick to anger and vehement in speech, but both his anger and his vehemence are justified by the occasion. Something, moreover, of fateful and mysterious, severing him from the common race of men and shrouding him within the seclusion of his dread calamity, has been added. The terror of his dreadful past, and the prospect of his august future, environ him with more than kingly dignity. The skill of Sophocles as a dramatic poet is displayed in all its splendour by the new light thrown upon the central figure of Œdipus. The effect of unity is not destroyed : those painful shocks to our sense of probability, so frequent when inferior dramatists—poets of the rank of Fletcher or of Jonson—attempt to depict a nature altered by internal reformation or by force of circumstance, do not occur. The Œdipus of both the tragedies remains one man ; we understand the change that has been wrought in him ; and while we feel that it is adequate and natural, we marvel at the wisdom of the poet who could vary his design with so much firmness.

The oracle, which continues to play an important part in this tale of Thebes, has warned Œdipus that he will end his days within the precincts of the Semnai Theai, or august goddesses of retribution. In his new phase the man of haste and wrath is no longer heedless of oracles ; nor does he let their words lie idle in his mind. It is, therefore, with a strong presentiment of approaching death that he discovers early in this play that his feet, led by Antigone, have rested in the grove

of the Furies at Colonus. The place itself is fair. There are here no Harpy-Gorgons with bloodshot eyes, and vipers twining in their matted hair. The meadows are dewy, with crocus-flowers and narcissus; in the thickets of olive and laurel nightingales keep singing; and rivulets spread coolness in the midst of summer's heat. The whole wood is hushed, and very fresh and wild. A solemn stillness broods there; for the feet of the profane keep far away, and none may tread the valley-lawns but those who have been purified. The ransomed of the Lord walk there. This solemnity of peace pervades the whole play, forming, to borrow a phrase from painting, the silver-gray harmony of the picture. In thus bringing Œdipus to die among the unshowered meadows of those Dread Ladies, whom in his troubled life he found so terrible, but whom in his sublime passage from the world he is about to greet resignedly, we may trace peculiar depth of meaning. The thought of death, calm but austere, tempers every scene in the drama. We are in the presence of one whose life is ended, who is about to merge the fever of existence in the tranquillity beyond. This impression of solemnity is heightened when we remember that the poet wrote the *Coloneüs* in extreme old age. Over him too the genius of everlasting repose already spread wings in the twilight, and the mysteries of the grave were nearer to him and more daily present than to other men.

A country fellow, who perceives Œdipus seated by his daughter on a marble bench within the sacred precinct, bids them quit the spot; for it is hallowed. Œdipus, however, knowing that his doom shall be fulfilled, asks that he may be confronted with the elders of the place. They come and gaze with mingled feelings of distrust and awe on the blind hero, august in desolation. Before they can converse with him, Œdipus has to quit the recesses of the grove, and gain a spot where speech and traffic are permitted. Then, in answer to their questions, he informs them who he is—Œdipus. At that name they start back in horror, demanding that he shall carry the abomination of his presence from their land. This affords the occasion for a splendid speech from the old man, one of the most telling passages of eloquence in Sophocles, in which he appeals to the time-long hospitality and fame for generosity of Athens. Athens was never known to spurn the suppliant or expel the stranger, and the deeds of Œdipus they so much dread, are sufferings rather:—

ἐπεὶ τὰ γ' ἔργα μου
πεπονθότ' ἐστὶ μᾶλλον ἢ δεδρακότα.¹

The Chorus, moved by the mingled impetuosity and sound reasoning of their suitor, perceive that the case is too grave for them to decide. Accordingly, they send a messenger for Theseus; but before he can be summoned, Ismene arrives on horseback with the news that her brothers are quarrelling about the throne of Thebes. Eteocles, the younger, has usurped the sovereignty, while Polyneices has fled to Argos to engage the chiefs of the Achæians in his cause. Both parties,

¹ "Seeing that my actions are rather things I suffered than deeds which I performed."

meantime, are eager to secure the person of Œdipus, since an oracle has proclaimed that with him will victory abide. Œdipus, hearing these tidings, bursts into a strain of passionate denunciation, which proves that the old fire of his temper is smouldering still unquenched. When he was forlorn and in misery, his unnatural sons took no thought of him. They sent him forth to roam, a pariah upon the earth, leaving to his daughters the care and burden of supporting him. Now, basely anxious for their selfish profit, they come to claim possession of his old, world-wearied flesh. Instead of blessings, they shall meet with curses. Instead of the fair land of Thebes to lord it over, they shall barely get enough ground to die and be buried in. He, meanwhile, will abide at Athens, and bequeath a heritage of help and honour to her soil.

The Chorus now call upon Œdipus to perform the rites of purification required by the Eumenides—rites which Sophocles has described with the loving minuteness of one to whom the customs of Colonus were from boyhood sacred. Ismene goes to carry out their instructions, and in her absence Theseus arrives upon the scene. Theseus, throughout the drama, plays toward Œdipus the part of a good-hearted, hospitable friend. His generosity is ethically contrasted with the meanness of Creon and the selfishness of Polyneices, while, artistically, the practical energy of his character serves for a foil to the stationary dignity of the chief actor. Sophocles has thus contrived to give weight and importance to a personage who might, in weaker hands, have been degraded into a mere instrument. Œdipus assures the Attic king that he will prove no useless and unserviceable denizen. The children of Erechtheus, whose interests rank first in the mind of Theseus, will find him in the future a powerful and god-protected sojourner within their borders. His natural sympathy for the persecuted and oppressed having been thus strengthened by the prospect of reciprocal advantage, Theseus formally accepts Œdipus as a suppliant, and promises him full protection. At this point, forming as it were a halting-place in the action of the play, Sophocles introduced that famous song about Colonus, which no one has yet succeeded in translating, but which, for modern ears, has received new value from the music of Mendelssohn.

What follows, before the final climax of the drama, consists of the efforts made by Creon, on the part of Eteocles, and by Polyneices, to enlist Œdipus respectively upon their sides in the war of succession to the Theban throne. Creon displays his heartless, cunning, impudent, sophisticated, and forceful character, while Œdipus opposes indignation and contempt, unmasking his hypocrisy, and stripping his specious arguments of all that hides their naked selfishness. In this scene we feel that Sophocles is verging upon the Euripidean manner. A little more would make the altercation between Creon and Œdipus pass over into a forensic wrangling-match. As it is, the chief dramatic value of the episode is to exhibit the grandeur of the wrath of Œdipus in its righteous

heat, when contrasted with the wretched shifts of a mere rhetorical sophist.

After Creon, by the help of Theseus, has been thwarted in his attempt to carry off Antigone, Polyneices approaches with crocodile tears, fawning intercessions, and fictitious sorrow for his father's desolation. Œdipus flashes upon his covert egotism the same light of clear unclouded insight which had unmasked Creon. "What," he asks, "is the value of tears now, of prayers now? Dry were your eyes, hard as stone your heart, dumb your lips, when I went forth from Thebes unfriended. Here is your guerdon: before Thebes' walls you shall die, pierced by your brother's hand, and your brother by yours." The imprecation of the father upon the son would be unnatural, were it not for the son's falseness, who behaved like a Regan to Œdipus in his calamity, and who now, when the old man has become a mysteriously important personage, seeks to make the most of him for his own uses.

The protracted dialogues with Creon and Polyneices serve to enhance the sublimity of Œdipus. He, all the while, is seated, a blind, travel-stained, neglected mendicant, upon the marble bench of the Eumenides. There is horror in his very aspect. Hellas rings with the abominations connected with his name. Yet, to this poor pariah, to this apparent object of pity and loathing, come princes and warriors capable of stirring all the States of Greece in conflict. He rejects them, firm in his consciousness of heaven-appointed destiny. Sophocles seems bent on showing how the wrath of God may be turned aside from its most signal and notorious victims by real purity of heart and nobleness of soul; how, from the depths of degradation and affliction, the spirit of man may rise; and how the lot of demigods may be reserved for those whom the world ignorantly judges worthy of its scorn. Œdipus of late stood like the lightning-blasted tree that travellers dread—the *evitandum bidental* of Roman superstition. His withered limbs have now more health and healing in them than the leaf-embowered forest oak.

The treatment of Polyneices in the *Œdipus Coloneüs* supplies a good example of the Sophoclean tendency to humanise the ancient myths of Hellas. The curse pronounced by Œdipus formed an integral element of that portion of the legend which suggested to Æschylus the *Seven against Thebes*. By its force, the whole weight of the doom that overhangs the house of Laius is brought to bear upon the suicidal brethren, both of whom rush helplessly, with eyes open, to meet inevitable fate.

ὦ Ζεῦ τε καὶ Γῆ καὶ πολισσοῦχοι θεοί,
'Αρὰ τ' Ἐρινὸς πατρὸς ἡ μεγασθενής¹

are the opening words of the prayer of Eteocles in that tragedy; while phrases like these, ὦ πόνοι δόμων νέοι παλαιοῖσι συμμυγεῖς κακοῖς and

¹ "O Zeus and Earth and gods that guard the city,
And the fell puissance of a father's curse!"

ὦ μέλαινα καὶ τελεία γένεος Οἰδίου τ' ἀρά,¹ form the burden of the choric songs. Sophocles does not seek to make the wrath of Œdipus less terrible; he adheres to the old outline of the story, and heightens the tragic horror of the curse by framing for it words intense by reason of their very calculated calmness (1383-96). At the same time he shows how the obstinate temper of Polyneices, and his sense of honour, are necessary to its operation. After the dreadful sentence, dooming him to self-murder by his brother's spear, has been pronounced, Polyneices stands before his father and his sister like one stunned. Antigone, with a woman's instinct, entreats him to choose the only way still left of safety. He may disband the army, and retire from the adventure against Thebes. To this her brother answers:—

ἀλλ' οὐχ οἶόν τε. πῶς γὰρ αὐθις ἂν πάλιν
στράτευμ' ἀγοίμι ταῦτόν εισάπαξ τρέσας;²

When she persists, he repeats μὴ πείθ' ἄ μὴ δεῖ (persuade me not to my dishonour). Thus, instead of bringing into strong relief the operation of blind fate, Sophocles places in the foreground the human agencies which contribute to the undoing of Polyneices. His crime of unfilial egotism, his dread of being thought a coward, and his honour rooted in dishonour, drive him through the tempest of his father's curse upon the rock of doom. The part played by Antigone in this awful scene of altercation between her father and her brother, first interceding for mercy, and then striving to break the stubborn will of the rebellious youth,³ prepares our minds for the tragedy in which she will appear as protagonist. Hitherto she has been remarkable for filial love. She now shows herself a gentle and tender sister to one who had deeply wronged her. The absolute unselfishness, which gives to her the beauty as of some clear flawless jewel, shines forth by anticipation in the *Coloneüs*, enlisting our warmest sympathies upon her side and tempering the impression of hardness that might be produced by a simple study of the *Antigone*.

When Polyneices, with the curse still ringing in his ears, has fled forth, Cain-like, from the presence of his father, thunder is heard, and the end approaches. The chief actors, led by the blind hero, move from the stage in order suited to the processional gravity of the Greek theatre, while the speech of the Messenger, conveying to the Chorus the news of the last minutes in the life of Œdipus, prepares the spectators for the reappearance of his daughters on the scene. As in the *Œdipus Tyrannus*, so now a new motive of interest is introduced in the last act of the drama. The *Antigone* is imperatively demanded as a sequel. Our attention is riveted upon Antigone, who in losing her father has

¹ "O troubles of the ancient house, new miseries commingled with the old!" and "O dark and fateful curse of the whole race and Œdipus!"

² "Nay, but I cannot. How could I again
Lead the same troops forth, having once turned tail?"

³ See especially 1181-1203, 1414-43.

lost all. Her first thought is that he died nobly, peacefully, at one with God. Her next thought is that she shall never see him again, never more bear the sweet burden of anxiety and pain for him, never even have access to his hidden tomb. Her third thought is a longing to be dead with him, enfolded in oblivion of the fate which persecutes her kith and kin. Life stretches before her boundless, homeless, comfortless, nor has she now a single memory for him whose love might have consoled a woman of less stubborn soul, for Hæmon. It is characteristic of his whole conception of Antigone that Sophocles introduced no allusion to that underplot of love at this point. When Theseus reproves her for despair, she awakes to fresh unselfishness: "Send me to Thebes," she cries, "that I may stay, if possible, my brothers' strife." Throughout this final scene the single-hearted heat and firm will of Antigone, her desire for action, and her readiness to accept responsibility are contrasted with Ismene's yielding temper and passivity. We are thus prepared for the opening of the third drama, which, though written first by Sophocles, is the artistic close and climax of the tale of Thebes.

The most perfect female character in Greek poetry is Antigone. She is purely Greek, unlike any woman of modern fiction, except perhaps the Fedalma of George Eliot. In her filial piety, in her intercession for Polyneices at the knees of Œdipus, in her grief when her father is taken from her, she does indeed resemble the women whom most men among us have learned to honour in their sisters or their daughters or their mother. Of such women the Greek maiden, with her pure calm face and virginal straight lines of classic drapery, is still the saint and patroness. But what shall we say of the Antigone of this last drama, of the sister who is willing, lest her brother lie unburied on the Theban plain, to lay her own life down, disobeying the law of her sovereign, defying Creon to the face, appealing against unjust tribunals to the judgment-seat of powers more ancient than the throne of Zeus himself, and marching to her living tomb with dauntless strength in order that the curse-attainted ghost of Polyneices shall have rest in Hades? To the modern mind she appears a being from another sphere. A strain of unearthly music seems to announce her entrance and her exit on the stage. That the sacrifice of the sister's very life, the breaking of her plighted troth to Hæmon, should follow upon the sprinkling of those few handfuls of dust—that she should give that life up smilingly, nor ever in her last hours breathe her lover's name—is a tragic circumstance for which our sympathies are not prepared: we can neither divest our minds of the fixed modern prejudice that the first duty of a woman is to her husband, nor can we fully enter into the antique superstition of defrauded sepulture. Yet it is necessary to do both of these things, to sequester Antigone from the sphere of modern obligations, and to enter hand in hand with her the inner sanctuary of antique piety, in order to do justice to the

conception of Sophocles. This effort of the imagination may be facilitated by remembering first, that Antigone inherited her father's proud self-will—

δηλοῖ τὸ γέννημ' ὤμων ἐξ ὠμοῦ πατρὸς
τῆς παιδὸς· εἶκειν δ' οὐκ ἐπίσταται κακοῖς¹—

and secondly, that disaster after disaster, the loss of Œdipus, the death of her two brothers, has come huddling upon her in a storm of fate, so that life is in a manner over for her, and she feels isolated in a cold and cruel world. This combination of her character and her circumstances renders her action in the *Antigone* conceivable. Without the hardness she inherited from Œdipus, she could not have gone through her tragic part. Without the vow she registered above her father's grave, to bring help to her brethren, seeing that they alone were left, the sentiment of her last speech would sound rhetorical. Moreover, the poet who breathed into her form a breath of life so fiery, has himself justified us in regarding her act as one removed from the plain path of virtue. Antigone was no Hindhu widow to die upon a husband's pyre. Her heroism, her resistance offered to the will of Creon, had in it a splendid criminality. It was just the casuistry of the conflict between public and private obligations, between the dictates of her conscience and the commands of her sovereign, that enabled Sophocles to render the peculiar stoicism of her character pathetic. In spite of all these considerations, it is probable that she will strike a modern reader at the first as frigid. Especially if he have failed to observe the *nuances* of her portrait in the *Œdipus Coloneus*, he will be inclined to wish that Sophocles had softened here and there the outlines of her adamantine statue. Yet, after long contemplation of those perfect lineaments, we come to recognise in her a purity of passion, a fixity of purpose, a loyalty of kinship, a sublime enthusiasm for duty, simply conceived and self-justified in spite of all conventions to the contrary, which soar above the strain of modern tragic sentiment. Even Alfieri, in the noble drawing he has sketched from the Sophoclean picture, could not abstain from violating its perfection by this sentimental touch of common feeling :—

“ Emone, ah ! tutto io sento,
Tutto l' amor, che a te portava : io sento
Il dolor tutto, a cui ti lascio.”²

No such words are to be found in Sophocles upon the lips of the dying Antigone. She is all for her father and her brothers. The tragedy of Hæmon belongs to Creon, not to her. Her furthest concessions to

¹ “ How in the daughter the sire's temper stern
Shows sternly ! Bend she will not, rather breaks ! ”

² “ Hæmon ! Ah me ! I feel it all,
Feel all the love I bore thee ; yea, I feel
All the despair to which I leave thee ! ”

the sympathies which might have swayed a weaker woman, are found in this line—

ὦ φίλταθ' Αἴμον, ὡς σ' ἀτιμάζει πατήρ,¹

and in the passage of the Kommos where she bewails her luckless lot of maidenhood. For the rest, Sophocles has sustained her character as that of one "whom, like sparkling steel, the strokes of chance made hard and firm." This steely durability, this crystalline sparkle, divide her not only from the ideal raised by romance for womanhood, but distinguish her as the daughter of Œdipus from the general sisterhood even of Greek heroines.

The peculiar qualities of Antigone are brought into sharp relief by the milder virtues of Ismene, who thinks it right to obey Creon, and who has no spirit for the deed of daring, but who is afterwards eager to share the punishment of her sister. Antigone repels her very sternly, herein displaying the force of her nature under its less amiable aspect: "Have courage! Thou livest, but my soul long since hath died." The glory of the act is hers alone. Ismene has no right to share it when the risks are past, the penalty is paid. Antigone's repulsion of her sister seems to supply the key to her own heroism. "Œdipus," she says, "is dead; my brethren are dead: for them I lived, and in their death I died to life; but you—your heart is not shut up within your father's and your brothers' grave; it is still warm, still eager for love and the joys of this world. Live, then. For me it would be no more possible to live such life as yours, than for the clay-cold corpse upon the bier."

The character of Creon, darkened in its tone and shadow to the utmost with a view to affording a foil of another species for Antigone, was thought worthy of minute and careful treatment by Sophocles. In the *Œdipus Tyrannus* he is wronged rather than wronging. While suffering from the unjust suspicion and hasty language of the King, he pleads his cause with decent gravity and shows no sign of either arrogance or cowardice. At the end, when Œdipus has fallen, his own behaviour is such as would not disgrace a generous as well as prudent prince. The neutrality for good or evil which distinguishes Creon in this play, marking him out in contrast with the fiery heat of Œdipus, the impious irony of Jocasta, is, to say the least, respectable. In the *Œdipus Coloneüs* he plays a consistently mean and odious part; his pragmatism display of rhetoric before the burghers of Colonus, when tested by his violent and cruel conduct toward Antigone, proves him to be a hollow-hearted and specious hypocrite. The light here reflected back upon his respectability in the *Tyrannus* is decidedly unfavourable. In the *Antigone* Creon becomes, if possible, still more odious; only our animosity against him is tempered by contempt. To the faults of egotism, hardness, and hypocritical prating, are now added the infatuation of self-will and the godless hatred of a dead foe. There is, indeed, a show of right in the decree published concerning

¹ "Ah, dearest Hæmon, how doth thy sire misrate thee!"

the two brothers, one of whom had brought a foreign army against Thebes ; but it would be sophistry to maintain that Creon was actuated by patriotic motives. The defeat and death of Polyneices were punishment enough. By pursuing his personal spite beyond the grave Creon insults the common instincts of humanity, the sympathies of the people, and the supposed feelings of the gods, who cannot bear to gaze upon abominations. The pathetic self-devotion of Antigone, the voice of the city, the remonstrances of Hæmon, and the warnings of Teiresias are all thrown away upon his stubborn and conceited obstinacy. He shows himself, in short, to be a tyrant of the orthodox sort. Like a tyrant, he is moreover absurdly suspicious : the guardian has, he thinks, been bought ; Ismene must be hatching treason ; Hæmon prefers a woman to his duty ; Teiresias is plotting for the sake of gain against him. When it is just too late, he gives way helplessly and feebly, moved to terror by the dark words of the seer. Creon is, therefore, a mixed character, great neither for good nor for evil, weak through wilfulness, plausible in words and wavering in his determinations, a man who might have passed for excellent if he had never had to wield a kingdom's power. His own description of himself—*μάταιον ἄνδρα* (a man of naught)—suits him not only in the utter collapse of his character and ruin of his fortunes, but also in the height of his prosperity and fulness of his seeming strength.

Sophocles might fairly be censured for having made the misery of Creon the climax of a drama which ought to have had its whole interest centred in Antigone. Our sympathies have not been sufficiently enlisted on the side of Hæmon to make us care much about his death. For Eurydice it is impossible to rouse more than a languid pity. Creon, we feel, gets no more than he deserves ; instead of being sorry for him, we are only angry that he was not swept away into the dust-heap of oblivion sooner. It was surely a mistake to divert the attention of the audience, at the very end of the tragedy, from its heroine to a character which, like that of Creon, rouses impatient scorn as well as antipathy. That Sophocles had artistic reasons for not concluding this play with the death of Antigone, may be readily granted by those who have made the crises of the *Ajax*, the *Œdipus Tyrannus*, and the *Œdipus Coloneüs* the subject of special study. He preferred, it seems, to relax the strained sympathies of his audience by a prolongation of the drama on an altered theme. Yet this scarcely justifies the shifting of the centre of interest attempted in the *Antigone*. We have to imagine that the inculcation of a moral lesson upon the crime of *ἀσέβεια* (impiety) was the poet's paramount object.¹ If so, he sacrificed dramatic effect to ethics.

¹ The last six lines spoken by the Chorus seem to justify this view. A couplet from the *Pheræi* of Moschion might be inscribed as a motto upon the *Antigone* :—

κενὸν θανόντος ἀνδρὸς αἰκίζειν σκιάν'
ζῶντας κολάζειν οὐ θανόντας εὐσεβές.

“ 'Tis vain to vilify a dead man's shadow ;
To scourge the living, not the dead, is righteous.”

It should be noticed that Antigone, in whom the fate of the family of Laius is finally accomplished, falls an innocent victim. Her tragedy is no immediate consequence of the Edipodean curse. While her brethren were wilfully involved in the doom of their house, she perished in the cause of divine charity. Finding that the immutable ordinances of heaven clashed with the arbitrary volition of a ruler, she preferred to obey the law of conscience and to die at the behest of a pride-maddened tyrant. She is technically disobedient, morally most duteous. Thus the *Antigone* carries us beyond the region of hereditary disaster into the more universal sphere of ethical casuistry. Its tragic interest depends less upon the evolution of the law of ancestral guilt than on the conflict of two duties. By suggesting the casuistical question to his audience, while he freed his heroine from all doubt upon the subject, Sophocles maintained the sublime simplicity which distinguishes Antigone above all women of romance. The retribution that falls on Creon furnishes a powerful example of the Greek doctrine of Nemesis; but over Antigone herself Nemesis exerts no sway. In her action there was nothing unconsidered; in her doom there was nothing unforeseen.

CHAPTER XIV

GREEK TRAGEDY AND EURIPIDES

The Conditions for the Development of a National Drama—The Attic Audience—The Persian War—Nemesis the Cardinal Idea of Greek Tragedy—Traces of the Doctrine of Nemesis in early Greek Poetry—The Fixed Material of Greek Tragedy—Athens in the Age of Euripides—Changes introduced by him in Dramatic Art—The Law of Progress in all Art—Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides—The Treatment of *εὐψυχία* by Euripides—Menoikeus—The Death of Eteocles and Polyneices—Polyxena—Medea—Hippolytus—Electra and Orestes—Injustice done to Euripides by recent critics.

CRITICS who are contented with referring the origin of the Greek drama to the mimetic instinct inherent in humanity are apt to neglect those circumstances which render it an almost unique phenomenon in literature. If the mimetic instinct were all that is requisite for the origination of a national drama, then we should find that every race at a certain period of its development produced both tragedy and comedy. This, however, is far from being the case. A certain rude mimesis, such as the acting of descriptive dances or the jesting of buffoons and mummers, is indeed common in all ages and nations. But there are only two races which can be said to have produced the drama as a fine art originally and independently of foreign influences. These are the Greeks and the Hindhus. With reference to the Hindhus, it is even questionable whether they would have composed plays so perfect as their famous *Sakountala* without contact with the Hellenes. All the products of the modern drama, whether tragic or comic, must be regarded as the direct progeny of the Greek stage. The habit of play-acting, continued from Athens to Alexandria, and from Rome to Byzantium, never wholly expired. The *Christus Patiens*, attributed to Gregory of Nazianzus, was an adaptation of the art of Euripides to Christian story; and the representation of *Mysteries* during the Middle Ages kept alive the dramatic tradition, until the discovery of classic literature and the revival of taste in modern Europe led to the great works of the English, Spanish, French, and subsequently of the German theatre.

Something more than the mere instinct of imitation, therefore, caused the Greeks to develop their drama. Like sculpture, like the epic, the

drama was one of the artistic forms through which the genius of the Greek race expressed itself—by which, to use the language of philosophical mysticism, it fulfilled its destiny as a prime agent in the manifestation of the World-Spirit. In their realisation of that perfect work of art for which they seem to have been specially ordained, the drama was no less requisite than sculpture and architecture, than the epic, the ode, and the idyll.

Two conditions, both of which the Greeks enjoyed in full perfection at the moment of their first dramatic energy, seem to be requisite for the production of a great and thoroughly national drama. These are, first, an era of intense activity or a period succeeding immediately to one of excitement, by which the nation has been nobly agitated; secondly, a public worthy of the dramatist, spurring him on by its enthusiasm and intelligence to the creation of high works of art. A glance at the history of the drama in modern times will prove how necessary these conditions are. It was the gigantic effort which we English people made in our struggle with Rome and Spain, it was the rousing of our keenest thought and profoundest emotion by the Reformation, which prepared us for the Elizabethan drama, by far the greatest, next to the Greek, in literature. The nation lived in action, and delighted to see great actions imitated. Races in repose or servitude, like the Hebrews under the Roman Empire, may, in their state of spiritual exaltation and by effort of pondering on the mysteries of God and man, give birth to new theosophies; but it requires a free and active race, in which young and turbulent blood is flowing, to produce a drama. In England, again, at that time, there was a great public. All classes crowded to the theatres. London, in whose streets and squares martyrs had been burned, on whose quays the pioneers of the Atlantic and Pacific, after disputing the Indies with Spain, lounged and enjoyed their leisure, supplied an eager audience, delighting in the dreams of poets which recalled to mind the realities of their own lives, appreciating the passion of tragedy, enjoying the mirth of comic incident. The men who listened to *Othello* had both done and suffered largely; their own experience was mirrored in the scenes of blood and struggle set before them. These two things, therefore—the awakening of the whole English nation to activity, and the presence of a free and haughty audience—made our drama great.

In the Spanish drama only one of the requisite conditions was fulfilled—activity. Before they began to write plays the Spaniards had expelled the Moors, discovered the New World, and raised themselves to the first place among European nations. But there was not the same free audience in Spain as in England. Papal despotism and the tyranny of the Court checked and coerced the drama, so that, with all its richness and imaginative splendour, the Spanish theatre is inferior to the English. The French drama suffered still more from the same kind of restriction. Subject to the canons of scholastic pedants, tied down to an imitation of the antique, made to reflect the manners and sentiments of a highly artificial Court, animated by

the sympathies of no large national audience, the French playwrights became courtiers, artists obedient to the pleasures of a king—not, like the dramatists of Greece and England, the prophets of the people, the leaders of a chorus triumphant and rejoicing in its mighty deeds.

Italy has no real theatre. In Italy there has been no stirring of a national, united spirit; no supreme and central audience; no sudden consciousness of innate force and freedom in the sovereign people. The requisite conditions have always failed. The German drama, both by its successes and shortcomings, illustrates the same position. Such greatness as it achieved in Goethe and Schiller it owed to the fermentation of German nationality, to the so-called period of "storm and stress" which electrified the intellects of Germany and made the Germans eager to assert their manhood among nations. But listen to Goethe complaining that there was no public to receive his works; study the petty cabals of Weimar; estimate the imitative and laborious spirit of German art; and it is clear why Germany produced but scattered and imperfect results in the drama.

The examples of England, Spain, France, Italy, Germany, all tend to prove that for the creation of a drama it is necessary that the condition of national activity should be combined with the condition of a national audience—not an audience of courtiers, or critics, or learned persons. In Greece, both of these conditions were united in unrivalled and absolute perfection. While in England, during the Elizabethan period, the public which crowded our theatres were uncultivated, and formed but a small portion of the free nation they represented—in Athens the whole people, collectively and in a body, witnessed the dramatic shows provided for them in the theatre of Bacchus. That theatre had space for 30,000 spectators, so that the total male population of Athens could enter it, and at the same moment attend to the tragedies or comedies of rival playwrights.¹ The same set of men, when assembled in the Pnyx, constituted the national assembly; and in that capacity made laws, voted supplies, declared wars, ratified alliances, ruled the affairs of dependent cities. In a word, they were Athens. Every man among them—by intercourse with the greatest spirits of the Greek world in the Agora and porches of the wrestling-grounds, by contemplation of the sculptures of Pheidias, by familiarity with Eleusinian processions, by participation in solemn sacrifices and choric dances, by listening to the recitations of Homer, by attendance on the lectures of the sophists, by debates in the Ecclesia, by pleadings in the law-courts—had been multifariously educated and rendered capable of appreciating the subtleties of rhetoric and argument, as well as of comprehending the æsthetical beauty with which a Greek play was enriched. It is easy to imagine the influence which this potent, multitudinous, and highly cultivated audience must have exercised over the dramatists, and what an impulse it must have communicated to their genius. In England the playwright and the

¹ See Leake's *Topography of Athens*, vol. i. p. 521.

actor were both looked down upon with pity or contempt; they wrote and acted for money in private speculations, and in rivalry with several petty theatres. In Athens the tragedian was honoured. Sophocles was elected a general with Pericles, and a member of the provisional government after the dissolution of the old democracy. The actor, too, was respected. The State itself defrayed the expenses of the drama, and no ignoble competition was possible between tragedian and tragedian, since all exhibited their plays to the same audience, in the same sacred theatre, and all were judged by the same judges.

The critical condition of the Greek people itself at the epoch of the drama is worth minute consideration. During the two previous centuries, the whole of Hellas had received a long and careful education: at the conclusion came the terrible convulsion of the Persian war. After the decay of the old monarchies, the Greek states seethed for years in the process of dissolution and reconstruction. The colonies had been founded. The aristocratic families had striven with the mob in every city; and from one or the other power at times tyrants had risen to control both parties and oppress the commonwealth. Out of these political disturbances there gradually arose a sense of law, a desire for established constitutions. There emerged at last the prospect of political and social stability. Meanwhile, in all departments of art and literature, the Greeks had been developing their genius. Lyrical, satirical, and elegiac poetry had been carried to perfection. The Gnostic poets and the Seven Sages had crystallised morality in apophthegms. Philosophy had taken root in the colonies. Sculpture had almost reached its highest point. The Greek games, practised through nearly three hundred years, had created a sense of national unity. It seemed as if all the acquirements and achievements of the race had been spread abroad to form a solid and substantial base for some most comprehensive superstructure. Then, while Hellas was at this point of magnificent but still incomplete development, there followed, first, the expulsion of the Peisistratids from Athens, which aroused the spirit of that mighty nation, and then the invasion of Xerxes, which electrified the whole Greek world. It was this that inflamed the genius of Greece; this transformed the race of thinkers, poets, artists, statesmen, into a race of heroes, actors in the noblest sense of the word. The struggle with Persia, too, gave to Athens her right place. Assuming the hegemony of Hellas, to which she was foredestined by her spiritual superiority, she flashed in the supreme moment which followed the battle of Salamis into the full consciousness of her own greatness. It was now, when the Persian war had made the Greeks a nation of soldiers, and had placed the crown on Athens, that the drama—that form of art which combines all kinds of poetry in one, which subordinates sculpture, painting, architecture, music, dancing, to its own use, and renders all arts subservient to the one end of action—appeared in its colossal majesty upon the Attic stage.

At this point of history the drama was a necessary product. The

forces which had given birth to all the other forms of art were still exuberant and unexhausted, needing their completion. At the same time, nothing but the impassioned presentation of humanity in action could possibly have satisfied the men who had themselves enacted on the plains and straits of Attica the greatest and most artistic drama of real history. It was one of the chief actors of Marathon and Salamis who composed the *Prometheus*, and personated his own hero on the stage.

If we proceed to analyse the cardinal idea of Greek tragedy, we shall again observe the close connection which exists between the drama and the circumstances of the people at the time of its production. Schlegel, in his *Lectures on the Drama*, defines the prevailing idea of Greek tragedy to be the sense of an oppressive destiny—a fate against which the will of man blindly and vainly dashes. This conception of hereditary destiny seems to be strongly illustrated by many plays. Orestes, Œdipus, Antigone are unable to escape their doom. Beautiful human heroism and exquisite innocence are alike sacrificed to the fatality attending an accursed house. Yet Schlegel has not gone far enough in his analysis. He has not seen that this inflexible fate is set in motion by a superior and anterior power, that it operates in the service of offended justice. When Œdipus slays his father, he does so in contempt of oracular warnings. Orestes, haunted by the Furies, has a mother's blood upon his hands, and unexpiated crimes of father and of grandsire to atone for. Antigone, the best of daughters and most loving of sisters, dies miserably, not dogged by Fate, but having of her own free will exposed her life in obedience to the pure laws of the heart. It is impossible to suppose that a Greek would have been satisfied with the bald fate-theory of Schlegel. Not Fate, but Nemesis, was the ruling notion in Greek tragedy. A profound sense of the Divine government of the world, of a righteous power punishing pride and vice, pursuing the children of the guilty to the tenth generation, but showing mercy to the contrite—in short, a mysterious and almost Jewish ideal of offended Holiness, pervades the whole work of the tragedians. This religious conception had gradually defined itself in the consciousness of the Greek race. Homer in both his epics presents us with the spectacle of crime punished. It is the sin of Paris and the obstinacy of the Trojan princes which lead to the fall of Troy. It is the insolence of the suitors in the *Odyssey* which brings them to their death. The Cyclical poets seem to have dwelt on the same theme. The storm which fell on the Achaian fleet, dispersing or drowning the heroes, was a punishment for their impiety and pride during the sack of Troy. The madness of Ajax followed his violence upon Cassandra. When conscious morality begins in Greece the idea is at once made prominent. Hesiod continually insists on justice, whose law no man may violate unpunished. The Gnostic poets show how guilt, if unavenged at the moment, brings calamity upon the offspring of the evil-doer. This notion of an inheritance of crime is particularly noticeable, since it tinged the whole tragedy of

the Greeks. Solon, again, in his dialogue with Cræsus, develops another aspect of the same idea. With him the Deity is jealous of all towering greatness, of all insolent prosperity; his Nemesis punishes the pride of wealth and the lust of life. Some of the most prominent personages of Greek tragedy—Creon, Œdipus, Theseus, Agamemnon—illustrate this phase of the idea. In the sayings of the Seven Sages we trace another shade of the conception. All of them insist on moderation, modesty, the right proportion, the due mean. The lyrists take up a somewhat different position. The vicissitudes of life, both independent of and connected with personal guilt, fascinate their imagination. They have a deep and awful sense of sudden catastrophes. Pindar rises to a loftier level: his odes are pervaded by reverence for a holy Power, before whom the insolent are forced to bow, by whom the humble are protected, and the good rewarded.

Such are the traces of a doctrine of Nemesis to be found in all the literature of the pre-dramatic period. That very event which determined the sudden splendour of the drama, gave a sublime and terrific sanction to the already existing morality. The Persian war exhibited the downfall of a haughty and insolent race, cut off in all its pomp and power. Before the eyes of the men who witnessed the calamities of Œdipus and Agamemnon on the stage, the glory of godless Asia had vanished like a dream. Thus the idea of Nemesis quelling the insolent and smiting the unholy was realised in actual history; and to add to the impression produced on Greek imagination by the destruction of the Persian hosts, Pheidias carved his statue of Nemesis to be a monument in enduring marble of the national morality. Æschylus erected an even more majestic monument to the same principle in his tragedies.¹

Nemesis is the fundamental idea of the Greek drama. It appears strongest in Æschylus, as a prophetic and awful law, mysteriously felt and terribly revealed. Sophocles uses it to point the deep moralities which govern human life. In Euripides it degenerates into something more akin to a sense of vicissitudes; it becomes more sentimental—less a religious or moral principle than a phenomenon inspiring fear and pity. This sequence appears to be necessary in the growth and expansion of a primitive idea. Rugged and superstitious at first, it is next harmonised and humanised, and ends at last in being merely artistic.

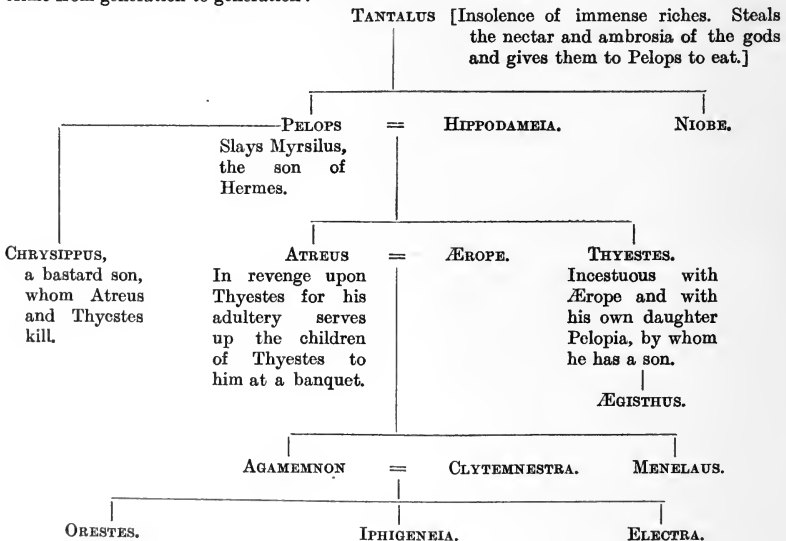
In Æschylus the fundamental moral law of Nemesis, as a part of the Divine government of the world, is set forth in three distinct manifestations. We find it expressed mythologically, as abstract and ideal, in the *Prometheus*. The offence of Prometheus against Zeus, though unselfish and generous, must be expiated by suffering; the rebellious demigod must be brought at last to merge his will in that of Zeus, to bind his brows with the willow of submission, and to place upon his finger the iron ring of necessity. We find it expressed typically, as still ideal and almost superhuman, in the *Oresteia*. Here a whole

¹ The terrific lessons of the Persian war seem to have quickened in the Greeks a spiritual sense beyond what was natural to their genius, and from the influence of which they speedily recovered.

family is vitiated by the offence of their first ancestor. The hereditary curse is renewed and fortified from generation to generation, by the sins of the children, until at last a reconciliation is effected between the purifying deities and the infernal powers of vengeance. In the *Persæ* the same law is exhibited as a fact of contemporary history. It is no longer a matter of mythology, as in the *Prometheus*, or a matter of heroic legend, as in the *Oresteia*, but a matter of actual experience, that the godless man should suffer and involve the innocent in his disaster. Thus the law of Nemesis is displayed as an eternal verity in the *Prometheus*; and in the *Oresteia* it is actualised and humanised within the region of heroic legend; in the *Persæ* it is used for the explanation of everyday events. The pedigree of inherited crime and vengeance, as explained in the choruses of the *Oresteia*, and as illustrated by the whole history of the Tantalidæ, is this. The pride of wealth in the first instance swells the heart, and inclines its possessor to ungodly thoughts. This leads to impiety (τὸ δυσσεβές), and in the energetic language of the *Agamemnon*¹ the arrogant man kicks with his heel against the altar of Justice. A state of presumptuous insolence (ὑβρις) is the result of the original unholiness. And now the man, who has been corrupted in his soul, is ready for the commission of some signal crime. Até, or a blindness of the reason, which prevents him from foreseeing the consequences of his acts, is the child of this presumption. Inspired by Até, he sheds the blood of his brother, or defiles his sister's bed;² and from this moment the seed is sown, which will spring up and breed fresh mischief for each successive

¹ Line 375; compare *Choëph.* 631, *Eum.* 510-514.

² This pedigree of the House of Tantalus—a family Upas-tree—illustrates the descent of crime from generation to generation:—



generation. After the spilling of blood the affair passes into the hands of the Erinnyes, whose business it is to beset the house of the guilty doer. They form the bloody revel, which though glutted with gore, refuse to quit the palace of Atreus. They leap upon it from above, and rack it like a tempest. Yet from their power there is escape. The curse of the house works; but it works only through the impure. Should a man arise capable of seeing rightly and living purely, he may atone the curse and become free. Such a man was Orestes. The leading thought in this system of morality is that pride begets impiety, impiety produces an insolent habit of mind, which culminates in blindness; the fruit of this blindness is crime, breeding crime from sire to son. It is only when the righteous man appears, who performs an act of retributive justice, in obedience to divine mandates, and without the indulgence of any selfish passion, that the curse is stayed. Such is a crude sketch of the Æschylean theory of Nemesis, as set forth in the great Trilogy. To Æschylus, the presentation of the moral law conceived by him is of more importance than the exhibition of the characters of men controlled by it. Such is not the case with Sophocles. He fixes our attention upon the *ἀμαρτία*, or error of the guilty man, interests us in the qualities by which he was betrayed into sin, and makes us feel that suffering is the inevitable consequence of arrogant or wilful acts. The weakness of the offender is more prominent in Sophocles than the vengeance of the outraged deity. Thus, although there is the sternest religious background to all the tragedies of Sophocles, our attention is always fixed upon the humanity of his heroes. The house of Labdacus is involved in hereditary guilt. Laius, despising an oracle, begets a son by Jocasta, and is slain by that son. Œdipus, in his youthful recklessness, careless of oracular warnings, kills his father and weds his mother. Jocasta, through her levity and impiety, is hurried into marriage with the murderer of her husband, who is also her own son. All this *ἀνθαδία*, or headstrong wilfulness, is punished by the descent of a fearful plague on Thebes; and Œdipus, whose heat of temper and self-reliance are his only serious crime, is overpowered by the abyss of misery into which these faults have plunged his people and his family. The utter prostration of Œdipus—when his eyes have been opened to the tissue of horrors he has woven round himself, his mother, his nation, and his children—is the first step in his moral discipline. He abdicates in favour of the insolent Creon, and goes forth to wander, an abhorred and helpless blind man, on the face of the earth. When, at the conclusion of his Pariah life, the citizens of Colonus refuse him harbourage, he only cries: "My deeds were rather sufferings than crimes." His old heroic haughtiness and headstrong will are tempered to a noble abhorrence of all baseness, to a fiery indignation. He has been purged and lessoned to humility before the throne of Zeus. Therefore, in return for his self-annihilation, the gods at last receive him to their company, and constitute him a

blessed Dæmon in the place of his disgrace.¹ It was the highest triumph of tragic art to exhibit that new phase in the character of Œdipus, which marks the conclusion of the *Tyrannus*, and is sustained in the *Coloneüs*. In both of these plays, Œdipus is the same man: but circumstances have so wrought upon his temper as to produce a great change. Still, the change is only commensurate with the force of the circumstances. We comprehend it, while at the same time we are forced to marvel at the profound skill of the poet, who, in the first tragedy, has presented to our eyes the hot-tempered king reduced to abject humiliation, and in the second has shown us the same man dignified, and purified by the dealings of the heavy hand of God. Set aside by his calamity, and severed from the common lot of men, Œdipus has submitted to the divine will and has communed with unseen powers. He is therefore now environed with a treble mystery—with the mystery of his awful past,—the mystery of his god-conducted present,—the mystery of his august future. It was by such masterly delineation of character that Sophocles threw the old Æschylean dogma of Nemesis into the background, and moralised his tragedy without sacrificing an iota of its religious force. Aristotle, speaking of the highest tragic art, says that its object is to represent an ἦθος, a permanent habit of moral temper. Careless or bad art allows impossible incongruities in the delineation of character, whereas the true poet maintains identity throughout. If this be so, Sophocles deserves the title of ἠθικώτατος (most masterly in the delineation of human character) in the very highest sense. As a further illustration of the divergence of Sophocles from the Æschylean dogma of Nemesis, it is worth while to mention the *Antigone*. This play takes us beyond the region of hereditary guilt into the sphere of moral casuistry; its tragic interest depends not upon the evolution of an ancestral curse, although Antigone is incidentally involved in the crime of her brothers; but upon the conflict of duties in a single heart. Antigone, while obeying the law of her conscience, is disobeying the command of her sovereign. She acted rightly; yet her offence was sufficient to cause

¹ The text, in this chapter, so far as Æschylus and Sophocles are concerned, repeats what has been already said in the first volume of these Studies. Owing to the way in which they were at first composed, it is impossible to avoid a certain amount of repetition, without a laborious re-casting and re-writing of all the chapters. That would involve a thoroughgoing change of style, and would deprive the work of the one quality it claims—youthfulness. I do not, therefore, think it necessary to excuse myself upon the score of repetitions and anomalies. But I should like to take this opportunity of saying how much I regret that the conditions of life imposed on me by bad health have prevented me from attending any of the representations of Greek plays upon English stages. I feel sure that my criticism of both tragedy and comedy, which rests upon mere study of the texts, would have been essentially modified by witnessing the *Agamemnon*, the *Œdipus Tyrannus*, the *Alcestis*, the *Birds*, the *Frogs*, as they have, during the last fifteen years or so, been exhibited to English audiences at various centres of learning. To revive the Attic drama is impossible. Yet the acting capabilities of a play can only be tested by dramatic action. I am told by those who saw Mr. Lawrence and Mr. Benson in Cassandra and Clytemnestra, and by those who listened to the climax of the *Œdipus Tyrannus*, that fresh light was poured for them upon the masterpieces of Æschylus and Sophocles by the human interest evoked in acting.

her legal death, and this death she chose with open eyes. It is in the person of Creon that the old moral of Nemesis is drawn. Like *Œpidus*, he treats the warnings of *Teiresias* with scorn, and persists in his criminal persecution of the dead *Polyneices*. Shaken at last by the seer's vaticinations, he rescinds his orders, but too late. *Antigone* has hanged herself in prison; *Hæmon* curses his father, and stabs himself upon her corpse; *Eurydice*, maddened with grief, puts an end to her own life; and thus the house of the tyrant is left unto him desolate. It is quite impossible by any phrases of mere criticism to express the admiration which every student of *Sophocles* must feel for the profundity of his design, for the unity of his art, and for the firmness with which he has combined the essential religious doctrines of Greek tragedy with his own ethical philosophy. In passing to *Euripides* we feel how much we have lost. The religious foundation has been broken up; the clear intuitive morality of *Sophocles* has been exchanged for sophistry; and, as a consequence, his tragedies can never boast of unity beyond the region of æsthetical composition. In the delineation of character he wavers; not because he could not conceive of a well-sustained type, since *Medea*, *Hippolytus*, and many other of his studies have a grand subjective identity; but because, apparently through levity, he was more interested in the creation of plots and situations than in the exhibition of the truly tragic type of character. The praise bestowed on him by *Aristotle* proves that his contemporaries had recognised this source of both his weakness and his strength.

In considering the work done by the three great tragic authors, we must not forget that the Greek dramatists adhered to a fixed body of legends; the tales of the House of *Atreus*, of *Troy*, of the family of *Laius* at *Thebes*, of *Heracles*, of *Jason*, and of *Theseus*, formed the staple of the plays of *Æschylus*, *Sophocles*, and *Euripides*. This fact helps to account for the early decline of the Greek drama. It was impossible for the successors of *Æschylus* and *Sophocles* to surpass them in the heroic treatment of the same mythical motives. Yet custom and tradition, the religious antecedents of tragedy, the cumbrous apparatus of mask and buskin and Bacchic robe, the conventional Chorus, the vast size of the theatre, the whole form, in fact, of Greek dramatic art, rendered a transition from the heroic to the romantic tragedy impossible. Those fixed legends which *Æschylus* had used as the framework for his religious philosophy of *Nemesis* and *Até*, from which *Sophocles* had drawn deep lessons of morality, had to be employed by *Euripides* as best he might. On their firmly traced, inflexible outlines he embroidered his own work of pathos and imagination, losing sight of the divine element, blurring morality, but producing a world of fanciful yet living shapes of sentiment and thought and passion.

In order to comprehend the position of *Euripides* in relation to his predecessors, we must consider the changes which had taken place in *Athens* between the period of the *Persian war* and that in which he flourished. All the mutations of Greek history were accomplished with

celerity; but in this space of less than half a century the rate of progress was nothing less than marvellous.¹ Some of the men of Marathon yet remained when Aristophanes was writing, both to point his moral against Euripides, and also to prove by contrast with the generation that had grown up since, how impossible it was for the poet of the present to vie with the Æschylus of the past. In the first place, Athens had become the centre of progressive thought. Teachers of rhetoric and reasoning made her wrestling-grounds and gardens the scene of their disputes and lectures. The arts of eloquence were studied by the youth who in a previous age had been contented with Homer. At Athens, Anaxagoras had questioned the divinity of Helios, and had asserted Reason to be the moving force of the universe. Sophists who taught the arts of life for money, and philosophers who subjected morals to ingenious analysis, while they explained away on scientific principles the ancient myths of Greek nature-worship, combined to disturb ethical and religious traditions. A more solid, because more reasoned, morality was springing up perhaps. A purer monotheism was being inculcated. But meanwhile the old Hellenic customs and the fabric of mythic theology were undermined. It could not be but that the poet of the day should participate in these changes. In the second place, the Athenian populace had grown to be supreme in two departments—the high parliament of State and the law-courts. Every Athenian was now far more than formerly an orator or judge of orators, an advocate or judge of advocates. Two passions possessed the popular mind: the passion for the Assembly with its stormy debate and pompous declamation; the passion for the Dikastery with its personal interests, its problems of casuistical law, its momentous tragedies of private life, its studied eloquence. Talking and listening were the double function of an Athenian citizen. To speak well on every subject, so as to gain causes in the courts, and to persuade the people in the Pnyx; to criticise speeches with acumen, so as not to be deluded by specious arguments: these were the prime accomplishments of an

¹ The evolution of the Attic drama through its three great tragedians was accomplished with a rapidity which is quite miraculous. Æschylus gained his first prize in 484 B.C., Sophocles his first in 468 B.C., Euripides his first in 441 B.C. The *Medea* of Euripides, a play which exhibits all the innovations of its author, appeared in 431 B.C. Therefore a period of fifty-three years sufficed for the complete development of the greatest work of art the world has ever witnessed. The history of our own stage offers a parallel to this extraordinary rapidity of growth. Marlowe produced his *Tamburlaine* in 1590, Ford his *Lover's Melancholy* in 1628: between these two dates—that is to say, within the compass of thirty-eight years—were composed all the plays of Marlowe, Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Beaumont, Fletcher, Massinger, Webster, Heywood, Decker, Marston, Chapman, Middleton, and others whom it would be tedious to mention. Halliwell's *Dictionary of Old English Plays* contains 280 closely-printed pages; yet very few of the pieces he enumerates are subsequent to what we call Elizabethan. But, though our drama, in respect of fertility, offers a parallel to that of Athens, we can show no three poets of paramount genius corresponding to Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, each of whom would have been sufficient by himself to mark a century in the growth of the genius of his nation. Between Æschylus and Sophocles there is a wide chasm in religion, politics, and art; between Sophocles and Euripides, again, there is a chasm in religion, politics, art, and philosophy. Yet Sophocles, after superseding Æschylus, lived to put on mourning for the death of Euripides.

Athenian youth of promise. It is obvious that a very peculiar audience was thus formed for the tragedian—an audience greedy of intellectual subtleties, of pathetic situations, of splendid oratory, of clever reasoning—an audience more appreciative of the striking than the true, of the novel than the natural. In the third place, the Athenians had waxed delicate and wanton since the Persian war. When Æschylus began to write, the peril of utter ruin hung like a stone of Tantalus over Hellas. That removed, the Greeks breathed freely. The Athenians, growing in wealth and power, neglected the old moderation of their ancestors. Youths who in earlier days would have fared hardly, now drove their chariots, backed their fighting-cocks, and followed their own sweet will. Aristotle quaintly enough observes, that the flute had become fashionable after the expulsion of the Persians. The poet of the day could no longer be austere like Æschylus or sedate like Sophocles. In all these changes Euripides partook. The pupil in rhetoric of Prodicus, in philosophy of Anaxagoras and Heraclitus, a book-collector, a student of painting, the friend of Socrates, cultivated in all innovations of morality and creed, Euripides belonged essentially to his own day. As far as a tragic dramatist can be the mouthpiece of his age, Euripides was the mouthpiece of Athenian decline. For this reason, because he so exactly expressed the feelings and opinions of his time, which feelings and opinions produced a permanent national habit of mind, Euripides became the darling of posterity. Æschylus was the Titanic product of a bygone period; Sophocles displayed the pure and perfect ideal; but Euripides was the artist who, without improving on the spirit of his age, gave it a true and adequate expression. The only wonder is that during his lifetime Euripides was not more popular at Athens. His comparative neglect proves him to have been somewhat in advance of his century, and justifies Aristophanes in the reproach that he anticipated the Athenians in the break-up of their forms of thought.

At this point we may consider the condition of the Tragic Art when Euripides took it up as the business of his life. Though tragedy, as formed by Æschylus, represented one true and important aspect of Greek thought—the religious, yet it could never have been adequate to the life of the whole nation in the same degree as the many-sided drama of Shakespeare, for example, was to that of our Elizabethan ancestors. Its regularity and solemnity tended to make it an ideal work of art. It might arouse the religious feeling, the national pride, the enthusiasm for a legendary past, which were so powerful among the Athenians of the Marathonian epoch. But it could not have had much attraction for the Athenians of the Syracusan expedition. As men subject to the divine rule, indeed, it had a message fraught with meaning for them; but as Athenians of to-day it did not touch them. We can well believe that this lofty, ceremonious art fatigued a large portion of the Attic audience. After having listened to some seventy plays of Æschylus and fifty of Sophocles, not to mention Phrynichus

and Choerilus, and scores of minor dramatists, all teaching the same religious morality, and all obeying the same æsthetic principles, we can conceive that a merry Greek began to long for novelty. It must have required the supreme genius of a Sophocles to sustain the attention of the audience at its ancient altitude. In the hands of inferior poets, the tragic commonplaces must have appeared insipid. Some change seemed absolutely necessary. Euripides, a poet of very distinguished originality, saw that he must adapt his dramatic style to the new requirements of his audience, and give them what they liked, even though it were not good for them. The sophistic arguments, the strained situations, the law-court pleadings, the pathetic touches, the meretricious lyrics, the philosophical explanations, the sententious epigrams, the theatrical effects, which mar his tragedies, were deliberate innovations on the old pure style. Euripides had determined to bring tragedy home to the sympathies of the spectators. All the peculiarities of his art flow from this one aim. Whether he did not pursue this aim on a false method, whether he might not have aroused the sympathies of his audience without debasing tragedy, remains a fit matter for debate.

Entirely to eliminate the idea of Nemesis, which gave its character to Greek tragedy, was what Euripides, had he been so inclined, could hardly have succeeded in effecting. Though he never impresses on our minds the dogma of an avenging deity, like Æschylus, or of an inevitable law, like Sophocles, he makes us feel the chance and change of human life, the helplessness of man, the stormy sea of passions, sorrows, and vicissitudes on which the soul is tossed. Conventional phrases about moderation in all things, retributive justice, and the like, are used to keep up the old tragic form. In this way he brought tragedy down to the level of real life, wherein we do not trace the visible finger of Providence, but where all seems at least confusion to the natural eye. Euripides, no more than Shakespeare, sought to be a prophet or interpreter of the divine operations. In the same spirit he treated his materials with freedom. Adhering conventionally, and as a form of art, to the mythical legends of Hellas—that charmed circle beyond which the tragic muse had never strayed—he adapted them to his own purposes. He gave new characters to the principal heroes,¹ mixed up legendary incidents with trivial domestic scenes, lowered the language of demigods to current Greek talk, hazarded occasional scepticism, and introduced familiar phrases into ceremonious debates. The sacred character of the myths disappeared; Euripides used them as so many masses of entertaining folklore and fiction, fit for tragic handling. When we hear Achilles and Orestes talking like Athenian citizens, wrangling, perorating, subtilising, seeking victory in strife of words, trifling with questions of profoundest import, and settling moral problems by verbal quibbles, we understand the remark of Sophocles that he had painted men as they ought to be, Euripides as they are. Medea and Alcestis are not the mythical Medea or the legendary queen of Pheræ, but an injured

¹ Very notable in this respect is his consistent degradation of Ulysses.

wife, and a devoted wife, just such as Shakespeare or Balzac might have depicted. But unfortunately for this attempt to make Greek tragedy more real and living, more representative of the actual world, the cothurnus, the mask, the Chorus, the thymelé, the gigantic stage, remained. All the cumbrous paraphernalia of the Æschylean theatre environed the men and women of Euripides, who cut but a poor figure in the garb of demigods. In trying to adapt the mould of Greek tragedy to real life, Euripides overpassed the limits of possibility. The mould snapped in his hands. Therefore he is better to read than he could have been in scenic representation.

The same inevitable divergence from the Æschylean system is observable in every department of the tragedy of Euripides. While Sophocles had diminished the direct interposition of mysterious agencies, so frequently invoked by Æschylus, and had interested his audience in human character controlled and tempered by an unseen will of God, Euripides went further. With him the affairs of life are no longer based upon a firm foundation of Divine law, but gods intervene mechanically and freakishly, like the magicians in Ariosto or Tasso.¹ Their agency is valuable, not as determining the moral conduct of the personages, but as an exhibition of supernatural power which brings about a sudden revolution of events. Independently of their miraculous activity, the human agents display all varieties of character: every shade of virtue and vice is delicately portrayed; pathetic scenes are multiplied; the tendernesses of domestic life are brought prominently forward; mixed motives and conflicting passions are skilfully analysed. Consequently the plays of Euripides are more rich in stirring incidents than those of his predecessors. What we lose in gravity and unity is made up for by versatility. Euripides, to use a modern phrase, is more sensational than either Æschylus or Sophocles. Aristotle called him *τραγικώτατος* (consummate in tragic effects), by which he probably meant that he was most profuse of touching and exciting scenes.

The same tendencies strike us in the more formal department of the tragic art. Here as elsewhere Euripides moves a step beyond Sophocles, breaking the perfection of poetic harmony for the sake of novelty and effect. Euripides condescended to stage tricks. It is well known how Aristophanes laughed at him for the presentation of shabby-genteel princes and monarchs out-at-elbow. Having no deep tragic destiny for the groundwork of his drama, he sought to touch the spectators by royalty in ruins and wealth reduced to beggary. The gorgeous scenic shows in which Æschylus had delighted, but which he had invariably subordinated to his subject, and which Sophocles with the tact of a supreme master in beauty had managed to dispense with, were lavished by Euripides. One play of his, the *Troades*, has

¹ Exception must be made in favour of the *Hippolytus* and the *Bacchæ*, where the whole action of the play and the conduct of the persons are determined by the influences of Aphrodite and Dionysus.

absolutely no plot. Such attraction as it possesses, it owes to the rapid succession of pathetic situations and splendid scenes, the whole closing with the burning of the towers of Troy.

By curtailing the function of the Chorus, Euripides separated from the action of the drama that element which in Æschylus had been chiefly useful for the inculcation of the moral of the play. On the other hand, by expanding the function of the Messenger he was able to indulge his faculty for brilliant description. It has been well said, that the ear and not the eye was the chosen vehicle of pathos to the Greeks. This remark is fully justified by the narrative passages in the plays of Euripides—passages of poetry unsurpassed for radiance, swiftness, strength, pictorial effect. The account of the Bacchic revels among the mountains of Cithæron, and of the death of Pentheus in the *Bacchæ*, that of the death of Glauké in *Medea*, and of Hippolytus in the play that bears his name, that of the sacrifice of Polyxena in the *Hecuba*, and many others, prove with what consummate skill the third of the great tragic poets seized upon a field within the legitimate province of his art, as yet but imperfectly occupied by his predecessors.

Another novelty was the use of the prologue. Here, again, Euripides expanded the already existing elements in Greek tragedy beyond their power of enduring the strain he put upon them. In their drama the Greek poets did not aim at surprise; the spectators were expected to be familiar beforehand with the subject of the play. But when the plot became more complicated, and the incidents more varied under the hands of Euripides, a prologue was the natural expedient, in perfect harmony with the stationary character of Greek tragedy, for placing the audience at the point of view intended by the poets.

In all these changes it will be evident that Euripides, wisely or unwisely, obtained originality by carrying his art beyond the point which it had reached under his predecessors. Using a simile, we might compare the drama of Æschylus to the sublime but rugged architecture which is called Norman, that of Sophocles to the most refined and perfect pointed style, that of Euripides to a highly decorated—florid and flamboyant—manner. Æschylus aimed at durability of structure, at singleness and grandeur of effect. Sophocles added the utmost elegance and finish. Euripides neglected force of construction and unity of design for ornament and brilliancy of effect. But he added something of his own, something infinitely precious and enduringly attractive. The fault of his style consisted in a too exclusive attention to the parts.

The object of the foregoing remarks has been to show how and to what extent Euripides departed from the form and essence of Greek tragedy. It may sound paradoxical now to assert that it was a merit in him rather than a defect to have sacrificed the unity of art to the development of subordinate beauties. Yet it seems to me that in no other way could the successor of Æschylus and Sophocles have made himself the true exponent of his age, have expanded to the full the

faculties still latent in Greek tragedy, or have failed to "affect the fame of an imitator." The law of inevitable progression in art, from the severe and animated embodiment of an idea to the conscious elaboration of merely æsthetic motives and brilliant episodes, has hitherto been neglected by the critics and historians of poetry. They do not observe that the first impulse in a people toward creativeness is some deep and serious emotion, some fixed point of religious enthusiasm or national pride. To give adequate form to this taxes the energies of the first generation of artists, and raises their poetic faculty, by the admixture of prophetic inspiration, to the highest pitch. After the original passion for the ideas to be embodied in art has somewhat subsided, but before the glow and fire of enthusiasm have faded out, there comes a second period, when art is studied more for art's sake, but when the generative potency of the earlier poets is by no means exhausted. For a moment the artist at this juncture is priest, prophet, hierophant, and charmer, all in one. More conscious of the laws of beauty than his predecessors, he makes some sacrifice of the idea to meet the requirements of pure art; but he never forgets that beauty by itself is insufficient to a great and perfect work, nor has he lost his interest in the cardinal conceptions which vitalise the most majestic poetry. During the first and second phases which I have indicated, the genius of a nation throws out a number of masterpieces—some of them rough-hewn and Cyclopean, others perfect in their combination of the strength of thought with grace and elevated beauty. But the mine of ideas is exhausted. The national taste has been educated. Conceptions which were novel to the grandparents have become the intellectual atmosphere of the grandchildren. It is now impossible to return upon the past—to gild the refined gold, or to paint the lily of the supreme poets. Their vigour may survive in their successors: but their inspiration has taken form for ever in their poems. What then remains for the third generation of artists? They have either to reproduce their models—and this is stifling to true genius; or they have to seek novelty at the risk of impairing the strength or the beauty which has become stereotyped. Less deeply interested in the great ideas by which they have been educated, and of which they are in no sense the creators, incapable of competing on the old ground with their elders, they are obliged to go afield for striking situations, to force sentiment and pathos, to subordinate the harmony of the whole to the melody of the parts, to sink the prophet in the poet, the hierophant in the charmer.

This law of sequence is widely applicable. It will be seen to control the history of all uninterrupted artistic dynasties. Greek sculpture, for example, passes from the austere, through the perfect, to the simply elegant. The artist of the Æginetan pediment was wholly intent upon the faithful representation of heroic incidents. The event filled his mind: he sought to express it as energetically as he could. Pheidias stands on the ground of accomplished art. The Mythus selected for

treatment is developed with perfect fidelity, but also with regard to æsthetic effect. Praxiteles neglects the event, the substance of the Mythus. His interest in that has languished, and has been supplanted by enthusiasm for mere forms of beauty. He lavishes a Pheidian wealth of genius on separate figures and situations of no great import except for their consummate loveliness. In architecture, the genealogy of the Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian orders points to the same law. Take another instance from modern painting. Giotto, Raphael, Correggio, differ less perhaps in actual calibre than in relative historical position. Giotto, intent upon the fundamental ideas of Christian mythology, determines to express them forcibly, faithfully, earnestly, without regarding aught but the best method of investing them with harmony, lucidity, and dignity. Raphael ascends a step, and combines the strength and purity of Giotto with elaborate beauty and classic finish of style. Correggio at his appearance finds all the great work done. The Christian mythus has been adequately set forth by his predecessors. He is driven to become the thaumaturgist of chiaroscuro, the audacious violator of unity in composition, the supreme painter of erotic paradise. Further development of the religious idea beyond that achieved by Raphael was impossible. Already in Raphael's work a compromise between religious austerity and pagan grace had been observable. The simplicity of Giotto was gone beyond recapture. Correggio could only be original by carrying onward to its ultimate perfection the element of beauty for its own sake introduced by Raphael. Like Euripides, Correggio was condemned to the misfortune of separating beauty from the idea, the body from the spirit. With them the forces inherent in the germs of their respective arts were exhausted. But those who rightly understand them must, we imagine, be prepared to accept with gratitude the existence of Correggio and Euripides, both as complementing Giotto and Æschylus, and also as accounting for the meridian splendour of Sophocles and Raphael. Without the cadence of Euripides the majestic aria of Sophocles would hardly be played out. By studying the Correggiosity of Correggio we comprehend how much of mere æsthetic beauty is held in solution in the work of Raphael. It is thus, as it were, that, like projectiles, arts describe their parabolas and end.

To return in detail to the Greek tragedians. Æschylus determines at all hazards to exhibit the chosen mythus in its entirety, and to give full prominence to his religious idea. Hence we have to put up with much that is tedious—a whole *Choëphoræ*, for example. But hence the unrivalled majesty of the *Agamemnon*. Sophocles manipulates his subject more artistically, so as to make it harmonious without losing sight of its internal source of unity. But he already begins to disintegrate the colossal work of Æschylus—notably in his separation of the Trilogy and in his moralising of the idea of Nemesis. With Euripides the disintegration is complete. He neglects the mythus altogether. The theosophy of Æschylus, always implicit in Sophocles,

survives as a mere conventionality in the work of Euripides. Finally, like Praxiteles, he carves single statues of eminent beauty; like Correggio, he conceals his poverty of design beneath a mass of redundant elegance. What we have really to regret in the art of Euripides is that he should have endeavoured to compete at all with Æschylus and Sophocles upon the old ground of the tales of Thebes and Troy. Where he breaks new ground, as in the *Medea*, the *Hippolytus*, and the *Bacchæ*, he proves himself a consummate master. Here the novelty of his method shocks no sense of traditional propriety. He is not driven to flippant scepticism in dealing with time-honoured myths, or to travesties of well-marked characters, in order to assert his individuality. These plays exhibit a complete unity of outward form, and a profound internal unity of passion and character. They are not surpassed in their own kind by anything that any other poet had produced; and if "the *chef d'œuvre*" be adequate to the *chef d'œuvre*," Euripides may here be pronounced the equal of Sophocles and Shakespeare.

To enter into an elaborate analysis of Euripides as a poet would be beyond the scope of this chapter, which has for its subject the relation of the third great dramatist to his predecessors and to Greek tragedy in general. Yet something must be added to justify the opinion just expressed, that, though Euripides suffered by the constraint under which he laboured in competition with rivals who had nearly exhausted the resources of the tragic art, yet he displays beauties of his own of such transcendent merit as to place him in the first rank of the poets of the world. It would be a delightful task to attempt to do him justice in the teeth of a malevolent generation of critics, led by Schlegel and Müller, who do not understand him—to summon from the shadows of the Attic stage the "magnificent witch" Medea, pure-souled Polyxena, wifely Alcestis, fiery-hearted Phædra, chaste and cold Hippolytus, Andromache upon her chariot a royal slave, Orestes in his agony soothed by a sister's ministrations, the sunny piety of Ion, the self-devotion of Menoikeus—intermingling perchance these pictured forms, pure, statuesque and clear as frescoes from Pompeii, with choric odes and exquisite descriptions. The lyrics of Euripides are among the choicest treasures of Greek poetry: they flow like mountain rivulets, flashing with sunbeams, eddying in cool shady places, rustling through leaves of mint, forget-me-not, marsh-marigold, and dock. His landscapes are most vivid: in ancient poetry there is nothing to compete with the pictures of Cithæron, where the Bacchantes lie limb-length beneath the silver-firs, their snakes asleep, and the mountain air ruffling their loose curls; or with the cave of Polyphemus, where the satyrs lead their flocks from pasture up the valley between stone-pine and chestnut-tree to the lawns that overhang dark purple sea-waves. In the department of the picturesque Euripides is unrivalled. His paintings have the truth to nature, the delicately modulated outline, and the facile grace of the most perfect bas-reliefs or frescoes.

But to attempt this labour of criticism would be to write a book upon Euripides. It must be enough in this place to illustrate one quality which occupies a large space in the dramatic ethics of Euripides, and forms the motive of the action of his leading characters. The old religious basis of Nemesis having been virtually abandoned by him, Euripides fell back upon the morality of passions and emotions. For his cardinal virtue he chose what the Greeks called *εὐθυχία* (stout-heartedness), pluck in the noblest sense of the word,—that temper of the soul which prepared the individual to sacrifice himself for the State, and to triumph in pain or death or dogged endurance rather than give way to feebler instincts. That this quality should be prominent in Euripides is not without significance. Not only did it enable him to construct most thrilling scenes: it also harmonised with the advancing tendencies of Greek philosophy, which already held within itself the germs of Stoicism—or the theory of *καρτερία* (steadfast endurance).¹ One of the most dramatic exhibitions of this virtue occurs in the *Phœnissæ*. The Seven Captains are beleaguering Thebes, and affairs are going ill with the garrison. Teiresias, however, prophesies that if Creon's son, Menoikeus, will kill himself, Thebes must triumph. Creon accepts the prophecy but seeks to save his son; he sends for Menoikeus and instructs him how he may escape to Dodona. Menoikeus pretends to agree with what his father counsels, and, after true Euripidean fashion, sends Creon to get his journey-money. Then the boy, left alone upon the stage, turns to the Chorus and begins his speech:—

“ How well have I my father's fears allayed
 With fraudulent words to compass my own will !
 Lo, he would filch me hence, with shame to me,
 Loss to my fatherland. An old man's heart
 Deserves some pity.—What pity can I claim
 If I betray the land that gave me birth ?
 Know then that I shall go and save the state,
 Giving my life and dying for this land.
 For this is shameful ; if beneath no ban
 Of oracles, bound by no force of fate,
 But standing to their shields, men dare to die
 Under the ramparts of the town they love ;
 While I, untrue to brother and to sire,
 And to my country, like a felon slink
 Far hence in exile ! Lo, where'er I roam
 All men would call me coward ! By great Zeus,
 Who dwells among the stars, by bloody Ares,
 Who made the dragon-seed in days of old
 Lords of the land, I swear this shall not be !
 But I will go, and on the topmost towers,
 Standing, will dash into the murky den

¹ It may be questioned whether a Dorian type of character was not in the mind of Euripides when he constructed his ideal of feminine heroism. What Plutarch in the life of Cleomenes says of Cratesiclea and the wife of Pantecus reads like a commentary on the tragedies of *Macaria*, *Polyxena*, and *Iphigenia*. Xenophon's partiality for the Spartans indicates the same current of sympathy. Philosophical analysis was leading up to an eclectic Hellenism.

Where couched the dragon, as the prophet bade.
 Thus will I free my country. I have spoken.
 See, then, I leave you : it is no mean gift
 In death I give the city ; but my land
 I purge of sickness. If all men were bold
 Of their good things to work the public weal,
 I ween our towns had less of ills to suffer,
 And more of blessings for all days to be."

Phœn. 991-1018.

With the *Phœnissæ* in our hands, one other passage may be translated which displays the power possessed by Euripides of composing a dramatic picture, and presenting pathos to the eye. Eteocles and Polyneices have been wounded to the death. Jocasta, their mother, and Antigone, their sister, go forth to the battlefield to find them :—

"Then rushed their wretched mother on the twain
 And seeing them thus wounded unto death,
 Wailed : ' O, my sons ! too late, too late I come
 To succour you ! ' Then, clasping them by turns,
 She wept and mourned the long toil of her breasts,
 Groaning ; and by her side their sister groaned :
 ' O, ye who should have been my mother's stay
 In age, O, thoughtless of my maiden years
 Unwedded, dearest brothers ! ' From his chest
 Heaving a heavy breath, King Eteocles heard
 His mother, and stretched forth a cold damp hand
 On hers, and nothing said, but with his eyes
 Spake to her by his tears, showing kind thoughts
 In symbols. Then the other, who still breathed,
 Looked at his sister, and the queen, and said,
 ' We have perished, mother ! yea, I pity thee,
 And this my sister, and my brother dead ;
 For dear he was—my foe—and yet was dear.
 Bury me, O, my mother, and thou, too,
 Sweet sister, in my father's land, I pray ;
 And close my dying eyelids with thy hand,
 Mother ! '—Upon his eyes he placed her hand—
 ' And fare you well ! Now darkness clips me round.'
 Then both breathed out their weary life together.
 But the queen, when she saw this direful end,
 Maddened with anguish drew the dead man's sword,
 And wrought things horrible ; for through her throat
 She thrust the blade : and on her dearest falling
 Dies, and lies stretched, clasping both in her arms."

Phœn. 1429-1454.

But to return to the virtue of high spirit and stout-heartedness. The play of *Hecuba* contains a still more touching picture of heroism in death than that displayed by Menoikeus. Troy has been taken. Odysseus is sent by the Greeks to inform Hecuba that her daughter Polyxena must be sacrificed. Hecuba reminds him how in former days he had come disguised as a spy to Troy, and how she had recognised him, and, at his strong entreaty, spared him from discovery. In return for this, let him now spare her daughter. Frigidly and politely Odysseus

replies, " True, lady, a life for life. You saved mine, I would do something to save yours ; but your daughter is quite another person. I have not the pleasure of having received benefits from her. I must trouble her to follow me." Then Polyxena breaks silence :—

" I see thee, how beneath thy robe, O king,
Thy hand is hidden, thy face turned from mine,
Lest I should touch thee by the beard and pray.
Fear not : thou hast escaped the god of prayers
For my part. I will rise and follow thee,
Driven by strong need ; yea, and not loth to die.
Lo ! if I should not seek death, I were found
A cowardly, life-loving, selfish soul !
For why should I live ? Was my sire not king
Of all broad Phrygia ? Thus my life began ;
Then was I nurtured on fair bloom of hope
To be the bride of kings ; no small the suit,
I ween, of lovers seeking me : thus I
Was once—ah, woe is me ! of Idan dames
Mistress and queen, 'mid maidens like a star
Conspicuous, peer of gods, except for death ;
And now I am a slave : this name alone
Makes me in love with death—so strange it is."

Hec. 342-358.

Sheer contempt of life, when life has to be accepted on dishonourable terms, is the virtue of Polyxena. But, so far, though we may admire her fortitude, we have not been touched by her misfortune. Euripides reserves the pathos, after his own fashion, for a picture. Talthybius, the herald, is telling Hecuba how her daughter died :—

" The whole vast concourse of the Achaian host
Stood round the tomb to see your daughter die.
Achilleus' son, taking her by the hand,
Placed her upon the mound, and I stayed near ;
And youths, the flower of Greece, a chosen few,
With hands to check thy heifer, should she bound,
Attended. From a cup of carven gold,
Raised full of wine, Achilleus' son poured forth
Libation to his sire, and bade me sound
Silence throughout the whole Achaian host.
I, standing there, cried in the midst these words :
' Silence, Achaians ! let the host be still !
Hush, hold your voices ! ' Breathless stayed the crowd ;
But he : ' O, son of Peleus, father mine,
Take these libations pleasant to thy soul,
Draughts that allure the dead : come, drink the black
Pure maiden's blood wherewith the host and I
Sue thee : be kindly to us ; loose our prows,
And let our barks go free ; give safe return
Homeward from Troy to all, and happy voyage.'
Such words he spake, and the crowd prayed assent.
Then from the scabbard, by its golden hilt,
He drew the sword, and to the chosen youths
Signalled that they should bring the maid ; but she,
Knowing her hour was come, spake thus, and said :

' O, men of Argos who have sacked my town,
 Lo, of free will I die ! let no man touch
 My body : boldly will I stretch my throat.
 Nay, but I pray you set me free, then slay ;
 That free I thus may perish : 'mong the dead,
 Being a queen, I blush to be called slave.'
 The people shouted, and King Agamemnon
 Bade the youths loose the maid, and set her free :
 She, when she heard the order of the chiefs,
 Seizing her mantle, from the shoulder down
 To the soft centre of her snowy waist
 Tore it, and showed her breasts and bosom fair
 As in a statue. Bending then with knee
 On earth, she spake a speech most piteous :
 ' See you this breast, oh ! youth, if breast you will,
 Strike it ; take heart : or if beneath my neck,
 Lo ! here my throat is ready for your sword !'
 He willing not, yet willing, pity-stirred
 In sorrow for the maiden, with his blade
 Severed the channels of her breath : blood flowed ;
 And she, though dying, still had thought to fall
 In seemly wise hiding what eyes should see not.
 But when she breathed her life out from the blow,
 Then was the Argive host in divers way
 Of service parted ; for some bringing leaves,
 Strewed them upon the corpse ; some piled a pyre,
 Dragging pine trunks and boughs ; and he who bore none,
 Heard from the bearers many a bitter word :
 ' Standest thou, villain ? Hast thou then no robe,
 No funeral honours for the maid to bring ?
 Wilt thou not go and get for her who died
 Most nobly, bravest-souled, some gift ?' Thus they
 Spake of thy child in death : O, thou most blessed
 Of women in thy daughter, most undone !"

Hec. 521-582.

The quality of high spirit which we have seen in Menoikeus and Polyxena, is displayed by Macaria in the *Heracleidæ* and by Iphigeneia in the last scene of her tragedy at Aulis. Another shade of the same virtue gives a peculiar attraction to the self-devotion of Alcestis in her death, and of Electra in her attendance on the brain-sick Orestes. It is noticeable that Euripides, the so-called woman-hater, has alone of the Greek poets subsequent to Homer, with the single exception of Sophocles, devoted his genius to the delineation of female characters. It is impossible to weigh occasional sententious sarcasms against such careful studies of heroic virtue in woman as the Iphigeneia, the Electra, the Polyxena, the Alcestis of our poet. Aristophanes, who was himself the worst enemy Athenian ladies ever met with, describes Euripides as a foe to women, apparently because he thought fit to treat them, not as automata, but as active, passionate, and powerful agents in the play of human life.¹

¹ The real cause of offence was the prominence given by Euripides to the passion of unholy love in some of his heroines ; to the interest and sympathy he created for Phædra, Sthenobœa, and others.

But to return to our illustrations of this high-spirited, stout-hearted, quality of soul. In the *Medea* and the *Hippolytus* Euripides again displays the virtue of stern Stoicism in two women. But here the heroines are guilty: their Spartan endurance of anguish to the death is tempered with crime. These tragedies are the masterpieces of the poet; in each of them the single passion of an individual forms the subject of the drama. Separated from all antecedents of ancestral doom, Medea and Phædra work out the dreadful consequences of their own tempestuous will. Not *Othello*, and not *Faust*, have a more complete internal unity of motive. No modern play has an equal external harmony of form. Medea was one of the most romantic figures of Greek story. Daughter of the sun-god in the Colchian land of mystery and magic, she unfolded like some poisonous flower, gorgeous to look upon, with flaunting petals and intoxicating scent, but deadly. Terrible indeed in wiles, she learned to love Jason. By a series of crimes, in which the hero participated as her accomplice, and of which he reaped the benefits—by the betrayal of her father's trust, by the murder of her brother, by the butchery of Pelias—she placed her lover on the throne of Thessaly. Then Jason, at the height of his prosperity, forgetting the love, as of some tigress, that the sorceress bore him, forgetting too her fatal power of life and death, cast his eyes on Glauké, the king's daughter of Corinth, and bade Medea go forth with her sons, a Pariah,—a dishonoured wife. Whither should she turn? To Colchis, and the father whose son she slew? To Thessaly, where the friends of Pelias still live? Jason does not care. His passion for Medea has vanished like a mist. Their common trials, common crimes—trials which should have endeared them to each other; crimes which were as strong as hell to bind them—have melted from his mind like dew. He only wishes to be rid of the fell woman, and to live a peaceful life with innocent home-keeping folk. But on one thing Jason has not reckoned—on the awful fury of his old love; he forgets how she wrought by magic and by poison in his need, and how in her own need she may do things terrible and strange. In the same way we often think that we will lightly leave some ancient, strong, habitual sin, of old time passionately cherished, of late grown burdensome; but not so easily may the new pure life be won. Between our souls and it there stands the fury of the past.

Medea in her house, like a lioness in her den, has crouched sleepless, without food, not to be touched or spoken to, since the first news of Glauké's projected bridal was told. No one knows what she is meditating. Only the nurse of her children mistrusts her fiery eyes and thunderous silence, her viperish loose hair and throbbing skin. The moment is finely prepared. Some Corinthian ladies visit her, and she, though loth to rise, does so at their prayer, excusing her reluctance by illness, and by a foreigner's want of familiarity with their customs. Pale, calm, and terrible, she stands before them. From this first appearance of Medea to the end of the play, her one figure occupies

the whole space of the theatre. Her spirit is in the air, and the progress of the action only dilates the impression which she has produced. The altercations with Creon and with Jason are artfully conducted so as to arouse our sympathy and make us feel that such a nature is being driven by the intemperance and selfishness of others into a *cul-de-sac* of crime. The facility with which she disposes in thought of her chief foes, as if they were so many flies that have to be caught and killed, is eminently impressive. "Many are the ways of death: I will stretch three corpses in the palace—Creon's, the bride's, my husband's. My only thought is now of means—whether to burn them, or to cut their throats—perchance the old tried way of poison were the best. Nay, they are dead" (*Καὶ δὴ τεθνήσκει*). Medea knows *they* cannot escape her. For the rest, she will consider her own plans. In the scene with Jason she rises to an appalling altitude. Her words are winged snakes and the breath of furnaces. There is no querulous recrimination, no impotence of anger; but her spirit glows and flickers dragon-like against him, as she stands above him on the pedestal of his ingratitude. But when he has gone, and she sits down to reconsider her last act of vengeance—the murder of his sons and hers—then begins the tragic agony of her own soul. These lines reveal the contest between a mother's love and the pride of an injured woman, the endurance of one who must steel her heart in order to preserve her fame for fortitude and power:—

"O Zeus, and justice of high Jove, and light
Of Sun, all seeing! Now victorious
Over my foes shall I pace forth, sweet friends,
To triumph!

"I shudder at the deed that will be done
Hereafter: for my children I shall slay—
Mine; there is none shall snatch them from me now.

"Let no one deem me timid, weak of hand,
Placidly tame; but of the other temper,
Harsh to my foes and kindly to my friends."

Then when Glauké, arrayed in the robe Medea sent her, is smouldering to ashes with her father in slow phosphorescent flame, Medea sends for her children and makes that last speech which is the very triumph of Euripidean rhetoric:—

"O, children, children! you have still a city,
A home, where, lost to me and all my woe,
You will live out your lives without a mother!
But I—lo! I am for another land,
Leaving the joy of you:—to see you happy,
To deck your marriage-bed, to greet your bride,
To light your wedding torch shall not be mine!
O me, thrice wretched in my own self-will!
In vain then, dear my children! did I rear you;
In vain I travailed, and with wearing sorrow

Bore bitter anguish in the hour of childbirth !
 Yea, of a sooth, I had great hope of you,
 That you should cherish my old age, and deck
 My corpse with loving hands, and make me blessed
 'Mid women in my death. But now, ah me !
 Hath perished that sweet dream. For long without you
 I shall drag out a dreary doleful age.
 And you shall never see your mother more
 With your dear eyes : for all your life is changed.
 Woe, woe !
 Why gaze you at me with your eyes, my children ?
 Why smile your last sweet smile ? Ah ! me ; ah ! me !
 What shall I do ? My heart dissolves within me,
 Friends, when I see the glad eyes of my sons !
 I cannot. No : my will that was so steady,
 Farewell to it. They too shall go with me :
 Why should I wound their sire with what wounds them,
 Heaping tenfold his woes on my own head ?
 No, no, I shall not. Perish my proud will.
 Yet whence this weakness ? Do I wish to reap
 The scorn that springs from enemies unpunished ?
 Dare it I must. What craven fool am I,
 To let soft thoughts flow trickling from my soul !
 Go, boys, into the house : and he who may not
 Be present at my solemn sacrifice—
 Let him see to it. My hand shall not falter.
 Ah ! ah !
 Nay, do not, O my heart ! do not this thing !
 Suffer them, O poor fool ; yea, spare thy children !
 There in thy exile they will gladden thee.
 Not so : by all the plagues of nethermost Hell
 It shall not be that I, that I should suffer
 My foes to triumph and insult my sons !
 Die must they : this must be, and since it must,
 I, I myself will slay them, I who bore them.
 So it is fixed, and there is no escape.
 Even as I speak, the crown is on her head,
 The bride is dying in her robes, I know it.
 But since this path most piteous I tread,
 Sending them forth on paths more piteous far,
 I will embrace my children. O, my sons,
 Give, give your mother your dear hands to kiss !
 O, dearest hands, and mouths most dear to me,
 And forms and noble faces of my sons !
 Be happy even there : what here was yours,
 Your father robs you of. O, loved embrace !
 O, tender touch and sweet breath of my boys !
 Go, go, go, leave me ! Lo, I cannot bear
 To look on you : my woes have overwhelmed me !
 Now know I all the ill I have to do :
 But rage is stronger than my better mind,
 Rage, cause of greatest crimes and griefs to mortals." ¹

Med. 1021-1080.

¹ The whole of this splendid speech should be compared with the fragment of Neophrón's *Medea*, on which it is obviously modelled. See chapter xvi. on Fragments of the Lost Tragic Poets.

Phædra, the heroine of the *Hippolytus*, supplies us with a new conception of the same thirst for *εὐκλεία* (glory and fair fame)—the same *εὐψυχία* (high spirit), *γενναϊότης* (noble pluck), indifference to life when honour is at stake. The pride of her good name drives Phædra to a crime more detestable than Medea's, because her victim Hippolytus is eminently innocent. I do not want to dwell upon the pining sickness of Phædra, which Euripides has wrought with exquisitely painful details, but rather to call attention to Hippolytus. Side by side with the fever of Phædra is the pure fresh health of the hunter-hero. The scent of forest-glades, where he pursues the deer with Artemis, surrounds him; the sea-breeze from the sands, where he trains his horses, moves his curls. His piety is as untainted as his purity; it is the maiden-service of a maiden-saint. In his observance of the oath extorted from him by Phædra's nurse, in his obedience to his father's will, in his kindness to his servants, in his gentle endurance of a painful death, and in the joy with which he greets the virgin huntress when she comes to visit him, Euripides has firmly traced the ideal of a guileless, tranquil manhood. Hippolytus among the ancients was the Paladin of chastity, the Percival of their romance. Nor is any knight of mediæval legend more true and pure than he. Hippolytus first comes upon the stage with a garland of wild flowers for Artemis:—

“Lady, for thee this garland have I woven
Of wilding flowers plucked from an unshorn meadow,
Where neither shepherd dares to feed his flock,
Nor ever scythe hath swept, but through the mead
Unshorn in spring the bee pursues her labours,
And maiden modesty with running rills
Waters the garden. Sweet queen, take my crown
To deck thy golden hair: my hand is holy.
To me alone of men belongs this honour,
To be with thee and answer when thou speakest;
Yea, for I hear thy voice but do not see thee.
So may I end my life as I began.”

Even in this bald translation some of the fresh morning feeling, as of cool fields and living waters, and pure companionship and a heart at peace, transpires. Throughout the play, in spite of the usual Euripidean blemishes of smart logic-chopping and pragmatistical sententiousness, this impression is maintained. Hippolytus moves through it with the athletic charm that belongs to such statues as that of Meleager and his dog in the Vatican. At the end the young hero is carried from the sea-beach, mangled, and panting out his life amid intolerable pain and fever-thirst. His lamentations are loud and deep as he calls on Death the healer. Then suddenly is he aware of the presence of Artemis:—

“O, breath and perfume of the goddess! Lo,
I feel thee even in torment, and am eased!
Here in this place is Artemis the queen.”

The scent of the forest coolness has been blown upon him. His death will now be calm.

- “ *A.* Poor man ! she is ; the goddess thou most loved.
H. Seest thou me, lady, in what plight I lie ?
A. I see thee ; but I may not drop a tear.
H. Thou hast no huntsman and no servant now.
A. Nay, truly, since thou diest, dear my friend.
H. No groom, no guardian of thy sculptured shrine.
A. 'Twas Kupris, the arch-fiend, who wrought this woe.
H. Ah, me ! Now know I what god made me die.
A. Shorn of her honour, vexed with thy chaste life.
H. Three of us her one spite—behold ! hath slain.
A. Thy father, and his wife, and thirdly thee.
H. Yea, and I therefore mourn my sire's ill hap.
A. Snared was he by a goddess's deceit.
H. Oh ! for your sorrow in this woe, my father !
T. Son ! I have perished : life has now no joy.
H. I mourn this error more for you than me.
T. Would, son, I were a corpse instead of you.
A. Stay ! for though earth and gloom encircle thee,
 Not even thus the anger unavenged
 Of Kupris shall devour at will thy body :
 For I, with my own hand, to pay for thee,
 Will pierce of men him whom she mostly dotes on,
 With these inevitable shafts. But thou,
 As guerdon for thine anguish, shalt henceforth
 Gain highest honours in Trœzenian land,
 My gift. Unwedded maids before their bridals
 Shall shear their locks for thee, and thou for ever
 Shalt reap the harvest of unnumbered tears.
 Yea, and for aye, with lyre and song the virgins
 Shall keep thy memory ; nor shall Phædra's love
 For thee unnamed fall in oblivious silence.
 But thou, O son of aged Ægeus, take
 Thy child within thy arms and cherish him ;
 For without guile thou slewest him, and men,
 When the gods lead, may well lapse into error.
 Thee too I counsel ; hate not thy own father,
 Hippolytus : 'twas fate that ruined thee.”

Thus Artemis reconciles father and son. Hippolytus dies slowly in the arms of Theseus, and the play ends. The appearance of the goddess, as a lady of transcendent power more than as a divine being—her vindictive hatred of Aphrodite, and the moral that she draws about the fate by which Hippolytus died and Theseus sinned, are all thoroughly Euripidean. Not so would Æschylus the theologian, or Sophocles the moralist, have dealt with the conclusion of the play. But neither would have drawn a more touching picture.

The following scene from the opening of the *Orestes* may be taken as a complete specimen of the manner of Euripides when working pathos to its highest pitch, and when desirous of introducing into mythic history the realities of common life. Electra appears as the devoted sister ; Orestes as the invalid brother ; the Chorus are somewhat importunate, but, at the same time, sympathetic visitors. This

extract also serves to illustrate the Euripidean habit of mingling lyrical dialogue with the more regular iambic in passages which do not exactly correspond to the *Commos* of the elder tragedians, but which require highly-wrought expression. Helen has just left Electra. As the wife of Menelaus walks away, the daughter of Agamemnon follows her with her eyes, and speaks thus :—

El. O nature ! what a curse art thou 'mid men—
Yea, and a safeguard to the nobly-tempered !

[*Points her finger at Helen.*]

See how she snipped the tips of her long hair,
Saving its beauty ! She's the same woman still.—
May the gods hate thee for the ruin wrought
On me, on him, on Hellas ! Woe is me !

[*Sees the Chorus advancing.*]

Here come my friends again with lamentations,
To join their wails with mine : they'll drive him far
From placid slumber, and will waste mine eyes
With weeping when I see my brother mad.

[*Speaking to the Chorus.*]

O dearest maidens, tread with feet of wool ;
Come softly, make no rustling, raise no cry :
For though your kindness be right dear to me,
Yet to wake him will work me double mischief.

[*The Chorus enters.*]

Ch. Softly, softly ! let your tread
Fall upon the ground like snow !
Every sound be dumb and dead :
Breathe and speak in murmurs low !

El. Further from the couch, I pray you ; further yet, and yet away !

Ch. Even so, dear maid, you see that I obey.

El. Ah, my friend, speak softly, slowly,
Like the sighing of a rush.

Ch. See I speak and answer lowly
With a stealthy smothered hush.

El. That is right : come hither now ; come boldly forward to my side ;
Come, and say what need hath brought you : for at length with
watching tried,

Lo, he sleeps, and on the pillow spreads his limbs and tresses wide.

Ch. How is he ? Dear lady, say :
Let us hear your tale, and know
Whether you have joy to-day,
Whether sorrow brings you low.

El. He is breathing still, but slightly groaning in his sleep away.

Ch. O poor man ! but tell us plainer what you say.

El. Hush ! or you will scare the pleasant
Sleep that to his eyelids brings
Brief oblivion of the present.

Ch. Ah, thrice wretched race that springs
Burdened with the god-sent curses of abhorred deeds !

El. Ah me !
Guilty was the voice of Phœbus, when enthroned for prophecy
He decreed my mother's murder—mother murdered guiltily !

Ch. Look you, lady, on his bed,
How he gently stirs and sighs !

El. Woe is me ! His sleep hath fled,
Frightened by your noisy cries !

Ch. Nay ; I thought he sleeping lay.

El. Hence, I bid you, hence away
From the bedside, from the house !
Cease your noise ;
Subdue your voice ;
Stay not here to trouble us !

Ch. He is sleeping, and you rightly caution us.

El. Holy mother, mother Night !
Thou who sheddest sleep on every wearied wight !
Arise from Erebus, arise
With plummy pinions light :
Hover o'er the house of Atreus ; and upon our aching eyes,
Wearied with woe,
With grief brought low,
Solace bring 'mid miseries.
Silence ! Hush ! what noise was this ?
Can you ne'er your tongue restrain,
And allow soft slumber's kiss
To refresh his fevered brain ?

Ch. Tell me, lady, what the close
Of his grief is like to be ?

El. Death. Nought else will end his woes.
Lo, he fasts continually.

Ch. Alas ! Alas ! his fate is sure.

El. By the promise to make pure
Hands a mother's life-blood stained,
Phœbus brought
Woe, and wrought
All the grief that we have gained.

Ch. Just it was to slay the slayer ; yet the deed with crime was fraught.

El. Thou art dead : oh, thou art dead,
Mother, who didst bear me ! mother, who didst shed
A father's blood, and slay
The children of thy bed !
We are dying, we are dying, like the dead, and weak as they :
For thou art gone,
And I am wan,
Weeping, sighing night and day !
Look upon me, friends, behold
How my withered life must run,
Childless, homeless, sad and cold,
Comfortless beneath the sun.

Ch. Come hither, maid Electra, to the couch ;
Lest haply he should breathe his life away
Unheeded : I like not this deep dead languor.

[*Orestes wakes up.*]

Or. O soothing sleep ! dear friend ! best nurse of sickness !
How sweetly came you in my hour of need.
Blest Lethe of all woes, how wise you are,
How worthy of the prayers of wretched men !
Whence came I to this place ? How journeyed I ?
I cannot think : my former mind is vanished.

El. O dearest, how hath your sleep gladdened me !
Say, can I help to soothe or raise your body ?

Or. Yes, take me, take me : with your kind hands wipe
The foam of fever from my lips and eyes.

El. Sweet is this service to me ; I am glad
To soothe my brother with a sister's hand.

- Or.* Support me with your breast, and fan my forehead ;
Brush the loose hair : I scarce can see for sickness.
- El.* Poor head ! How rough and tangled are the curls,
How haggard is your face with long neglect !
- Or.* Now lay me back upon the bed again :
When the fit leaves me, I am weak and helpless.
- El.* Yea ; and the couch is some relief in sickness,
A sorry friend, but one that must be borne with.
- Or.* Raise me once more upright, and turn my body :
Sick men are hard to please, through wayward weakness.
- El.* How would you like to put your feet to earth ?
'Tis long since you stood up ; and change is pleasant.
- Or.* True : for it gives a show of seeming health ;
And shows are good, although there be no substance.
[Orestes changes his posture and sits at ease.]
- El.* Now listen to me, dearest brother mine,
While the dread Furies leave you space to think.
- Or.* What have you new to say ? Good news will cheer me ;
But of what's bad I have enough already.
- El.* Menelaus is here, your father's brother :
His ships are safely moored in Nauplia.
- Or.* What ! Has he come to end your woes and mine ?
He is our kinsman and our father's debtor.
- El.* He has : and this is surety for my words—
Helen hath come with him from Troy, is here.
- Or.* If heaven had saved but him, he'd now be happier :
But with his wife, he brings a huge curse home.
- El.* Yea : Tyndareus begat a brood of daughters
Marked out for obloquy, a shame through Hellas.
- Or.* Be you then other than the bad ; you can :
Make not fine speeches, but be rightly minded !
[As he speaks, he becomes excited.]
- El.* Ah me, my brother ! your eyes roll and tremble—
One moment sane, and now swift frenzy fires you !
[Orestes speaks to phantoms in the air.]
- Or.* Mother, I sue to thee : nay, mother, hound not
Those blood-faced, snake-encircled women on me !
There ! There ! See there—close by they bound upon me !
- El.* Stay, wretched brother ; start not from the bed !
For nought you see of what seems clear and certain.
- Or.* O Phœbus ! They will slay me, those dog-faced,
Fierce-eyed, infernal ministers, dread goddesses !
- El.* I will not leave you ! but with woven arms
Will stay you from the direful spasm-throes.
[Orestes hurls Electra from him.]
- Or.* Let go ! Of my damned Furies thou art one,
That with thy grip wouldst hale me down to hell !
- El.* Ah, woe is me ! what succour shall I find,
Seeing the very gods conspire against us ?
- Or.* Give me my bow and arrows, Phœbus' gift,
Wherewith Apollo bade me fight the fiends,
If they should scare me with wild-eyed delirium.
Some god shall feel the fury of man's hand,
Unless ye vanish forth from out my sight !
[He threatens the phantoms.]
- Hear ye not ! See ye not the feathery wings
Of swift, sure-striking shafts, ready to flutter ?
Ha ! Ha !

Why linger here ? Go, sweep with outspread pinions
The windy sky ! Hence, and complain of Phœbus !
Woe's me !

[*Recovering his reason again.*]

Why waste I breath, wearying my lungs in vain ?
Where am I ? From my bed how leaped I—when ?
'Midmost the waves once more I see fair weather.
Sister, why weep you ? Wherefore veil your head ?
I blush to see you partner of my woe,
Blush that a girl should suffer in my sickness.
Nay, do not pine thus, bowed beneath my burden—
All mine ;—you said but yea ; 'twas I who shed
Our mother's blood : but Loxias I blame,
Who urging me to most unholy deeds
Helped me with words, in act availed me nothing.
Yea, and I think my sire, if, face to face,
I asked him—is it right to slay my mother ?
Would lengthen many prayers, beseeching me
Never to draw my sword on her who bare me,
Seeing he might not see the sun again,
And I am doomed to bear this weight of horrors.—
But now unveil your face again, dear sister,
And cease from weeping—even though we be
Ringed round with sorrows. When you see me downcast,
Soothe you my terror and my frenzied soul—
Soothe and caress me ; yea, and when you moan,
'Tis mine to stay and comfort as I can :
For these kind services of friends are fair,
But, dear, sad sister, go into the house,
And give your watchful eyes to sleep, and rest ;
Take food, and with fair water bathe yourself.
For think, if you should fail me, if by watching
You take some sickness, then we're lost : 'tis you,
You only, are my help ; all else is vanished.

El. Not so. With you to die I choose, with you
To live : it is all one : for if you perish,
What shall I do—a woman ? How shall I,
Brotherless, friendless, fatherless, alone,
Live on ? Nay, if you ask it, I will do
Your will : but, brother, rest you on your bed ;
Nor take the terror and the startling fear
For more than phantoms : stay upon the couch.
For though one is not sick, and only seems,
Yet is this pain and weariness to mortals."

Or. 126-315.

This scene, for variety of motive and effect, is not excelled by any passage in ancient tragedy. The scope which it afforded for impressive acting must have been immense, though it is difficult to understand how the fixed masks and conventional dresses of the Greek stage could have been adapted to the violent and frequent changes of mood exhibited by Orestes. Adequately to render the effect of the lyrical dialogue between Electra and the Chorus is very difficult. I have attempted to maintain in some degree the antistrophic pauses, and by the use of rhyme, to hint how very near the tragedy of the Greeks approached, in scenes like this, to the Italian opera. The entrance of

the Chorus singing "Silence" can only be paralleled by passages in which the spies or conspirators of Rossini or Mozart appear upon the stage, whispering "Zitto, Zitto!" to the sound of subdued music. In the same way Electra's impassioned apostrophe to Night must have been the subject of an elaborate Aria.

The scene which I have translated from the *Orestes* suggests the remark that many Euripidean plays were in fact melodramas. This is true, in a special sense, of the *Troades*, which must have owed its interest as an acted drama to the music and the *mise en scène*. It is also worthy of notice that a fair proportion of our extant tragedies are what the Germans call *Lustspiele*. That is to say, they have no proper tragic ending, and the element of tragedy contained in them consists of perils escaped by the chief actors. Thus the *Helena* and the *Iphigeneia in Tauris* have a joyful climax. The *Orestes* closes with a reconciliation of all parties, hurriedly effected, that reminds us of a modern comedy. The *Ion* is brought to a satisfactory conclusion. The apotheosis of Iphigeneia in her play at Aulis eliminates the tragic element, though, regarded as the first part of an eminently tragic series and read by the light of the *Electra*, this play may be regarded as the prologue to a mighty drama of crime and retribution. The *Alcestis* is now universally and rightly classed among the plays of a semi-satyrical character; and the *Andromache* is not a genuine tragedy, since the death of Neoptolemus is episodical and has little to do with the previous action. In all these plays the keynote is struck by the Greek phrase *μεταβολή*, which signified a revolution brought about within the limits of a certain situation. This probably attracted Euripides to the class of drama in question, since it enabled him to deal freely with character and to concentrate his attention upon the working out of striking incidents. From this point of view the *Andromache* is so important that it deserves more than a passing notice. The peculiar faculty and the prevailing faults of the poet are alike illustrated in its scenes—his fine and sharp character-marking in the chief personages, his powerful rhetoric and subtle special-pleading, his acute remarks on politics and domestic relations, no less than his wilful neglect of dramatic unity and wanton carelessness of construction. Viewed in one light, the *Andromache* is a bitter satire upon the Spartan type of character, exemplified in the cruel Hermione and the treacherous Menelaus. From yet another standpoint of criticism it may be regarded as a dramatic essay on the choice of wives and the economy of the household. Thus the political and social theorist overlays the artist proper in this play; and yet the language is so brilliant, the pathos is so telling, and the lyrical episodes are so musical that we understand its popularity among the ancients. At the opening of the drama, Andromache, who has taken sanctuary at Phthia in the shrine of Thetis, describes the misery of her situation as bondswoman and concubine to Neoptolemus. Though warmly attached to herself and the father of her son Molossus, he has recently married Hermione, the

Spartan princess. Thus the true subject of the play is set before us ; for if the *Andromache* has any unity of conception, we must find it in the "nuptial choice" of Neoptolemus, who, after bringing discord into his household by the jealousy of two women, eventually meets his death as an indirect consequence of this domestic folly. The elegiac lamentations of the Trojan princess and the tender remonstrances of the Chorus, which follow the prologue, are among the most melodious passages of poetry in Euripides. Then the action begins. Neoptolemus is away at Delphi. Hermione and her father, Menelaus, remain at home, and use the opportunity for persecuting Andromache. In a long and agitating scene with Hermione, the heroine shows that she remains a noble lady, of untamed and royal soul, in spite of slavery. She disregards all threats, and maintains her station at the altar, whither she has fled for safety. One menace only makes her flinch. It is that violence may be done to her child Molossus, if she will not move. Now Menelaus enters, and the altercations are repeated, all tending to the same point of proving the odiousness of the Spartan character and the dignity of Andromache. Meanwhile our interest in her misfortunes is gradually heightened ; and we tremble for her when at last Menelaus persuades the suppliant to leave the sanctuary by assuring her that the only way of saving Molossus is to sacrifice her own life. At this point the pathos of the situation becomes truly Euripidean. We have the spectacle of a tender and helpless mother in the power of a merciless tyrant, obliged to give her own life for her son, not shrinking from the sacrifice, but dreading to leave him unprotected to his future fate amid unkindly aliens. She rises from the altar ; and no sooner is she in the hands of Menelaus, than he tells her that his promises were fraudulent. Molossus will be butchered after all. Then follows a great scene of high-wrought feeling. Andromache and Molossus are kneeling before Menelaus praying for their lives, when Peleus, the aged grandfather of Neoptolemus, appears and stays the execution. Euripides has drawn the character of Peleus with something of the heat and fury of the Sophoclean Teiresias. The old king does not spare Menelaus, but makes his tongue a scourge to flay him with invective. The end of the struggle is that Peleus conveys Andromache and the boy safely away ; and during the rest of the drama we hear nothing of them. Meantime Hermione, who, in contrast to Andromache's noble firmness and womanhood, is the type of *impotentia*, as quick to self-abandonment as she was blind in selfish cruelty, begins to reflect upon her husband's anger. What will he say and do if he returns and hears of her intention with regard to Andromache ? She is only just prevented from committing suicide, and lies sunk in contemptible remorse, when a new actor appears upon the scene. It is Orestes, to whom Hermione had been affianced at Argos. The treacherous Menelaus preferred to give her to a more fortunate and respectable husband ; but Orestes has a mind to wed her still, and has resolved to murder Neoptolemus at Delphi because of the insult put upon himself. He therefore removes

Hermione from the palace, and departs for Delphi. Peleus is now left alone upon the stage, to hear of the murder of his grandson from a messenger, and to receive instructions from Thetis as to the future of the realm of Phthia. It will be seen that the construction of this drama is defective, and that it has two separate plots, the one relating to Andromache, the other to Hermione and Orestes, which are only brought into artificial connection by the death of Neoptolemus. The speedy disappearance of Andromache from the scene, followed by the flight of Hermione and the escape of Menelaus to Sparta, leaves Peleus, who is only an accessory character, to bear the whole burden of the climax. Thus the *Andromache* lacks both internal and external unity, the unity of subject and form. Of material it has plenty, whether we regard the revolutions of fortune effected for the chief actors, or the variety of incidents, or the richness of reflective sentences, or the introduction of new "business" to sustain the flagging interest of the spectators. As a drama, it is second-rate. As a machine for the exhibition of specifically Euripidean qualities, it must rank high among the extant tragedies.

The *Iphigeneia in Aulide*, the *Electra*, the *Orestes*, and the *Iphigeneia in Tauris* might be called the Euripidean Oresteia, since each of these plays treats that portion of the Atridan story which Æschylus had handled in his three dramas. We miss the final purification of the hero, and have to infer the climax from the allusions of the *Andromache*, where, it may be said in passing, the noble type of his character, maintained without interruption in the *Electra*, the *Orestes*, and the *Tauric Iphigeneia*, is deformed by a savagery and guile that must have been repellent even to a Greek audience. In the *Electra* Euripides comes immediately and without doubt consciously into competition with both Æschylus and Sophocles. Like Sophocles, he has painted Electra as of harder nature than her brother. When Orestes, before engaging in his mother's murder, shows signs of yielding to his filial feeling and expresses a doubt about the oracle, she, like Lady Macbeth, reanimates his wavering courage with argument and taunt. But Euripides seems to have felt that it was unnatural in the Sophoclean drama to represent both brother and sister as unterrified by conscience after the successful issue of their plot. The lyrical dialogue between Orestes and Electra, when he returns with their mother's blood upon his hands and sword, is both terribly true to nature and dramatically striking. It needs the appearance of the Dioscuri to confirm them in the faith that they had done a righteous, heaven-appointed deed of justice. By this touch Euripides proved his determination to bring even the most mysterious of legends within the pale of ordinary human experience. The situation in which he places Electra at the opening of the play, outcast from her father's palace and wedded to a farmer, ragged in attire and obliged to do the hard work of her household, is another and perhaps a less justifiable instance of his realism. The stirring of compassion by the exhibition of material misery was one of the points urged against him

by Aristophanes; nor is it possible to feel that Electra's squalor adds anything essential to her tragedy. We may, however, be thankful to the poet for the democratic ideal of good manners and true chivalry, irrespective of blood and accidental breeding, which he has painted in his portrait of Electra's husband.¹ Not contented with thus varying the earlier outlines of the legend, Euripides in more than one passage directs a covert criticism against his predecessors. He shows that the tests of his identity offered by Orestes to Electra in the plays of Æschylus and Sophocles were insufficient, and that the murder of Clytemnestra in her palace, surrounded by the guard of a royal household, was improbable. The new motives invented by him for the recognition of Orestes and for the withdrawing of the queen to a place where she could be conveniently despatched are highly ingenious. Yet in the latter circumstance, what he gained in realism he lost in dramatic effect; for it was an incident of appalling terror that Clytemnestra and her paramour should be smitten in those very recesses of the palace where they had slaughtered Agamemnon, beneath the influence of those domestic Furies who, like an infernal revel, occupied the house of Atreus until all the guilty blood was shed. Throughout the *Electra* we feel that we are in the presence of a critical, realistic, and at the same time romantic poet, who has embroidered the old material of heroic story with modern casuistry, and has been working less with a view to producing a masterpiece of art than with the object of asserting his ingenuity within the narrow field of an exhausted legend. Had we not the *Choëphoræ* and the Sophoclean *Electra* for standards of comparison, it is possible that we might do simpler justice to the creative power of "sad Electra's poet" in this drama. As it is, we can hardly refrain from treating it as a triumph of skill and reflective ability, rather than as a potent work of original genius.

The *Orestes* lies open to even more stringent criticism. The whole conclusion, consisting of the burning of the palace at Argos, the apotheosis of Helen, the lamentations of the Phrygian slave, and the betrothal of direct enemies above the ruins of their ancestral home, is more comic than tragic, and almost justifies the theory that Euripides intended it to be a parody of some contemporary drama. This portion of the play, moreover, is a melodrama, and joins on to the first part by a merely formal link. Such interest as the *Orestes* possesses, after the beautiful opening scene, centres in the heroic friendship of Pylades, who sustains the hero in his suffering and defends him from the angry folk of Argos. It is far otherwise with the *Tauric Iphigeneia*. Here Euripides comes into no competition with Æschylus or Sophocles; for he has handled a legend outside the sphere of their known plays. It is one eminently suited to his powers, involving the description of romantic scenery, the recognition of brother by sister in circumstances of deep pathos and extreme improbability, the contest of the most powerful natural feelings, and in the last place, the exhibition of dangers

¹ Notice especially the speech of Orestes, line 367.

impending upon all the chief personages and only avoided by a thoroughly Euripidean fraud. None of the plots invented by Euripides are so nicely finished or so rich in incident as this; and yet there is nothing mechanical in its construction. Few of his plays have choral passages to match the yearnings of the captive maidens for their home in Hellas, or the praise of young Apollo throned by Zeus for prophecy beneath Parnassus. Few again are richer or more truthful in their presentation of emotions—the exquisite delicacy of a sister's affection, the loyalty of friends, and the passionate outpouring of a brother's love. Something in the savage circumstances of the play, the sombre Tauric scenery, the dreadful rites of Artemis, to whom Iphigeneia has been bound, and the watchful jealousy of her barbarian king, enhances the beautiful humanity of those three Greeks, burdened with such weight of sorrows on a foreign shore, haunted by memories of a father's cruelty, a mother's infidelity, pursued by the Furies of a righteous but abominable deed, yet none the less enjoying for one moment in the midst of pain and peril the pure pleasures of companionship. The chorus of Hellenic captives maintains an undercurrent of sad music that still further helps to heighten and interpret the situation. It is only at the last, when the knot of the situation has to be cut, that our sympathy begins to fail us. Thoas, though a barbarian, had been generous and kind. Yet Iphigeneia employs a heartless device for escaping from his hands with the sacred image of the Tauri in her possession; nor does she feel a moment's pang of remorse for the pain she is inflicting or for the lies she has employed to serve her purpose. It may indeed be said generally that Euripides justified the Aristophanic reproach of meanness by his too frequent employment of tricks and subterfuges. These are so distasteful to modern feeling that we are glad to know that even a Greek critic regarded them as faulty. With Iphigeneia's treason against Thoas we might compare Helen's plot for deceiving Theoclymenus, the insidious attack of Orestes upon Neoptolemus at Delphi, the capture of Helen and Hermione by Orestes and Pylades at Argos, and Agamemnon's incredibly base lure to Clytemnestra and Iphigeneia before Aulis. It is scarcely a defence of Euripides to urge that the gods themselves, as in the case of the Tauric Iphigeneia, sanction these deceptions. This only makes the matter worse, and forces us to choose between two hypotheses—either that Euripides sought to bring the old religion into contempt, or that he used its morality for merely theatrical purposes in order to justify the romantic crimes of his heroes. The latter seems the more probable theory; for it is clear in some most eminent examples that he has treated a deeply immoral legend for the sake of its admirable artistic capabilities. This is undoubtedly the case with the *Ion*, which presents a marvellous tale of human suffering, adventure, crime, and final felicity, dependent in all its details upon the fraud of a deity. Without doing justice to the masterly construction of the plot, the beautiful poetry, and the sustained interest of the *Ion*, it may be allowed me here to dwell for

one moment on its morality. Phœbus begets the boy Ion by a rape upon Creusa, and steals the boy away from Athens to Delphi. The mother is left to bewail not her shame only, but the loss of her son. In course of time she marries Xuthus and is childless. They go together to Delphi to inquire of the oracle; and here Xuthus is lyingly informed that Ion is the son of his youthful years. Rage and jealousy impel Creusa, on hearing this news, to poison Ion. She fails, and Ion in revenge attempts to murder her. The danger of Creusa at last forces Phœbus to reveal the truth through the mouth of Athene, who tells the queen that Ion is really her lost son, the offspring of Apollo's crime. Xuthus happens to be absent during this disclosure, and the goddess advises Creusa to keep the real truth to herself, since the good man already supposes Ion to be his own child, and will consequently treat him like a son. Stripped of its dramatic ornaments, its wonderful scene-painting, pathetic situations, unexpected recognitions, sudden catastrophes, accidents and dangers and adventures, this is the plain legend of the *Ion*; and a less ethical story of the gods could scarcely be found among those which Plato criticised in the *Republic*.

It is time to return from this digression once more to the plays which deal with Orestes. In them Euripides painted a virtue dear in its heroic aspect to the Greeks and celebrated in many of their legends, but which had not frequently been made the subject of dramatic presentation. The character of Pylades as the perfect comrade, fierce as a tiger and cunning as a fox against his foes, but tender as a woman to his suffering friend, willing to face all dangers in common with Orestes, enduring for his sake the obloquy of the world and the mysterious taint of religious impurity, refusing to live in his death and contending with him for the right to die, must be accepted as a masterpiece of creative power. There is nothing in common between Pylades and the confidant of modern tragedy—that *alter ego* or shadow of the hero's self, who dogs his path and reflects his sentiments. Pylades has a distinctly separate personality; in the *Orestes*, when Electra and her brother have abandoned hope, he takes the initiative and suggests the scheme that saves them. Yet none the less is sympathy the main point in his character. Euripides wrote nothing more touching than the description of his help afforded to Orestes in the council of the Argives, nothing more sublime than the contest between the two comrades in the *Tauric Iphigeneia*, when it is a question which of them should stay and by his own death save his friend for Hellas. Had the Athenians thus always thought of friendship, or had they learned the enthusiasm of its ideal from Euripides, they might indeed have bequeathed a new chivalry to the world. The three tragedies in which Pylades plays a prominent part, the *Electra*, *Orestes*, and *Tauric Iphigeneia*, are storehouses of the noblest sentiments and deepest truths about heroic friendship.

It is hard, while still beneath the overshadowing presence of so great a master as Euripides, to have patience with the critics and the scholars who scorn him—critics who cannot comprehend him, scholars

who have not read him since they were at school. Decadence! is their cry. Yet what would they have? Would they ask for a second Sophocles, or a revived Æschylus? That being clearly impossible, beyond all scope of wish, why will they not be satisfied with beauty as luminous as that of a Greek statue or a Greek landscape, with feeling as profound as humanity itself, and with wisdom "musical as is Apollo's lute"? These are the qualities of a great poet, and we contend that Euripides possesses them in an eminent degree. It is false criticism, surely, to do as Schlegel, Müller, and Bunsen have successively done¹—to measure Euripides by the standard of the success of his predecessors, or to ransack his plays for illustrations of pet dramatic theories, and then because he will not bear these tests, to refuse to see his own distinguished merits. It would sometimes seem as if our nature were exhausted by its admiration of a Sophocles or a Shakespeare. There is no enthusiasm left for Euripides and Fletcher.

Euripides, after all is said, incontestably displays the quality of radiancy. On this I should be willing to base a portion of his claim to rank as a great poet. An admirer of Æschylus or Sophocles might affirm that neither Æschylus nor Sophocles chose to use their art for the display of thrilling splendour. However that may be, Euripides, alone of Greeks, with the exception of Aristophanes, entered the fairyland of dazzling fancy which Calderon and Shakespeare and Fletcher trod. The *Bacchæ*, like the *Birds*, proves what otherwise we might have hardly known, that there lacked not Greeks for whom the *Tempest* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* would have been intelligible. Meanwhile, in making any estimate of the merits of Euripides, it would be unfair to omit mention of the enthusiasm felt for him by contemporaries and posterity. Mr. Browning, in the beautiful monument which he has erected to the fame of Euripides, has chosen for poetical treatment the well-known story of Athenians rescued from captivity by recitation of the verses of their poet.² There is no reason to doubt a story which attests so strongly to the acceptance in which Euripides was held at large among the Greeks. Socrates, again, visited the theatre on the occasion of any representation of his favourite's plays. By the new comedians, Menander and Philemon, Euripides was regarded as a divine

¹ Goethe was very severe on the critics who could not appreciate Euripides: "To feel and respect a great personality, one must be something oneself. All those who denied the sublime to Euripides were either poor wretches incapable of comprehending such sublimity, or shameless charlatans, who, by their presumption, wished to make more of themselves, and really did make more of themselves that they were" (Eckermann's *Conversations of Goethe*, English ed., vol. ii. p. 377). In another place he indicates the spirit in which any adverse criticism of Euripides should be attempted: "A poet whom Socrates called his friend, whom Aristotle lauded, whom Menander admired, and for whom Sophocles and the city of Athens put on mourning on hearing of his death, must certainly have been something. If a modern man like Schlegel must pick out faults in so great an ancient, he ought only to do it upon his knees" (*ib.* vol. i. p. 378). Again (*ib.* vol. i. p. 260), he energetically combats the opinion that Euripides had caused the decline of Greek tragedy.

² See *Balaustion's Adventure*. Since this chapter was first published, Mr. Browning has still further enforced his advocacy of Euripides by *Aristophanes' Apology*, while the great tragic poet has found a staunch defender from the carping critics of the Schlegel school in Dr. Mahaffy.

miracle. Tragedy and comedy, so dissimilar in their origins, had approximated to a coalition; tragedy losing its religious dignity, comedy quitting its obscene though splendid personalities; both meeting on the common ground of daily life. In the decadence of Greece it was not Æschylus and Aristophanes, but Euripides and Menander, who were learned and read and quoted. The colossal theosophemes of Æschylus called for profound reflection; the Titanic jokes of Aristophanes taxed the imagination to its utmost stretch. But Euripides "the human, with his droppings of warm tears," gently touched and soothed the heart. Menander with his facile wisdom flattered the intellect of worldly men. The sentences of both were quotable at large and fit for all occasions. They were not too great, too lofty, too resplendent for the paths of common life. We have lost Menander, alas! but we still possess Euripides. It seems a strange neglect of good gifts to shut our ears to his pathetic melodies and ringing eloquence—because, forsooth, Æschylus and Sophocles had the advantage of preceding him, and were superior artists in the bloom and heyday of the young world's prime.

CHAPTER XV

THE FRAGMENTS OF ÆSCHYLUS, SOPHOCLES, EURIPIDES

Alexandrian and Byzantine Anthologies—Titles of the Lost Plays of Æschylus—The *Lycurgeia*—The Trilogy on the Story of Achilles—The Geography of the *Prometheus Unbound*—Gnomic Character of the Sophoclean Fragments—Providence, Wealth, Love, Marriage, Mourning—What is true of the Sophoclean is still more true of the Euripidean Fragments—Mutilated Plays—*Phaëthon*, *Erechtheus*, *Antiope*, *Danaë*—Goethe's Restitution of the *Phaëthon*—Passage on Greek Athletes in the *Autolycus*—Love, Women, Marriage, Domestic Affection, Children—Death—Stoical Endurance—Justice and the Punishment of Sin—Wealth—Noble Birth—Heroism—Miscellaneous Gnomic Fragments—The Popularity of Euripides.

It is difficult to treat the fragments of Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides otherwise than as a golden treasury of saws and maxims, compiled by Alexandrian and Byzantine Greeks, for whom poetic beauty was of less value than sententious wisdom. The tragic scope and the æsthetic handling of the fables of their lost plays can scarcely be conjectured from such slight hints as we possess. Yet some light may be cast upon the Æschylean method by observing the titles of his dramas. We have, for example, the names of a complete tetralogy upon the legend of Lycurgus. The *Edonians*, the *Bassarids*, and the *Young Men* constituted a connected series of plays, a *Lycurgeia*, with *Lycurgus* for the satyric supplement. Remembering that Æschylus called his own tragedies morsels picked from the great Homeric banquet-table, we may conclude that this tetralogy set forth the Dionysian fable told by Diomedes to Glaucus in the *Iliad* (vi. 131).¹

“ No, for not Dryas' son, Lycurgus strong,
Who the divine ones fought, on earth lived long.
He the nurse-nymphs of Dionysus scared
Down the Nyseian steep, and the wild throng
Their ritual things cast off, and maddening fared,
Torn with his goad, like kine ; so vast a crime he dared.

¹ Worsley's translation, *Iliad*, vol. i. p. 154.

Yea, Dionysus, such a sight was there,
 Himself in fear sank down beneath the seas.
 And Thetis in her breast him quailing bare,
 At the man's cry such trembling shook his knees.
 Then angered were the gods who live at ease,
 And Zeus smote blind Lycurgus, and he fell
 Loathed ere his day."

It appears that the titles of the three dramas composing the trilogy were taken from the Chorus. In the first play the Edonian Thracians, subjects of Lycurgus, formed the Chorus; in the second, the Bassarids, or nurse-nymphs of Dionysus; in the third, the youths whom the wine-god had persuaded to adopt his worship. The subject of the first play was, therefore, the advent of Dionysus and his following in Thrace, and the victory of Lycurgus over the new cult. The second set forth the captivity of the Bacchantes or Bassarids, together with the madness sent upon Lycurgus as a punishment for his resistance, whereby he was driven, according to post-Homeric versions of his legend, to the murder of his own son Dryas in a fit of fury. The third play carried on the subject by exhibiting the submission of Lycurgus to the god whom he had disowned and dishonoured, and his death, at the hands of his own subjects, upon Mount Pangæus. Thus the first Chorus was hostile to Dionysus; the second was sympathetic, though captive and impotent; the third was triumphant in his cause. The artistic sequence of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis which the trilogy required, was developed through three moments in the life-drama of Lycurgus, and was typified in the changes of the choric sympathy, according to the law whereby Æschylus varied the form of his triple dramas and at the same time immediately connected the Chorus with the passion of each piece. The tragic interest centred in the conflict of Lycurgus and the god, and the final solution was afforded by the submission, though too late, of the protagonist's will to destiny. It is probable that the satyric play of *Lycurgus* represented the divine honours paid, after his death, to the old enemy, now become the satellite and subject of Dionysus, by pastoral folk and dwellers in the woodlands. The unification of obstinate antagonistic wills in the higher will of Zeus or Fate seems in all cases to have supplied Æschylus with the *Versöhnung* tragedy required, and to have suggested the religious *κάθαρσις* (purgation) without which the Greek drama would have failed to point its lesson. Seen in this light, the *Lycurgeia* must have been a masterpiece only less sublime, and even more full, perhaps, of picturesque incidents, than the Promethean trilogy. The emotional complexion, if that phrase may be permitted, of each member of the trilogy was determined by the Chorus; wherein we trace a signal instance of the Æschylean method.

More even to be regretted than the *Lycurgeia* is a colossal lost trilogy to which the name of *Tragic Iliad* has been given. That Æschylus should have frequently handled the subject-matter of the

Iliad was natural; and many titles of tragedies, quoted singly, point to his preoccupation with the mythus of Achilles. It has therefore been conjectured, with fair show of reason, that the *Myrmidones*, the *Nereides*, and the *Phrygians* formed a triple drama. The first described the withdrawal of Achilles from the war, the arming of Patroclus, and the grief which the son of Peleus felt for his friend's death. No Greek tragedy, had it been preserved, would have been more precious than this. The second showed how Thetis comforted her child, and procured fresh armour for him from Hephæstus, and how Achilles slew Hector. In the third, Priam recovered the dead body of his son and buried it. Supposing the trilogy to have been constructed upon these outlines, it must have resembled a gigantic history-play, in which, as in the *Iliad* itself, the character of Achilles was sufficient to form the groundwork of a complicated poem. The theme, in other words, would have resembled those of the modern and romantic drama, rather than such as the elder Greek poets were in the habit of choosing. The *Achilleis* did not in any direct way illustrate the doctrine of Nemesis, or afford a tragic conflict between the human will and fate. It owed its lustre to the radiant beauty of the hero, to the pathos of his love for Patroclus, to the sudden blazing forth of irresistible energy when sorrow for the dead had driven him to revenge, and to the tranquillity succeeding tempest that dignified his generous compliance with the prayers of Priam. The trilogy composed upon it must therefore, like a Shakespearean play, have been a drama of character. The fragments of the *Myrmidones* have already been pieced together in the chapter on the Homeric Achilles.¹ From the *Nereides* nothing has survived except what may be gathered from the meagre remnants of the Latin version made of it by Attius. The *Phrygians*, also called "Ἐκτορος λύτρα (Hector's Ransom), contained a speech of pleading addressed by Priam to the hero in his tent, of which the following is a relic: ²—

καὶ τοὺς θανόντας εἰ θέλεις εὐεργετεῖν,
τὸ γούν κακουργεῖν ἀμφιδέξινος ἔχει
καὶ μήτε χαίρειν μήτε λυπέσθαι πάρα.
ἡμῶν γε μέντοι Νέμεσις ἐσθ' ὑπερτέρα
καὶ τοῦ θανόντος ἢ δίκη πράσσει κόπον.

The trilogy of which the *Prometheus Bound* formed probably the middle play has been sufficiently discussed in the chapter on Æschylus.³ It remains in this place only to notice that the gigantic geography of the poet received further illustration in the lost play of the *Prometheus Unbound*. "Cette géographie vertigineuse," says Victor Hugo, "est mêlée à une tragédie extraordinaire où l'on entend des dialogues plus

¹ See chap. iii.

² "Lo, if thou fain wouldst benefit the dead,
Or if thou seek to harm them, 'tis all one;
For they can feel no joy nor suffer pain.
Nathless high Nemesis is throned above us,
And Justice doth exact the dead man's due."

³ See chap. xii.

qu'humains"; and, inverting this observation, we may add that the superhuman tragedy of the *Prometheia* owed much of its grandeur to the soul-dilating prospect of the earth's map, outstretched before the far-seeing sufferer on the crags of Caucasus.

Two other trilogies—a *Danaïd*, composed of the *Egyptians*, the *Suppliants*, and the *Danaïdes*; and an *Œdipodeia*, composed of *Laius*, the *Sphinx*, and *Œdipus*—may be mentioned, though to recover their outlines with any certainty is now hopeless. For the rest, it must be enough to transcribe and to translate a few fragments of singular beauty. Here is an invocation uttered in his hour of anguish by Philoctetes to Death, the deliverer: ¹—

ὦ θάνατε παιὰν μὴ μ' ἀτιμάσης μολεῖν·
μόνος γὰρ εἶ σὺ τῶν ἀνηκέστων κακῶν
λατρός· ἄλγος δ' οὐδὲν ἄπτεται νεκροῦ.

Another passage on Death, remarkable for the stately grandeur of its style, may be quoted from the *Niobe*: ²—

μόνος θεῶν γὰρ θάνατος οὐ δῶρων ἐρᾷ,
οὔτ' ἂν τι θύων οὔτ' ἐπισπένδων ἄνοις,
οὐ βωμὸς ἐστὶν οὐδὲ παιωνίζεται.
μόνου δὲ πειθῶ δαιμόνων ἀποστατεῖ.

The sublime speech of Aphrodite in the *Danaïdes*, imitated more than once by subsequent poets, must not be omitted: ³—

ἐρᾷ μὲν ἄγνός οὐρανὸς τρῶσαι χθόνα,
ἔρω δὲ γαῖαν λαμβάνει γάμου τυχεῖν·
δυμβροσ δ' ἀπ' εὐνάεντος οὐρανοῦ πεσῶν
ἔκυσε γαῖαν· ἥ δὲ τίκτεται βροτοῖς
μήλων τε βοσκὰς καὶ βίον Δημήτριον·
δενδρῶτις ὦρα δ' ἐκ νοτίζοντος γάμου
τέλειός ἐστι· τῶν δ' ἐγὼ παραίτιος.

Nor, lastly, the mystic couplet ascribed to both Æschylus and his son Euphorion: ⁴—

Ζεὺς ἐστὶν αἰθήρ, Ζεὺς δὲ γῆ, Ζεὺς δ' οὐρανός,
Ζεὺς τοι τὰ πάντα, χῶ τι τῶνδ' ὑπέρτερον.

¹ "O Death, the saviour, spurn me not, but come!
For thou alone of ills incurable
Art healer: no pain preyeth on the dead."

² "Alone of gods Death loves not gifts; with him
Nor sacrifice nor incense aught avails;
He hath no altar and no hymns of gladness;
Prayer stands aloof from him, Persuasion fails."

³ "Love throbs in holy heaven to wound the earth;
And love still prompts the land to yearn for bridals;
The rain that falls in rivers from the sky
Impregnates earth, and she brings forth for men
The flocks and herds and life of teeming Ceres;
The bloom of forests by dews hymeneal
Is perfected: in all which things I rule."

⁴ "Zeus is the air, Zeus earth, and Zeus wide heaven:
Yea, Zeus is all things, and what else above them."

The fragments of Sophocles are, perhaps, in even a stricter sense than those of Æschylus, a bare anthology, and the best way of dealing with them is to select those which illustrate the beauty of his style or the ripeness of his wisdom. Few indeed are full enough to afford materials for reconstructing the plot of a lost play. What, for instance, can be more tantalising to the student of Greek manners and sentiments than to know that Sophocles wrote a drama with the title *Lovers of Achilles*, and yet to have no means of judging of its fable better than is given in this pretty simile? ¹—

νόσημ' ἔρωτος τοῦτ' ἐφίμερον κακόν·
 ἔχοιμ' ἂν αὐτὸ μὴ κακῶς ἀπεικάσαι,
 ὅταν πάγον φανέντος αἰθρίου χεροῖν
 κρύσταλλον ἀρπάσωσι παῖδες ἀσταγῆ.
 τὰ πρῶτ' ἔχουσιν ἡδονὰς ποταινίους,
 τέλος δ' ὁ χυμὸς οὐθ' ὅπως ἀφῆ θέλει
 οὐτ' ἐν χεροῖν τὸ κτῆμα σύμφορον μένειν.
 οὕτω γε τοὺς ἐρώοντας αὐτὸς ἕμερος
 δρᾶν καὶ τὸ μὴ δρᾶν πολλακίς προῖεται.

A whole series of plays were written by Sophocles on the tale of Helen, and all of them have passed, "like shapes of clouds we form, to nothing." There was, again, a drama of the *Erigoni*, which might perhaps have carried the tale of Thebes still further than the climax reached in the *Antigone*. Yet Stobæus has only thought fit to treat us to two excerpts from it, whereof the following, spoken by Alemæon to Eriphyle, is the fullest: ²—

ὦ πᾶν σὺ τολμήσασα καὶ πέρα γύναι·
 κάκιον ἄλλ' οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδ' ἔσται ποτὲ
 γυναικὸς εἴ τι πῆμα γίγνεται βροτοῖς.

The sententious philosophy of life that endeared Euripides to the compilers of commonplace books was expressed by Sophocles also, with sufficient independence of the context to make his speeches valuable as quarries for quotation. To this accident of his art is probably due the large number of fragments we possess upon general topics of morality and conduct. In the following fine passage the poet

¹ "This love-disease is a delightful trouble ;
 Well might I shadow forth its power as thus :
 When the clear eager frost has fallen, boys
 Seize with their fingers the firm frozen ice,
 And first they feel an unaccustomed pleasure,
 But in the end it melts, and they to leave it
 Or in their hands to hold it know not how ;
 Even so the same desire drives wilful lovers
 To do and not to do by frequent changes."

² "Woman, that hast dared all, and more than all !
 There is not anything, nor will be ever,
 Than woman worse, let what will fall on men."

It is right to observe that Welcker and Ahrens have conjecturally pieced together this and many other scattered fragments, and connected them in such a way as to reconstitute a tragedy with Argos for its scene, not Thebes.

discusses the apparent injustice in the apportionment of good and evil fortune to virtuous and vicious men :¹—

δεινὸν γε τοὺς μὲν δυσσεβεῖς κακῶν τ' ἀπο
βλάστωντας, εἶτα τοῦσδε μὲν πράσσειν καλῶς,
τοὺς δ' ὄντας ἐσθλοὺς ἕκ τε γενναίων ἅμα
γεγῶτας εἶτα δυστυχεῖς πεφικένας,
οὐ χρῆν τάδ' οὕτω δαίμονας θνητῶν πέρι
πράσσειν· ἐχρῆν γὰρ τοὺς μὲν εὖσεβεῖς βροτῶν
ἔχειν τι κέρδος ἐμφανὲς θεῶν πάρα,
τοὺς δ' ὄντας ἀδίκους τοῖσδε τὴν ἐναντίαν
δικὴν κακῶν τιμῶρῶν ἐμφανῆ τίνειν.
κούδεις ἂν οὕτως εὐτύχει κακὸς γεγῶς.

The same play furnished Stobæus with an excellent observation on garrulity :²—

ἀνὴρ γὰρ ὅστις ἤδεται λέγων ἀεὶ
λέληθεν αὐτὸν τοῖς ξυνοῦσιν ὦν βαρὺς.

Also with a good remark upon the value of sound common sense :³—

ψυχὴ γὰρ εὖνους καὶ φρονοῦσα τοῦνδικον
κρείσσων σοφιστοῦ παντός ἐστιν εὐρέτις.

The *Aleadæ* supplied this pungent diatribe upon the contrast between poverty and wealth :⁴—

τὰ χρέματ' ἀνθρώποισιν εὐρίσκει φίλους,
αἰθίς δὲ τιμὰς εἶτα τῆς ὑπερτάτης
τυραννίδος θακοῦσιν ἀσχίστην ἔδραν.
ἔπειτα δ' οὐδεὶς ἐχθρὸς οὔτε φύεται
πρὸς χρέμαθ' ὅ τε φύντες ἀρνοῦνται στυγεῖν.
δεινὸς γὰρ ἔρπει πλοῦτος ἔς τε τὰ βατα
καὶ πρὸς βέβηλα, χῶπύθειν πένης ἀνὴρ
μηδ' ἐντυχῶν δύναται· ἂν ὦν ἐρᾷ τυχεῖν.
καὶ γὰρ δυσειδὲς σῶμα καὶ δυσώνυμον,
γλώσση σοφὸν τίθησιν εὐμορφόν τ' ἰδεῖν.

¹ "Tis terrible that impious men, the sons
Of sinners, even such should thrive and prosper,
While men by virtue moulded, sprung from sires
Complete in goodness, should be born to suffer.
Nay, but the gods do ill in dealing thus
With mortals! It were well that pious men
Should take some signal guerdon at their hands;
But evil-doers, on their heads should fall
Conspicuous punishment for deeds ill-done.
Then should no wicked man fare well and flourish."

From the *Aletes*.

² "The man who takes delight in always talking
Is irksome to his friends and does not know it."

³ "A reasonable soul, by just perception,
Better than sophists may discover truth."

⁴ "Money makes friends for men, and heaps up honours,
And sets them on the tyrant's hated throne:
Wealth finds no foes, or none but covert foes,
Climbs hallowed ways, and treads where tracks are common,
While poor men, what luck gives them may not use:
A mis-shaped body, an ill-sounding name,
Wealth turns by words to beauty, gifts with wisdom;

μόνῳ δὲ χαίρειν καὶ νοσεῖν ἐξουσία
πάρεστιν αὐτῷ κάπικρύψασθαι κακά.

In the *Locrian Ajax* we find two single lines worth preservation : 1—

σοφοὶ τύραννοὶ τῶν σοφῶν ξυνοῦσι.

and : 2—

ἀνθρωπὸς ἐστὶ πνεῦμα καὶ σκιά μόνον.

This charming description comes from the *Ægeus*, recalling Athens, where the poplars grow so large and leafy : 3—

ὥσπερ γὰρ ἐν φύλλοισιν αἰγείρου μακρᾶς,
κἂν ἄλλο μηδέν, ἀλλὰ τοῦκείνης κἄρα
αἶρα κραδαίνει κἀνακουφίζει πτέρων.

Some scattered utterances upon women and love may be collected from the *Phædra*, in which play Sophocles broke the ground trodden by Euripides : 4—

ἔρως γὰρ ἀνδρας οὐ μόνους ἐπέρχεται
οὐδ' αὖ γυναῖκας ἀλλὰ καὶ θεῶν ἄνω
ψυχὰς χαράσσει κάπι πόντον ἔρχεται.
καὶ τόνδ' ἀπείργειν οὐδ' ὁ παγκρατῆς σθένει
Ζεὺς ἀλλ' ὑπείκει καὶ θέλων ἐγκλίνεται.

οὕτω γυναικὸς οὐδὲν ἂν μείζον κακὸν
κακῆς ἀνὴρ κτήσαιτ' ἂν οὐδὲ σώφρονος
κρείσσον· παθῶν δ' ἕκαστος ὦν τύχη λέγει.

The next fragment, extracted possibly from the *Colchian Women*, deserves to be compared with similar Euripidean passages, though in point of workmanship it is finer, and in profound suggestion more intense, than is the usual manner of Euripides : 5—

ὦ παῖδες ἦ τοι Κύπρις οὐ Κύπρις μόνον
ἀλλ' ἐστὶ πολλῶν ὀνομάτων ἐπώνυμος.

For wealth alone hath privilege of freedom
In joy and sickness, and can hide its sorrow."

1 "Tyrants are wise by wise society."

2 "Man is but wind and shadow, nought besides."

3 "As in the boughs of a tall poplar-tree,
If nothing else, at least her shivering top
Moves 'neath the breeze, and waves her leafy pinions."

4 "Love falls not only on the hearts of men
Or women, but the souls of gods above
He furrows, and makes onslaught on the sea :
Against his force Zeus the all-powerful
Is impotent—he yields and bends with liking."

"Than a bad wife a man can have no greater
Curse, and no greater blessing than a good one.
Each after trial speaks by his experience."

5 "Girls, look you, Kupris is not Kupris only :
In her one name names manifold are blended ;

ἔστιν μὲν "Αἰδης ἔστι δ' ἀφθίτος βία
 ἔστιν δὲ λύσσα μαινὰς ἔστι δ' ἕμερος
 ἄκρατος ἔστ' οἰμωγμός. ἐν κείνῃ τὸ πᾶν
 σπουδαῖον ἡσυχάειν ἐς βίαν ἄγον.
 ἐνθήκεται γὰρ πνευμένων ὄσοις ἐν
 ψυχῇ. τίς οὐχὶ τῆσδε τῆς θεοῦ βορά ;
 εἰσέρχεται μὲν ἰχθύων πλωτῶ γένει
 ἔνεστι δ' ἐν χέρσου τετρασκελεῖ γονῆ'
 νωμᾷ δ' ἐν ὠωνοῖσι τοῦκείνης πετρὸν
 ἐν θηρῶν ἐν βροτοῖσιν ἐν θεοῖς ἄνω.
 τίς οὐ παλαῖος' ἐς τρίς ἐκβάλλει θεῶν ;
 εἴ μοι θέμις, θέμις δὲ τᾶληθῆ λέγειν,
 Διὸς τυραννεί πνευμένων' ἄνευ ὁδοῦ
 ἄνευ σιδήρου πάντα τοι συντέμεται
 Κύπρις τὰ θνητῶν καὶ θεῶν βουλεύματα.

While upon this topic of love and women, I may quote a considerable fragment of the *Tereus*, marked by more sympathy for women in the troubles of their married lives than the Greek poets commonly express :¹—

νῦν δ' οὐδὲν εἰμι χωρὶς, ἀλλὰ πολλάκις
 ἔβλεψα ταύτῃ τὴν γυναικεῖαν φύσιν,
 ὡς οὐδὲν ἔσμεν· αἱ νέαι μὲν ἐν πατρὸς
 ἡδιστον οἶμαι ζῶμεν ἀνθρώπων βίον·
 τερπνῶς γὰρ αἶε πάντας ἀνοία τρέφει.
 ὅταν δ' ἐς ἡβην ἐξικώμεθ' εὐφρονες,
 ὠθούμεθ' ἔξω καὶ διεμπολώμεθα
 θεῶν πατρῶν τῶν τε φυσάντων ἀπο,
 αἱ μὲν ξένους πρὸς ἀνδρας, αἱ δὲ βαρβάρους,
 αἱ δ' εἰς ἀθήν δώμαθ', αἱ δ' ἐπίρροθα,
 καὶ ταῦτ' ἐπειδὴν εὐφρόνῃ ζεύξῃ μία
 χρεῶν ἐπαινεῖν καὶ δοκεῖν καλῶς ἔχειν.

For she is Death, imperishable power,
 Frenetic fury, irresistible longing,
 Wailing and groaning. Her one force includes
 All energy, all languor, and all violence.
 Into the vitals of whatever thing
 Hath breath of life, she sinks. Who feeds her not ?
 She creeps into the fishes of the sea
 And the four-footed creatures of dry land,
 Shakes 'mid the birds her own aerial plumes,
 Sways beasts and mortal men and gods above.
 Which of the gods hath she not thrown in wrestling ?
 If right allow, and to speak truth is right,
 She rules the heart of Zeus. Without or spear
 Or sword, I therefore bid you know, Dame Kupris
 Fells at a blow of gods and men the counsels."

¹ "Now am I nought—abandoned : oftentimes
 I've noticed how to this we women fall,
 How we are nought. In girlhood and at home
 Our life's the sweetest life men ever know,
 For careless joy is a glad nurse to all :
 But when we come to youth, gleeful and gay,
 Forth are we thrust, and bought and sold and bartered,
 Far from our household gods, from parents far ;
 Some to strange husbands, to barbarians some,
 To homes uncouth, to houses foul with shame.
 Yea, let but one night yoke us, all these things
 Must needs forthwith be praised and held for fair."

The same play contains a fine choric passage upon the equality of human souls at birth, their after inequality through fortune :¹—

ἐν φύλον ἀνθρώπων μὲν ἔδειξε πατρὸς καὶ μητρὸς ἡμῶν
 ἄμερα τοὺς πάντας· οὐδεὶς ἐξοχος ἄλλος ἐβλάσταν ἄλλου.
 βόσκει δὲ τοὺς μὲν μοῖρα δυσμερίας τοὺς δ' ἄλβος ἡμῶν
 τοὺς δὲ δουλείας ζυγὸν ἔσχεν ἀνάγκας.

Among the fragments that deal with the commonplaces of Greek tragedy, the following, from the *Tyndareus*, may be cited as a brilliant expression of the Solonian proverb :²—

οὐ χρὴ ποτ' εὖ πράσσοντος ὀλβίσιαι τύχας
 ἀνδρὸς πρὶν αὐτῷ παντελῶς ἤδη βίος
 διεκπερανθῆ καὶ τελευτήσῃ βίον.
 ἐν γὰρ βραχεῖ καθέειλε κώλιγφ χρόνῳ
 πᾶμπλουτον ἄλβον δαίμονος κακοῦ δόσις,
 ὅταν μεταστῇ καὶ θεοῖς δοκῇ τάδε.

A play called the *Scyrian Women* furnishes two excellent apophthegmatic passages upon the misery of old age and the inutility of mourning :³—

οὐδὲν γὰρ ἄλγος οἶον ἢ πολλὴ ζῆση.
 πάντ' ἐμπέφυκε τῷ μακρῷ γήρᾳ κακὰ,
 νοὺς φροῦδος ἔργ' ἀχρεῖα φροντίδες κεραί.

ἀλλ' εἰ μὲν ἦν κλαίουσιν ἰᾶσθαι κακὰ
 καὶ τὸν θανάτῳ δακρύοις ἀνιστάται,
 ὁ χρυσοῦς ἦσσαν κτῆμα τοῦ κλαίειν ἂν ἦν.
 νῦν δ' ὦ γεραῖέ ταῦτ' ἀνηνύτως ἔχει
 τὸν μὲν τάφῳ κρυφθέντα πρὸς τὸ φῶς ἄγειν·
 κάμοι γὰρ ἂν πατήρ γε δακρύων χάριν
 ἀνῆκτ' ἂν εἰς φῶς.

¹ "Of one race and common lineage all men at the hour of birth
 From the womb are issued equal, sons alike of mother earth ;
 But our lots how diverse ! Some are nursed by fortune harsh and rude,
 Some by gentle ease, while others bare their necks to servitude."

² "To call that man who prospers truly happy
 Were vain before his life be wholly done ;
 For in short time and swift great wealth and puissance
 Have fallen by the dower of fate malign,
 When fortune veers and thus the gods decree."

³ "There is no trouble worse than length of life.
 Old age hath all the ills that flesh is heir to—
 Vain thoughts and powerless deeds and vanished mind."

"If mourners by their cries could cure our misery,
 If tears could raise the dead to life again,
 Gold would be valueless compared with crying.
 But now, old man, these sorrows nought avail
 To bring to light him whom the grave hath covered ;
 Else had my father, too, by grace of tears,
 The day revisited."

The second of these extracts finds a close echo in some beautiful lines on the inutility of tears by Philemon (*Sardius*, fr. 1).

Two lines from a lost play on the tale of Odysseus illustrate the celebrated pun of Ajax on his own name : 1—

ὀρθῶς δ' Ὀδυσσεύς εἰμ' ἐπώνυμος κακοῖς·
πολλοὶ γὰρ ὠδύσαντο δυσσεβεῖς ἐμοί.

In conclusion, a few single lines or couplets may be strung together for their proverbial pithiness and verbal delicacy : 2—

ἔνεστι γὰρ τις καὶ λόγοισιν ἡδονὴ
λήθην ὅταν ποιῶσι τῶν ὄντων κακῶν.
τὸ μὴ γὰρ εἶναι κρεῖσσον ἢ τὸ ζῆν κακῶς.
πόνου μεταλλαχθέντος οἱ πόνοι γλυκεῖς.
εἰ σῶμα δοῦλον ἄλλ' ὁ νοῦς ἐλεύθερος.
ἄρκους ἐγὼ γυναικὸς εἰς ὕδωρ γράφω.
ὦ θνητὸν ἀνδρῶν καὶ ταλαίπωρον γένος·
ὡς οὐδέν ἐσμεν, πλὴν σκιαῖς εἰκοτότες,
βάρος περισσὸν γῆς ἀναστρωφώμενοι.
θάρσει, γύναι· τὰ πολλὰ τῶν δεινῶν θναρ
πνεύσαντα νυκτὸς ἡμέρας μαλάσσεται.
τὰ μὲν διδακτὰ μανθάνω, τὰ δ' εὐρέτᾳ
ζητῶ, τὰ δ' εὐκτὰ παρὰ θεῶν ἤτησάμην.

Whenever we compare Euripides with his predecessors, we are led to remark that he disintegrated the drama by destroying its artistic unity and revealing the *modus operandi* of the scientific analyst. All the elements of a great poem were given as it were in their totality by Æschylus. Sophocles, while conscious of the effect to be gained by resolving the drama into its component parts, was careful to recombine them by his art. It is difficult with either Æschylus or Sophocles to separate a passage from its context without injuring the whole, or to understand the drift of a sentence without considering both circumstance and person. With Euripides the case is somewhat different.

- 1 "Rightly do bad men call my name Odysseus,
For ill folk odious insults heap upon me."
- 2 "Even in words there is a pleasure, when
They bring forgetfulness of present woes."
" 'Tis better not to be than to live badly."
"When toil has been well finished, toils are sweet."
"Enslave the body—still the soul is free."
"The oaths of women I on water write."
"O mortals, wretched creatures of a day,
How truly are we nought but like to shadows
Rolling superfluous weight of earth around!"
"Take courage, lady: many fearful things
That breathed dark dreams in night, by day are solaced."
"What may be taught, I learn; what may be found,
I seek; from Heaven I ask what may be prayed for."

Though he composed dramas supremely good in the aggregate impression left upon our mind, we feel that he employed his genius with delight in perfecting each separate part regarded by itself alone. So much of time and talent might be spent on the elaboration of the plot, so much on the accentuation of the characters, so much on lyric poetry, so much on moral maxims, so much on description, and so much on artificial argument. There is something overstrained in this crude statement; yet it serves to indicate the analytic method noticeable in Euripides. It consequently happened that his plays lent themselves admirably to the scissors and paste-box method of the compilers. He was a master of gnomes and sentences, and his tragedies were ready-made repertoires of quotations. The good cause and the better were pleaded in his dialogues with impartial skill, because it was the poet's aim to set forth what might be said rhetorically, because he took a lively interest in casuistry for its own sake. These qualities, combined with so much that is attractive in his fables, radiant in his fancy, tender in his human sympathy, and romantic in his conduct of a play, endeared him to the Greeks of all succeeding ages. What they wanted in dramatic poetry he supplied better than any other playwright, except perhaps Menander, who, for similar reasons, shared a similar exceptionally lucky fate. The result is that, besides possessing at least eighteen of the plays of Euripides, as against seven of Sophocles and seven of Æschylus, our anthology of Euripidean excerpts is voluminous in the same ratio. The majority of these we owe to the industry of Stobæus, who always found something to his purpose in a drama of Euripides, while collecting wise precepts and descriptive passages to illustrate the nature of a vice or virtue. We must be careful, amid the medley of sentiments expressed with equal force and equal ease, to remember that they are not the poet's own, but put into the mouth of his dramatic personages. What is peculiar is the impartiality of rhetorical treatment they display—a quality which, though it may not justify, accounts for the Aristophanic hostility to the Euripidean school of talkers on all subjects.

In addition to fragments, there remain detached portions of the *Phaëthon*, the *Erechtheus*, and the *Antiope*, sufficient, if nothing else had been preserved of the Euripidean drama, to suggest a better notion of this poet and his style than of Ion or Achæus, his lost compeers in the Alexandrian Canon. From the catastrophe of the *Phaëthon*, for example, it appears that Euripides contrived a truly striking contrast between the reception of the dead youth's corpse into the palace by his mother, and the advent, immediately following, of his father with a Chorus chanting bridal hymns. Lycurgus the orator, quoting the *Erechtheus*, has transmitted a characteristic speech by Praxithea, who deserves to be added to the list of courageous women painted with the virtues of *εὐψυχία* (high spirit) by Euripides. She maintains that, just as she would gladly send forth sons in the face of death to fight for their country, so, when the State requires of her the sacrifice of a

daughter, she would be ashamed to refuse this much and far more. The outlines of the *Antiope* are more blurred; yet enough survives of a dialectical contention between Zethus and Amphion, the one arguing for a life of study and culture, the other for a life of arms and action, to illustrate this phase of the master's manner. With regard to the *Phaëthon*, it should be mentioned that Goethe attempted its restitution. His essay may be studied with interest by those who seek to understand the German poet's method of approaching the antique. The reverence with which he handles the precious relics may possibly astonish scholars, who, through fastidiousness of taste, have depreciated a dramatist they imperfectly comprehend.¹ English literature can now boast its own *Erechtheus*, restored by Swinburne on the model of Æschylus rather than Euripides. While referring to the mutilated dramas of Euripides, the opening to the *Danaë* requires a passing word of comment. It consists of a prologue in the mouth of Hermes, a Chorus, and a couple of lines spoken by Acrisius. The whole, however, is pretty clearly the work of some mediæval forger, and has, so far as it goes, the same kind of interest as the *Χριστός πάσχω* (Christ's Passion), because it illustrates the ascendancy of Euripides during the later ages of Greek culture.

Irksome as it may be to both writer and reader, I know no better method of dealing with the fragments of Euripides than that already adopted with regard to those of Sophocles. The fragments themselves are precious, and deserve to be presented to the modern student with loving and reverential care. Yet there is no way of centralising the interest of their miscellaneous topics; and to treat them as an anthology of quotations, selecting the most characteristic and translating these as far as possible into equivalent lines, is all that I can do.

A peculiarly interesting fragment in its bearing on Greek life shall be chosen for the first quotation. It comes from the satyric drama of *Autolycus*, and expresses the contempt felt by cultivated Athenians for young men who devoted all their energies to gymnastics. It is not easy to connect the idea of vulgarity with that of the Greek athletes whose portraits in marble, no less resplendent than the immortal Apoxyomenos of the Vatican, adorned the peristyles of Altis. Yet there can be little doubt from the following fragment, taken in connection with certain hints in Plato, that these muscular heroes of an hour, for whom wreaths were woven and breaches broken in the city walls, struck some green-eyed philosophers as the incarnation of rowdyism. Euripides, if we may trust his biographers, had been educated by his father as an athlete; and it is not improbable that his early distaste for an eminently uncongenial occupation, no less than his familiarity with the manners of its professors, embittered his style in this sarcastic passage. Such splendid beings as the Autolycus, before whom the distinguished guests in Xenophon's Symposium were silenced, seemed to our poet at best but sculptor's models, walking statues, *πόλεως*

¹ See Goethe, *Sämmtliche Werke*, 1840, vol. xxxiii. pp. 22-43.

ἀγάλματα (town-ornaments), and at worst mere slaves of jaws and belly, *περισσαὶ σαρκές* (hypertrophies of flesh). Early in Greek literature the same reluctant light of moral science, like the gaze of Apollonius undoing Lamia's charm, had been cast upon the athletes by Xenophanes of Colophon.¹ While listening to Euripides, we can fancy that the Adikos Logos from the *Clouds* of Aristophanes is speaking through his lips to an Athenian audience, composed of would-be orators and assiduous dikasts: ²—

κακῶν γὰρ ὄντων μυρίων καθ' Ἑλλάδα,
οὐδὲν κἀκίον ἔστιν ἀθλητῶν γένους.
οἱ πρῶτα μὲν ζῆν οὔτε μανθάνουσιν εὖ,
οὔτ' ἂν δύναντο· πῶς γὰρ ὅστις ἔστ' ἀνὴρ
γνάθου τε δοῦλος νηθῦος θ' ἠσσημένος,
κτῆσαιτ' ἂν ἄλβον εἰς ὑπερβολὴν πατρός;
οὐδ' αὖ πένεσθαι καὶ ξυνηρετμεῖν τύχαις
οἰοί τ'· ἔθῃ γὰρ οὐκ ἐθισθέντες καλὰ
σκληρῶς διαλλάσσουν εἰς τὰμήχανα.
λαμπροὶ δ' ἐν ἤβῃ καὶ πόλεως ἀγάλματα
φοιτῶσ'· ὅταν δὲ προσπέσῃ γῆρας πικρὸν
τρίβωνες ἐκβαλόντες οἰχονται κρόκας.
ἐμμεψάμην δὲ καὶ τὸν Ἑλλήνων νόμον
οἷ τῶνδ' ἕκατι σύλλογον ποιούμενοι
τιμῶσ' ἀχρείους ἠδονὰς δαιτὸς χάριν.
τίς γὰρ παλαισας εὖ, τίς ὠκύπους ἀνὴρ
ἢ δίσκον ἄρας ἢ γνάθου παίσας καλῶς
πόλει πατρῷα στέφανον ἤρκεσεν λαβῶν;
πότῃρα μαχοῦνται πολεμίοισιν ἐν χερσίν
δίσκουσ' ἔχοντες ἢ δι' ἀσπίδων χερσὶ
θεινοντες ἐκβαλοῦσι πολεμίους πάτρας;
οὐδεὶς σιδήρου ταῦτα μωραίνει πέλας
στάς. ἄνδρας οὖν ἐχρήν σοφοῦς τε κάγαθοῦς

¹ The passage alluded to above is No. 19 of the fragments of Xenophanes. It consists of eleven elegiac couplets, in which the philosopher asserts his own superiority to the winners of wreaths at Olympia and elsewhere, severely blaming the Greeks for not recognising that "the wisdom we profess is more excellent than the strength of men or horses."

² "Of all the thousand ills that prey on Hellas
Not one is greater than the tribe of athletes;
For, first, they never learn how to live well,
Nor indeed could they; seeing that a man,
Slave to his jaws and belly, cannot hope
To heap up wealth superior to his sire's.
How to be poor and row in fortune's boat
They know no better; for they have not learned
Manners that make men proof against ill luck.
Lustrous in youth, they lounge like living statues
Decking the streets; but when sad old age comes,
They fall and perish like a threadbare coat.
I've often blamed the customs of us Hellenes,
Who for the sake of such men meet together
To honour idle sport and feed our fill;
For who, I pray you, by his skill in wrestling,
Swiftness of foot, good boxing, strength at quoits,
Has served his city by the crown he gains?
Will they meet men in fight with quoits in hand,
Or in the press of shields drive forth the foe man
By force of fisticuffs from hearth and home?
Such follies are forgotten face to face
With steel. We therefore ought to crown with wreaths

φύλλοις στέφεσθαι, χῶστίς ἡγείται πόλει
 κάλλιστα, σώφρων καὶ δίκαιος ὦν ἀνὴρ,
 ὅστις τε μύθοις ἔργ' ἀπαλλάσσει κακὰ
 μάχας τ' ἀφαιρῶν καὶ στάσεις· τοιαῦτα γὰρ
 πόλει τε πάσῃ πᾶσι θ' Ἑλλήσιν καλά.

Passing from the athletes to a cognate subject, the following fragment from the *Dictys* nobly expresses the ideal of friendship. The first two lines seem to need correction; I have let them stand, though inclined to propose *κεῖ* for *καί*, and to conjecture the loss of a line after the second: ¹—

φίλος γὰρ ἦν μοι· καὶ μ' ἔρωσ ἔλοι ποτὲ
 οὐκ εἰς τὸ μῶρον οὐδέ μ' εἰς Κύπριν τρέπων.
 ἀλλ' ἔστι δὴ τις ἄλλος ἐν βροτοῖς ἔρωσ,
 ψυχῆς δικαίας σώφρονός τε κάγαθῆς.
 καὶ χρῆν δὲ τοῖς βροτοῖσι τόνδ' εἶναι νόμον,
 τῶν εὐσεβούντων ὅτινές γε σώφρονες
 ἔρᾳν, Κύπριν δὲ τὴν Διὸς χαίρειν εἶν.

About *Erôs* and *Aphrodite* the poet has supplied us with a good store of contradictory sentiments. In one long and very remarkable fragment (No. 839, ed. Dindorf) from an unknown play, Euripides, if he be indeed the author of the verses, has imitated *Æschylus*, taking almost word for word the famous vaunt of *Kupris*, quoted above from the *Danaïdes*. The three next pieces may be also cited among the praises of love: ²—

ἔρωτα δ' ὅστις μὴ θεὸν κρίνει μέγαν
 καὶ τῶν ἀπάντων δαιμόνων ὑπέρτατον,
 ἢ σκαῖός ἐστιν ἢ καλῶν ἀπειρος ὦν
 οὐκ οἶδε τὸν μέγιστον ἀνθρώποις θεόν.

Men wise and good, and him who guides the State,
 A man well-tempered, just, and sound in counsel,
 Or one who by his words averts ill deeds,
 Warding off strife and warfare; for such things
 Bring honour on the city and all Hellenes."

- ¹ "He was my friend; and may love lead me never
 Aside to folly or to sensual joy!
 Surely there is another sort of love
 For a soul, just, well-tempered, strong, and good.
 And there should be this law for mortal men,
 To love the pure and temperate, and to leave
 Kupris, the daughter of high Zeus, alone."

We find a witty contradiction to the sentiment of these lines in a fragment of *Amphis* (*Dithyrambus*, fr. 2):—

τί φῆς; σὺ ταυτὶ προσδοκᾶς πείσειν ἐμ' ὡς
 ἔρωσ τις ἐστὶν ὅστις ὠραῖον φιλῶν
 τρόπων ἔραστῆς ἐστὶ τὴν ὕψιν παρείς;
 ἀφρων γ' ἀληθῶς.

- ² "Whoso pretends that Love is no great god,
 The lord and master of all deities,
 Is either dull of soul, or, dead to beauty,
 Knows not the greatest god that governs men."

Augē, 269.

ἔσοι γὰρ εἰς ἔρωτα πίπτουσιν βροτῶν
 ἔσθλων ὅταν τύχῳσι τῶν ἐρωμένων
 οὐκ ἔσθ' ὁποίας λείπεται τόθ' ἡδονῆς.

ἔχω δὲ τόλμης καὶ θράσους διδάσκαλον,
 ἐν τοῖς ἀμηχάνοισιν εὐπωτάτων,
 ἔρωτα πάντων δυσμαχώτατον θεῶν.

Here again, remembering how much the Greeks included in the term Music, is a pretty compliment: 1—

μουσικὴν δ' ἄρα
 ἔρωσ διδάσκει κἂν ἀμουσος ἢ τὸ πρῖν.

The next is a graceful expostulation on the lover's part with the god who can make or mar his happiness in life: 2—

σὺ δ' ὦ τύραννε θεῶν τε κἀνθρώπων ἔρωσ
 ἢ μὴ δίδασκε τὰ καλὰ φαίνεσθαι καλὰ,
 ἢ τοῖς ἐρώσιν ὧν σὺ δημιουργὸς εἰ
 μοχθοῦσι μόχθους εὐτυχῶς συνεκπύνει.
 καὶ ταῦτα μὲν δρῶν τίμιος θεοῖς ἔσει,
 μὴ δρῶν δ' ὑπ' αὐτοῦ τοῦ διδάσκεισθαι φιλεῖν
 ἀφαιρεθήσει χάριτας αἰς τιμῶσί σε.

Nor is this without its tincture of respect: 3—

ἄνδρὸς δ' ὀρώντος εἰς κύπριν νεανίου
 ἀφύλακτος ἢ τήρησις· ἦν γὰρ φαῦλος ἢ
 τᾶλλ' εἰς ἔρωτα πᾶς ἀνὴρ σοφώτερος.
 ἦν δ' αὖ προσῆται Κύπρις ἡδιστον λαβεῖν.

But Euripides can turn round and rate Love for his encouragement

"When it befalls poor mortal men to love,
 Should they find worthy objects for their loving,
 Then is there nothing left of joy to long for."

Andromeda, 147.

"Mine is a master of resolve and daring,
 Filled with all craft to do impossible things,
 Love, among gods the most unconquerable."

Hippolytus, 431.

¹ "Music, at least,
 Love teaches men, unmusical before."

Sthenebæa, 664.

² "O Love, our lord, of gods and men the king,
 Either teach not how beauteous beauty is,
 Or help poor lovers, whom like clay thou mouldest,
 Through toil and labour to a happy end.
 Thus shalt thou gain high honour: otherwise
 The loving lessons that men learn of thee,
 Will rob thee of their worship and goodwill."

Andromeda, 135.

³ "A young man with eyes turned to follow beauty
 May not be governed: yea, though he be weak,
 Yet is he wise and masterful for loving;
 And when Love smiles, what boon surpasseth love?"

Antigone, 161.

of idleness. There is a stern perception of the facts of life in the following excerpt from the *Danaë* :¹—

ἔρωσ γὰρ ἀργὸν κἀπὶ τοῖς ἀργοῖς ἔφν'
φιλεῖ κάτοπτρα καὶ κομῆς ξανθίσματα,
φεύγει δὲ μόχθους. ἔν δέ μοι τεκμήριον'
οὐδεὶς προσαιτῶν βίστον ἠράσθη βροτῶν,
ἐν τοῖς δ' ἔχουσιν ἠβητῆς πέφυχ' ὄδε.

Concerning women he is no less impartial. However he may have chosen to paint their possibilities of heroism, and the force of their character in hours of passion or of need, no poet has certainly abused them in stronger terms. The following is an almost laughable example :²—

δεινὴ μὲν ἀλκὴ κυμάτων θαλασσίω
δειναὶ δὲ ποταμοῦ καὶ πυρὸς θερμοῦ πνοαὶ
δεινὸν δὲ πενία δεινὰ δ' ἄλλα μυρία'
ἀλλ' οὐδὲν οὕτω δεινὸν ὡς γυνὴ κακὸν
οὐδ' ἂν γένοιτο γράμμα τοιοῦτ' ἐν γραφῇ
οὐδ' ἂν λόγος δεῖξειεν· εἰ δέ του θεῶν
τόδ' ἐστὶ πλάσμα δημιουργὸς ὦν κακῶν
μέγιστος ἴστω καὶ βροτοῖσι δυσμενῆς.

Nor can the group which I have classed together in the following extracts be considered as complimentary :³—

πλὴν τῆς τεκούσης θῆλυ πᾶν μισῶ γένος.

ἔνδον μένουσαν τὴν γυναικ' εἶναι χρεῶν
ἐσθλὴν θύρασι δ' ἀξίαν τοῦ μηδεὸς.

ἔστιν δὲ μήτηρ φιλότεκνος μᾶλλον πατρός·
ἡ μὲν γὰρ αὐτῆς οἶδεν βυθ' ὃ δ' οἶεται.

¹ "Love is a sluggard, and of sloth the twin :
Mirrors and hair-dyes are his favourite toys ;
Labour he shuns. I take this truth to witness :
No beggar for his bread was known to Love,
But with rich men his beauty-bloom abounds."

² "Dire is the violence of ocean waves,
And dire the blast of rivers and hot fire,
And dire is want, and dire are countless things ;
But nothing is so dire and dread as woman.
No painting could express her dreadfulness,
No words describe it. If a god made woman,
And fashioned her, he was for men the artist
Of woes unnumbered, and their deadly foe."

Incert. Fab. 880.

³ "Saving my mother, I hate womankind."

Melanippide, 507.

"Good women must abide within the house :
Those whom we meet abroad are nothing worth."

Meleager, 527.

"Mothers are fonder of their sons than fathers :
For mothers know they're theirs, while fathers think it."

Incert. Fab. 883.

οὐκ ἔστιν οὔτε τείχος οὔτε χρήματα,
οὔτ' ἄλλο δυσφύλακτον οὐδὲν ὡς γυνή.

ἀντὶ γὰρ πυρὸς
πῦρ ἄλλο μείζον ἢδὲ δυσμαχώτερον
ἐβλαστον αἱ γυναῖκες.

γαμείτε νῦν γαμείτε κᾶτα θνήσκετε
ἢ φαρμάκοισιν ἐκ γυναικὸς ἢ δόλοισιν.

On marriage many pithy sayings might be cited. The one I take first is eminent for practical brutality combined with sound sense :¹—

ἄσοι γαμοῦσι δ' ἢ γένοι κρείσσους γάμους
ἢ πολλὰ χρήματ' οὐκ ἐπίστανται γαμῶν.
τὰ τῆς γυναικὸς γὰρ κρατοῦντ' ἐν δώμασιν
δουλοῖ τὸν ἄνδρα κούκέρ' ἔστ' ἐλεύθερος.
πλοῦτος δ' ἐπακτὸς ἐκ γυναικείων γάμων
ἀνόνητος· αἱ γὰρ διαλύσεις οὐ βράδια.

To the same category belongs the following, though its worldly wisdom conceals no bitterness :²—

κακὸν γυναῖκα πρὸς νέαν ζεῦξαι νέον·
μακρὰ γὰρ ἰσχὺς μᾶλλον ἀρσένων μένει,
θήλεια δ' ἤβη θᾶσσον ἐκλείπει δέμας.

It answers to our own proverb : “ A young man married is a young man marred.”

For the sanctities of domestic life, and for the pathetic beauty of maternal love, no poet had a deeper sense than Euripides. The following lines, spoken apparently by Danaë, make us keenly regret the loss of the tragedy that bore her name ; all the tenderness of the Simonidean elegy upon her fable seems to inspire the maiden's longing for a child to fill her arms and sport upon her knee :—

τάχ' ἂν πρὸς ἀγκάλαισι καὶ στέρνοισι ἐμοῖς
πηδῶν ἀχῦροι καὶ φιλημάτων ὄχλω

“ There is no fort, there is no money-box,
Nor aught besides, so hard to guard as woman.”

Danaë, 323.

“ Instead of fire,
Another fire mightier and more invincible
Is woman.”

Hippolytus, 430.

“ Marry, go to, yea, marry—and then die
By poison at a woman's hand or wiles.”

Cretan Women, 467.

¹ “ Those men who mate with women better born
Or wed great riches, know not how to wed ;
For when the woman's part doth rule the house,
The man's a slave ; large dowers are worse than none,
Seeing they make divorce more difficult.”

Melanippide, 513.

² “ To mate a youth with a young wife is ill ;
Seeing a man's strength lasteth, while the bloom
Of beauty quickly leaves a woman's form.”

Æolus, 22.

ψυχὴν ἐμὴν κτήσαιο· ταῦτα γὰρ βροτοῖς
φίλτρον μέγιστον αἰ ξυνοῦσαι, πάτερ.¹

And where was the charm of children ever painted with more feeling than in these verses from the same play? ²—

γύναι, φίλον μὲν φέγγος ἡλίου τόδε,
καλὸν δὲ πόντου χεῦμ' ἰδεῖν εὐήμενον,
γῆ τ' ἠρυὸν θάλλουσα πλούσιόν θ' ὕδωρ,
πολλῶν τ' ἔπαινον ἐστὶ μοι λέξαι καλῶν.
ἀλλ' οὐδὲν οὕτω λαμπρὸν οὐδ' ἰδεῖν καλὸν
ὡς τοῖς ἀπαισι καὶ πόθῳ δεδηγμένοις
παίδων νεογνῶν ἐν δόμοις ἰδεῖν φάος.

In the next quotation, beautiful by reason of its plainness, a young man is reminded of the sweetness of a mother's love: ³—

οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδὲν μητρὸς ἡδίων τέκνοις.
ἐρᾶτε μητρὸς, παῖδες· ὡς οὐκ ἔστ' ἔρωσ
τοιούτος ἄλλος οἶος ἡδίων ἐρᾶν.

The sentiment here expressed seems to be contradicted by a fragment from an unknown play (No. 887), where a son tells his mother that he cannot be expected to cling to her as much as to his father. The Greeks, as we gather from the *Oresteia* of Æschylus, believed that the male offspring was specially related by sympathy, duty, and hereditary qualities to his father. The contrast between women and men in respect to the paternal home is well conveyed in the following four lines: ⁴—

γυνὴ γὰρ ἐξελθοῦσα πατρῶν δόμων
οὐ τῶν τεκόντων ἐστὶν ἀλλὰ τοῦ λέχους·
τὸ δ' ἄρσεν ἔστηκ' ἐν δόμοις αἰεὶ γένος
θεῶν πατρῶν καὶ τάφων τιμάρον.

Some of the most remarkable excerpts from Euripides turn upon the thought of death—a doom accepted by him with magnanimous

¹ "He, leaping to my arms and in my bosom,
Might haply sport, and with a crowd of kisses
Might win my soul forth; for there is no greater
Love-charm than close companionship, my father."

Danaë, 325.

² "Lady, the sun's light to our eyes is dear,
And fair the tranquil reaches of the sea,
And flowery earth in May, and bounding waters;
And so right many fair things I might praise;
Yet nothing is so radiant and so fair
As for souls childless, with desire sore-smitten,
To see the light of babes about the house."

Danaë, 327.

³ "Nought is more dear to children than their mother.
Sons, love your mother; for there is no love
Sweeter than this that can be loved by men."

Erechtheus, 370.

⁴ "A woman, when she leaves her father's home,
Belongs not to her parents, but her bed;
Men stay within the house, and stand for aye
Avengeful guardians of its shrines and graves."

Danaë, 330.

Greek stoicism. Those which appear to me the most important I have thrown together for convenience of comparison : ¹—

τίς δ' οἶδεν εἰ ζῆν τοῦθ' ὁ κέκληται θανεῖν,
τὸ ζῆν δὲ θηήσκειν ἐστὶ; πλὴν ὅμως βροτῶν
νοσοῦσιν οἱ βλέποντες οἱ δ' ὀλωλότες
οὐδὲν νοσοῦσιν οὐδὲ κέκτηνται κακά.

ἐχρῆν γὰρ ἡμᾶς σύλλογον ποιουμένους
τὸν φύντα θρηνεῖν εἰς ὅσ' ἔρχεται κακά,
τὸν δ' αὖ θανόντα καὶ πόνων πεπαυμένον
χαίροντας εὐχημοῦντας ἐκπέμπειν δόμων.

τοὺς ζῶντας εὖ δρᾶν· καθανῶν δὲ πᾶς ἀνὴρ
γῆ καὶ σκιά· τὸ μηδὲν εἰς οὐδὲν ῥέπει.

θάνατος γὰρ ἀνθρώποισι νεκίων τέλος
ἔχει· τί γὰρ τοῦδ' ἐστὶ μείζον ἐν βροτοῖς;
τίς γὰρ πετραῖον σκόπελον οὐτάζων δορὶ
ὀδύναισι δώσει; τίς δ' ἀτιμάζων νέκυς,
εἰ μηδὲν αἰσθάνονται τῶν παθημάτων;

To these should be added the magnificent words of consolation addressed by Dictys, in the tragedy that bears his name, to Danaë : ²—

δοκεῖς τὸν "Αἰδὴν σῶν τι φροντίζειν γόων
καὶ παῖδ' ἀνήσειν τὸν σὸν εἰ θέλοις στένειν;
παῦσαι· βλέπουσα δ' εἰς τὰ τῶν πέλας κακά
ῥῶν γένοι' ἄν, εἰ λογίζεσθαι θέλοις
ἔσοι τε δεσμοῖς ἐκμεμύχθηται βροτῶν,
ἔσοι τε γηράσκουσιν ὄρφανοὶ τέκνων,
τοὺς τ' ἐκ μεγίστης ὀλβίας τυραννίδος
τὸ μηδὲν ὄντας· ταῦτά σε σκοπεῖν χρεῶν.

- ¹ "Who knows if that be life which we call death,
And life be dying?—save alone that men
Living bear grief, but when they yield their breath
They grieve no more and have no sorrow then."
Incert. Fab. 821.
- "'Twere well for men, when first a babe draws breath,
To meet and wail the woes that he must bear;
But to salute the soul that rests from care
With songs and pæans on the path of death."
Cresphontes, 454.
- "Let those who live do right ere death descendeth;
The dead are dust; mere nought to nothing tendeth."
Meleager, 537.
- "In death there dwells the end of human strife;
For what 'mid men than death is mightier?
Who can inflict pain on the stony scour
By wounding it with spear-point? Who can hurt
The dead, when dead men have no sense of suffering?"
Antigone, 160.
- ² "Think'st thou that Death will heed thy tears at all,
Or send thy son back if thou wilt but groan?
Nay, cease; and, gazing at thy neighbour's grief,
Grow calm: if thou wilt take the pains to reckon
How many have toiled out their lives in bonds,
How many wear to old age, robbed of children,
And all who from the tyrants' height of glory
Have sunk to nothing. These things should'st thou heed."
Dictys, 334.

Close to the thought of death lies that of endurance ; and here is a fragment from the *Hypsipyle*, which might be placed for a motto on the title-page of *Epictetus* : ¹—

ἔφυ μὲν οὐδέεις ὅστις οὐ πονεῖ βροτῶν,
θάπτει τε τέκνα χἄτερ' αὐτὸ κτᾶται νέα,
αὐτὸς τε θνήσκει, καὶ τὰδ' ἀχθονται βροτοὶ
εἰς γῆν φέροντες γῆν' ἀναγκαίως δ' ἔχει
βίον θερίζειν ὥστε κάρπιμον στάχυν,
καὶ τὸν μὲν εἶναι τὸν δὲ μῆ' τί ταῦτα δεῖ
στένειν, ἅπερ δεῖ κατὰ φύσιν διεκπερᾶν ;
δεινὸν γὰρ οὐδὲν τῶν ἀναγκαίων βροτοῖς.

On Justice and the punishment of sins we may take the following passages, expressing, with dramatic energy, the intense moral conscience of the Greek race : ²—

δοκεῖτε πηδᾶν τὰδικήματ' εἰς θεοὺς
πτεροῖσι, κἄπειτ' ἐν Διὸς δέλτον πτυχαῖς
γράφειν τιν' αὐτὰ, Ζῆνα δ' εἰσορῶντά νιν
θνητοῖς δικάζειν ; οὐδ' ὁ πᾶς ἂν οὐρανὸς
Διὸς γράφοντος τὰς βροτῶν ἁμαρτίας
ἐξαρκέσειεν, οὐδ' ἐκείνος ἂν σκοπῶν
πέμπειν ἐκάστῳ ζῆμιαν' ἀλλ' ἡ Δίκη
ἐνταυθὰ πού 'στιν ἐγγύς εἰ βούλεσθ' ὄραν.

τὴν τοι Δίκην λέγουσι παῖδ' εἶναι Διὸς
ἐγγύς τε ναλεῖν τῆς βροτῶν ἁμαρτίας.

They stand, however, in somewhat curious opposition to a fragment from *Bellerophon* about Divine Justice : ³—

φησὶν τις εἶναι δῆτ' ἐν οὐρανῷ θεοῦς ;
οὐκ εἰσὶν, οὐκ εἰσ'. εἴ τις ἀνθρώπων λέγει,
μὴ τῷ παλαιῷ μωρὸς ὢν χρῆσθω λόγῳ.
σκέψασθε δ' αὐτὰ μὴ 'πὶ τοῖς ἐμοῖς λόγοις

¹ "No man was ever born who did not suffer.
He buries children, then begets new sons,
Then dies himself : and men forsooth are grieved,
Consigning dust to dust. Yet needs must be
Lives should be garnered like ripe harvest-sheaves,
And one man live, another perish. Why
Mourn over that which nature puts upon us ?
Nought that must be is terrible to mortals."

Hypsipyle, 752.

² "Think you that sins leap up to heaven aloft
On wings, and then that on Jove's red-leaved tablets
Some one doth write them, and Jove looks at them
In judging mortals ? Not the whole broad heaven,
If Jove should write our sins, would be enough,
Nor he suffice to punish them. But Justice
Is here, is somewhere near us ; do but look."

Melanippide, 488.

"Justice, they say, is daughter of high Jove,
And dwells hard by to human sinfulness."

Alope, 149.

³ "Doth some one say that there be gods above ?
There are not ; no, there are not. Let no fool,
Led by the old false fable, thus deceive you.
Look at the facts themselves, yielding my words

γνώμην ἔχοντες· φήμ' ἐγὼ τυραννίδα
κτείνειν τε πλείστους κτημάτων τ' ἀποστερεῖν,
ὄρκους τε παραβαίνοντας ἐκπορθεῖν πόλεις,
καὶ ταῦτα δρῶντες μᾶλλον εἰς' εὐδαίμονες
τῶν εὐσεβοῦντων ἡσυχῇ καθ' ἡμέραν·
πόλεις τε μικρὰς οἶδα τιμώσας θεοῖς
αἱ μειζύων κλύουσι δυσσεβεστέρων
λόγχης ἀριθμῶ πλείονος κρατούμεναι.

In which of the fragments just quoted was the poet speaking in his own person? In neither, perhaps, fully; partly, perhaps, in both. About wealth he utters in like manner seemingly contradictory oracles: 1—

βία νυν ἔλκετ' ὦ κακοὶ τιμὰς βροτοὶ
καὶ κτᾶσθε πλοῦτον πάντοθεν θηρώμενοι
σύμμικτα μὴ δίκαια καὶ δίκαι' ὁμοῦ·
ἔπειτ' ἀμᾶσθε τῶνδε δύστηνον θέρος.

ὦ χρυσέ, δεξιῶμα κάλλιστον βροτοῖς,
ὡς οὔτε μήτηρ ἠδονὰς τοιάσδ' ἔχει
οὐ παῖδες ἀνθρώποισιν οὐ φίλος πατήρ,
οἶας σὺ χοῖ σέ δώμασιν κεκτημένοι.
εἰ δ' ἡ Κύπρις τοιοῦτον ὀφθαλμοῖς ὄρᾳ
οὐ θαῦμ' ἔρωτας μυρίους αὐτὴν τρέφειν.

In what he says of noble birth Euripides never wavers. The true democrat speaks through his verse, and yet no poet has discoursed more enthusiastically upon bravery and honour. We may take the following examples in their order: 2—

εἰς δ' εὐγένειαν ὀλίγ' ἔχω φράσαι καλά·
ὁ μὲν γὰρ ἐσθλὸς εὐγενὴς ἔμοιγ' ἀνὴρ
ὁ δ' οὐ δίκαιος κἄν ἀμείνωνος πατρὸς
Ζητὸς πεφύκη δυσγενὴς εἶναι δοκεῖ.

No undue credence: for I say that kings
Kill, rob, break oaths, lay cities waste by fraud,
And doing thus are happier than those
Who live calm pious lives day after day.
How many little States that serve the gods
Are subject to the godless but more strong,
Made slaves by might of a superior army!"

Bellerophon, 293.

- 1 "Go to now, O ye bad men, heap up honours
By force, get wealth, hunting it whence ye can,
By indiscriminate armfuls, right and wrong;
Then reap of all these things the wretched harvest."

*I*no, 420.

"Gold! of all welcome blessings thou'rt the best!
For never had a mother's smile for men,
Nor son, nor father dear, such perfect charm,
As thou and they who hold thee for their guest.
If Kupris darts such glamour from her gaze,
No wonder that she breeds a myriad loves!"

Bellerophon, 288.

- 2 "For mere high birth I have small meed of praise:
The good man in my sight is nobly born;
While he who is not righteous, though his sire
Than Zeus be loftier, seems to me but base."

*Diety*s, 341.

ἐγὼ μὲν οὖν οὐκ οἶδ' ὄπως σκοπεῖν χρεῶν
τὴν εὐγένειαν· τοὺς γὰρ ἀνδρείους φύσιν
καὶ τοὺς δίκαιους τῶν κενῶν δοξασμάτων
κἂν ὡσι δούλων εὐγενεστέρους λέγω.

φεῦ τοῖσι γενναίοισιν ὡς ἀπανταχοῦ
πρέπει χαρακτῆρ χρηστός εἰς εὐψυχίαν.

ἅπασ μὲν ἀῆρ αἰετῶ περάσιμος
ἅπασα δὲ χθῶν ἀνδρὶ γενναίῳ πατρὶς.

Further to illustrate his conception of true nobility, using for this purpose in particular the fragments of the *Antioipe*, would be easy. It appears throughout that Euripides was bent on contrasting the honour that is won by labour with the pleasures of a lazy life. Against the hedonism which lay so near at hand to pagans in the licence of the flesh, the Greeks set up an ideal of glory attainable alone by toil. This morality found expression in the famous lines of Hesiod on ἀρετή (virtue, excellence of manhood), in the action of Achilles, in the proverb πάντα τὰ καλὰ χαλεπά (all things fair are hard to win), and in the fable of the Choice of Hercules. Euripides varies the theme in his iambs by a hundred modulations : ¹—

νεανίαν γὰρ ἀνδρα χρὴ τολμᾶν ἀεὶ·
οὐδέεις γὰρ ὦν βῆθυμος εὐκλεῆς ἀνήρ.
ἀλλ' οἱ πόννοι τίκτουσι τὴν εὐδοξίαν.

οὐκ ἔστιν ὅστις ἠδέως ζητῶν βιοῦν
εὐκλειαν εἰσεκτήσασα' ἀλλὰ χρὴ πονεῖν.

ὁ δ' ἠδὺς αἰὼν ἢ κακὴ τ' ἀνανδρία
οὐτ' οἶκον οὔτε γαίαν ὀρθώσειεν ἄν.

σὺν μυρίοισι τὰ καλὰ γίγνεται πόννοις.

"I know not how to think of noble blood :
For men of courage and of virtuous soul,
Though born of slaves, are far above vain titles."
Melanippide, 496.

"Lo, in all places how the nobly born
Show their good breed and spirit by brave bearing !"
Danaë, 328.

"The whole wide ether is the eagle's way :
The whole earth is a brave man's fatherland."
Incert. Frag. 866.

¹ "A young man should be always doing, daring ;
For no slack heart or hand was ever famous.
'Tis toil and danger that beget fair fame."
Archelaus, 233.

"Who seeks to lead a life of unstirred pleasure
Cannot win fame : fame is the meed of travail."
Ibid. 234.

"A life of pleasure and unmanly sloth
Could never raise a house or State to honour."
Ibid. 235.

"Fair honour is the child of countless toils."
Ibid. 236.

ἐμὲ δ' ἄρ' οὐ
μοχθεῖν δίκαιον; τίς δ' ἀμοχθος εὐκλεῆς;
τίς τῶν μεγίστων δειλὸς ὧν ὠρέξατο;

The political morality deduced from this view of life is stern and noble: ¹—

γνώμη γὰρ ἀνδρὸς εὖ μὲν οἰκοῦνται πόλεις,
εὖ δ' οἶκος, εἰς τ' αὐτὸν πόλεμον ἰσχύει μέγα·
σοφὸν γὰρ ἐν βούλευμα τὰς πολλὰς χέρας
νικᾷ· σὺν ὀχλῳ δ' ἀμαθία πλεῖστον κακόν.

τρῆς εἰσὶν ἀρεταὶ τὰς χρεῶν σ' ἀσκέειν, τέκνον,
θεοὺς τε τιμᾶν τοὺς τε φύσαντας γονεῖς,
νόμους τε κοινούς 'Ελλάδος· καὶ ταῦτα δρῶν
κάλιστον ἔξεις στέφανον εὐκλείας ἀεί.

Nor is the condemnation of mere pleasure-seeking less severe: ²—

ἀνὴρ γὰρ ὅστις εὖ βίον κεκτημένος
τὰ μὲν κατ' οἴκου ἀμελία παρῆς ἔφ,
μολπαῖσι δ' ἤσθεις τοῦτ' ἀεὶ θηρεύεται,
ἀργὸς μὲν οἴκοις καὶ πόλει γενήσεται
φίλοισι δ' οὐδέϊς· ἢ φύσις γὰρ οἴχεται
ὅταν γλυκείας ἠδονῆς ἤσσω τις ἦ.

The indifference induced by satiety is well characterised in the following lines: ³—

κόρος δὲ πάντων· καὶ γὰρ ἐκ καλλίωνων
λέκτροις ἐπ' ἀισχροῖς εἶδον ἐκπεπληγμένους.
δαίτῳ δὲ πληρωθεὶς τις ἀσμενος πάλιν
φαύλη διαίτη προσβαλὼν ἤσθη στόμα.

In the foregoing specimens no selection has been made of lines remarkable for their æsthetic beauty. This omission is due to Stobæus, who was more bent on extracting moral maxims than strains of poetry

"Is it not right that I
Should toil? Without toil who was ever famous?
What slothful soul ever desired the highest?"

Archelaus, 238.

¹ "Tis judgment that administers the State,
The household, and in war of force is found;
For one wise word in season hath more strength
Than many hands. Crowds and no brains breed ruin.

Antiope, 205.

"There are three virtues to observe, my son:
Honour the gods, the parents that begot you,
The laws that govern Hellas. Follow these,
And you will win the fairest crown of honour."

Ibid. 221.

² "The man who, when the goods of life abound,
Casts to the winds economy, and spends
His days in seeking after feast and song,
At home and in the State will be a drone,
And to his friends be nothing. Character
Is, for the slaves of honeyed pleasure, gone."

Ibid. 196.

³ "There is satiety of all things. Men
Desert fair wives to dote on ugly women;
With rich meat surfeited, they gladly turn
To humble fare, and find fresh appetite."

Ibid. 187.

comparable with the invocation of Hippolytus to Artemis. Two, however, I have marked for translation on account of their artistic charm ; the first for its pretty touch of picturesqueness, the second for its sympathy with sculpture :¹—

πολὺς δ' ἀνείρπε κισσοῦς εὐφύης κλάδος
 χελιδόνων μουσείον.

ἕα· τίν' ὄχθον τόνδ' ὀρώ περίρρυτον
 ἄφρω θαλάσσης, παρθένου τ' εἰκό τινα
 ἐξ αὐτομόρφων λαΐνων τευχισμάτων
 σοφῆς ἀγαλμα χεῖρὸς.

Some passages, worthy of preservation, yet not easily classified, may wind up the series. Here is “ Envy, eldest born of hell ” :²—

τίς ἄρα μήτηρ ἢ πατήρ κακὸν μέγα
 βροτοῖς ἔφυσε τὸν δυσώνυμον φθόνον ;
 ποῦ καὶ ποτ' οἰκεῖ σωμάτων λαχῶν μέρος ;
 ἐν χερσὶν ἢ σπλάγχνοισιν ἢ παρ' ὄμματα
 ἔσθ' ἡμῖν ; ὡς ἦν μόχθος λατροῖς μέγας
 τομαῖς ἀφαιρεῖν ἢ ποτοῖς ἢ φαρμάκοις
 πασῶν μεγίστην τῶν ἐν ἀνθρώποις νόσον.

The next couplet is pregnant with a home-truth which most men have had occasion to feel :³—

ἅπαντές ἐσμεν εἰς τὸ νουθετεῖν σοφοί
 αὐτοὶ δ' ἔταν σφαλῶμεν οὐ γιγνώσκομεν.

The value attached by Greek political philosophers to the *ἦθος*, or temperament, of States, and their dislike of demagogy, are accounted for in these four lines :⁴—

τρόπος ἐστὶ χρηστός ἀσφαλέστερος νόμου.
 τὸν μὲν γὰρ οὐδεὶς ἀν διαστρέψαι ποτὲ
 ῥήτωρ δύναται, τὸν δ' ἄνω τε καὶ κάτω
 λόγοις ταρασσῶν πολλάκις λυμαίνεται.

¹ “ Much ivy crept around, a comely growth,
 The tuneful haunt of swallows.” *Alcmene*, 91.

“ What ! Do I see a rock with salt sea-foam
 Surrounded, and the image of a maiden
 Carved from the stony bastions nature-wrought
 By some wise workman's craft ? ” *Andromeda*, 127.

² “ What mother or what father got for men
 That curse unutterable, odious envy ?
 Where dwells it ? In what member lies its lair ?
 Is it our hands, our entrails, or our eyes
 That harbour it ? Full ill would fare the leech
 Who with the knife, or potions, or strong drugs,
 Should seek to clear away this worst disease.” *Ino*, 418.

³ “ We all are wise for giving good advice,
 But when we fail we have no wisdom left.” *Incert. Fab.* 862.

⁴ “ Good ways of feeling are more safe than law :
 No rhetorician can upset the one ;
 The other he may tumble upside down
 With words, and do it often grievous wrong.” *Peirithous*, 598.

One single line, noticeable for its weighty meaning, and Euripidean by reason of its pathos, shall end the list: ¹—

νεὸς πόνους δὲ γ' οὐκ ἀγύμναστος φρένας.

The lasting title to fame of Euripides consists in his having dealt with the deeper problems of life in a spirit which became permanent among the Greeks, so that his poems, like those of Menander, never lost their value as expressions of current philosophy. Nothing strikes the student of later Greek literature more strongly than this prolongation of the Euripidean tone of thought and feeling. In the decline of tragic poetry the literary sceptre was transferred to comedy, and the comic playwrights may be described as the true successors of Euripides. The dialectic method, degenerating into sophistic quibbling, which he affected, was indeed dropped, and a more harmonious form of art than the Euripidean was created for comedy by Menander, when the Athenians, after passing through their disputatious period, had settled down into a tranquil acceptance of the facts of life. Yet this return to harmony of form and purity of perception did not abate the influence of Euripides. Here and there throughout his tragedies he had said once and for all, and well said, what the Greeks were bound to think and feel upon important matters, and his sensitive, susceptible temperament repeated itself over and over again among his literary successors. The exclamation of Philemon that, if he could believe in immortality, he would hang himself to see Euripides, is characteristic not only of Philemon but also of the whole Macedonian period of Greek literature.

¹ "Young, but in spirit not untrained by trouble."

Dictys, 332.

CHAPTER XVI

THE FRAGMENTS OF THE LOST TRAGIC POETS

Apparent Accident in the Preservation of Greek Poetry—Criticism among the Ancients—Formation of Canons—Libraries—The Political Vicissitudes of Alexandria, Rome, Constantinople—Byzantine Scholarship in the Ninth Century—The Lost MS. of Menander—Tragic Fragments preserved by the Comic Poets and their Scholiasts; by Athenæus, by Stobæus—Aristotle—Tragedy before Æschylus—Fragments of Aristarchus—The *Medea* of Neophon—Ion—*The Games* of Achæus—Agathon—His Character for Luxurious Living—*The Flower*—Aristotle's Partiality for Agathon—The Family of Æschylus—Meletus and Plato among the Tragic Playwrights—The School of Sophocles—Influence of Euripides—Family of Carkinus—Tragedians ridiculed by Aristophanes—The *Sisyphus* of Critias—Cleophon—Cynical Tragedies ascribed to Diogenes—Extraordinary Fertility of the Attic Drama—The Repetition of Old Plots—Mamercus and Dionysius—Professional Rhetoricians appear as Playwrights—The School of Isocrates—The *Centaur* of Chærémon—His Style—The *Themistocles* of Moschion—The Alexandrian Pleiad—The *Adonis* of Ptolemy Philopator.

AMONG the losses in Greek literature few are so tantalising as the almost absolute extinction of the tragic poets who preceded and followed the supreme Athenian triumvirate. It would have been exceedingly interesting to trace the history of the Drama from its rude origins up to the point at which the creative genius of Æschylus gave it an inalienable character, and again to note the deviation of the tragic muse from heroic themes to fables of pure fiction under the influence of Agathon. This pleasant task of analytical criticism, concordant with the spirit of our age, which is not satisfied with admiring masterpieces unless it can also understand the law of their growth and mark the several stages in the process of historical development, will fall to the lot of no student now, unless, indeed, Pompeii or Egyptian sepulchres render up a treasure-house of MSS. as yet undreamed of, and scholars save the priceless leaflets of charred tinder from destruction.

Why is it that out of the seventy plays of Æschylus only seven are extant; of the Sophoclean one hundred and thirteen (allowing seventeen others which bore his name to have been spurious) only seven;

while eighteen—or, if we admit the *Rhesus*, nineteen—are the meagre salvage from the wreck of at least seventy-five dramas by Euripides? Why is it that of their lost tragedies we possess but inconsiderable fragments—just enough to prove that the compilers of commonplace books like Stobæus might, if they had pleased, have gratified our curiosity beyond the dreams of a Renaissance scholar's covetousness? Why, again, is it that of Agathon, whose dramatic romance, *The Flower*, was thought worthy of citation by Aristotle, whom Aristophanes named as Ἀγάθων ὁ κλεινός, ἀγαθὸς ποιητῆς καὶ ποθεινὸς τοῖς φίλοις,¹ whose thanksgiving banquet supplied a frame for Plato's dialogue on Love, and whose style, if faithfully depicted by the philosopher, was a very "rivulet of olive oil noiselessly running"—why is it that of this Agathon we know nothing but what may be inferred from the caricature of the *Thesmophoriazusæ*, the portrait of the *Symposium*, and a few critical strictures in the *Poetics*? Why is it that Ion, who enjoyed a great renown (περιβόητος ἐγένετο) and ranked as fifth in the muster-roll of Athenian tragic poets, is now but a mere empty name? To these questions, which might be rhetorically multiplied *ad infinitum* on a hundred tones of querulous and sad expostulation with the past, there is no satisfactory answer. Not, as Bacon asserted, has Time borne down upon his flood only the froth and trash of things; far rather may we thank Fate that the flotsam and the jetsam that have reached our shore include the best works of antiquity. Yet, notwithstanding this, "the iniquity of oblivion," in the words of Sir Thomas Browne, "blindly scattereth her poppy, and deals with the memory of men without distinction to merit of perpetuity."

The students of antiquity attached less value than we do to literature of secondary importance. It was the object of their criticism, especially in the schools of Alexandria, to establish canons of perfection in style. The few great authors who were deemed worthy to rank as standards received unlimited honour, nor was it thought too much by Aristarchus or Aristophanes to devote a lifetime to their service. For inferior poets, whom we should prize as necessary to a full comprehension of the history of art, they felt less respect, not having grasped the notion that æsthetics are a branch of science, that the topmost peaks of Parnassus tower above the plain by gradual ascent from subordinate mountain-ranges, and that those who seek to scale the final altitudes must tread the intermediate heights. They were contented with representative men. Marlowe, according to their laws of taste, would have been obscured by Shakespeare; while the multitude of lesser playwrights, whom we honour as explaining and relieving by their comradeship the grandeur of the dramatist (ὁ τραγωδοποιός they might have styled Shakespeare, as their Pindar was ὁ λυρικός), would have sunk into oblivion, leaving him alone in splendid isolation. Much might be said for this way of dealing with literature. By concentrating attention on undeniable excellence, a taste for the noblest things in art was

¹ "Agathon the famous, a good poet, and longed for by his friends."

fostered, while the danger that we run of substituting the historical for the æsthetic method was avoided.¹ In our own century Auguste Comte has striven to revive the cultus of unique standards and to re-establish the empire of selective canons.

The Scholiasts of Alexandria, working in vast libraries which contained the whole treasures of Greek literature, decided that only a few poets were worthy of minute study. The works of these few poets again, they classified into masterpieces and inferior productions. A further selection sifted those that seemed best suited for the education of youth. Thus it happened that copies were repeated of certain well-established favourites; and so the treasures of dramatic poetry inherited by us represent the taste of scholiasts and teachers rather than the likings of the Attic audience. To judge by references in the plays of Aristophanes, the lost *Myrmidones* of Æschylus, the lost *Andromeda* of Euripides, enjoyed more popularity at Athens than even the *Agamemnon* or the *Medea*. Alexandrian and Byzantine pedagogues thought otherwise, and posterity was bound to be their pensioner. The difficulty of multiplying codices must be added as a most important cause of literary waste. It is doubtful whether we should now possess more than a few plays of Shakespeare and Jonson, out of the whole voluminous Elizabethan literature, but for the accident of printing. When we consider the circumstances under which the Attic dramatists survived, taking into account the famous fraud whereby Ptolemy Euergetes possessed himself of the MS. of Æschylus,² and remembering the vicissitudes successively of Alexandria, of Rome, and of Byzantium, perhaps we ought to be surprised that the sum total of our inheritance is so great. What the public voice of the Athenians had approved, the scholiasts of Alexandria winnowed. What the Alexandrians selected, found its way to Rome. What the Roman grammarians sanctioned, was carried in the dotage of culture to Byzantium. At each transition the peril by land and sea to rare codices, sometimes probably to unique autographs, was incalculable. Then followed the fury of iconoclasts and fanatics, the fire-brands of Omar, the remorseless crusade of churchmen against paganism, and the three great conflagrations of Byzantium. It is humiliating to the nations of Western Europe to compare the wealth of Greek books enjoyed by Photius in the ninth century, even after the second burning, with the meagre fragments which seem to have survived the pillage of Constantinople by the Crusaders in 1204. To this final disaster we ought probably to assign the destruction of the larger portion of Greek literature. In addition to all the ruin wrought by fire and pillage must

¹ Aristophanes, the grammarian, and Aristarchus included five tragic poets—Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Ion, and Achaëus—in the first rank. In a second series they placed the works of the so-called Pleiad, seven tragic poets who at Alexandria revived the style of the Attic drama. Their names were Homerus, Sosithus, Lycophron, Alexander, Philiscus, Sosiphanes, and Dionysiades.

² The story is told with wonderful vividness by Victor Hugo, *William Shakespeare*, pp. 176-194.

be reckoned the slow decay of learning during the centuries of intellectual apathy that preceded the fall of the Eastern Empire. What the fire and the Frank had spared, was still exposed to the tooth of the worm and to the slow corrosion of dust, damp, and mildew.

When the passion for antiquity was rekindled in the fourteenth century by the Italians, they eagerly demanded from Constantinople the treasures that the capital of Greece contained: nor is there any good reason to suppose that the Turkish troops of Mahomet II. in 1453 destroyed many books that had not previously been transferred in copies to Florence and Venice. During at least a quarter of a century before the downfall of the Byzantine Empire the princes of Italy were eagerly competing with each other for the purchase of Greek manuscripts; and throughout this period it was the immediate interest of the Palæologi to lay them under such obligations as might enlist their sympathy and call forth a return of friendly service. For the Emperor to have closed the doors of the Byzantine libraries against the agents of the Medici and the Venetian nobles, at the same time that he was sending Manuel Chrysoloras as an ambassador for aid against the Turks to Western Europe, would have been ridiculous. We must also bear in mind how many eager Italian scholars, supported by exhibitions from the lords of Florence, and supplied with almost unlimited credit for the purchase of literary treasures, pursued their studies at Constantinople and returned, like bees, book-laden with the honey of old learning, home; how many Levant merchants, passing to and fro between Italian and Greek ports, discovered that parchments were a more profitable freight than gems or spices. Taking all this into consideration, and duly weighing Curzon's competent opinion—"so thoroughly were these ancient libraries (of Athos) explored in the fifteenth century that no unknown classic author has been discovered, nor has any MS. been found of greater antiquity than some already known in the British Museum and other libraries"—we have the right to infer that what the printing press of Aldus made imperishable, was all or nearly all that the degenerate scholars of the later age of Hellas cared to treasure. The comparative preservation of Neoplatonic philosophy, for example, when contrasted with the loss of dramatic literature, may be referred to the theological and mystical interests of Byzantine students. Only one codex of first-rate importance is supposed to have perished in Italy after importation from Byzantium and before the age of printing. That was a MS. of Menander, which Vespasiano, the Florentine bookseller, mentioned among the gems of the library of Urbino.¹ Little, however, was known about the Greek dramatic poets at the time when Vespasiano wrote his Lives, and it is not impossible that what he took for a collection of Menander's plays, was really a commonplace book of such fragments as we still possess. Yet the mere mention of this volume raises curious speculation. We know

¹ *Vite di Uomini Illustri*, p. 97. He catalogues "tutte l' opere di Sofocle; tutte l' opere di Pindaro; tutte l' opere di Menandro."

that when Cesare Borgia possessed himself of Urbino in 1502 he carried off from the ducal palace a booty in jewels, plate, furniture, and books, to the value of 150,000 ducats. Some of the MSS. found their way into the Vatican collection; others were restored to Urbino, whence they were again transferred to Rome after the extinction of the ducal family in the seventeenth century. It is conceivable that the Menander, if it existed, may have been lost in the hurry of forced marches and the confusion that involved the Borgia's career. Had it been stolen, the thief could hardly have offered it for sale in its splendid dress of crimson velvet and silver clasps stamped with the arms of Montefeltro. It may even now be lurking somewhere in obscurity—a treasure of more value than the Koh-i-noor.

Putting aside the fragments of Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, it may be broadly stated that what survives of the other tragic poets of the Attic stage, and what we know about their lives, have been derived in the main from four sources. The plays of Aristophanes and the fragments of the later comic poets, who were the mercile critics of contemporary tragedians, have, in the first place, supplied us with some meagre quotations and with numerous insignificant caricatures. From these questionable authorities we learn, for instance, that Agathon was a man of effeminate manners, that Philocles was horribly ugly, that Morsimus was an indifferent eye-doctor as well as a writer of tame tragedies, that Meletus had no inspiration, that the whole family of Carkinus were barbarians, that Pythangelus and Akestor were no better than slaves, that Gnesippus mismanaged his choruses, that Hieronymus delighted in horrors, that Nothippus and Morychus were gluttons, that Moschion was a parasite, and so forth. To attach very much weight to comic squibs which dwell exclusively upon personal defects and foibles, and repeat *ad nauseam* the stock Athenian calumnies of drunkenness and debauchery, would be uncritical; though it must be borne in mind that satire in a Greek city, where all the eminent burghers were well known to the playgoers, was pointless unless it contained a grain of truth. Our second great authority is Athenæus, a man of wide reading and extensive curiosity, whose heart unhappily was set on trifles. Sauces, unguents, wreaths, the various ways of dressing fish, the changes of fashion in wine-drinking, formed the subjects of his profoundest investigations. Therefore the grave and heightened tragedies of our unfortunate poets were ransacked by him for rare citations, capable of throwing light upon a flower, a dish, or a wine-cup. These matters were undoubtedly the veriest *parerga* to poets bent on moving the passions of terror and pity; nor can we imagine a more distressing torment for their souls in Hades than to know that what remains of a much-pondered and beloved *Thyestes* is a couple of lines about a carving-knife or meat-dish. To be known to posterity through a calumny of Aristophanes and a citation in the *Deipnosophistæ*, after having passed a long life in composing tragedies, teaching choruses, and inventing chants, is a caricature of immortality which might well

deter a man of common sense from literature, and induce the vainest to go down speechless to the grave in peace. Those poets who fell under the hands of Stobæus, our third chief source of information, have fared better. It is more consistent with the aims and wishes of a tragic artist to survive, however mangled, in the commonplace book of a moralist than in the miscellanies of a literary *bon vivant*. The authors, therefore, of the Euripidean school,

“ Teachers best
Of moral prudence, with delight received,
In brief sententious precepts, while they treat
Of fate, and chance, and change in human life.”

may be said to have fared better than their predecessors, whose style rendered them less conveniently subject to the eclectic process of the Macedonian collector. Much of the difficulty, however, which obscures the text of these sententious fragments, arises from their collector having in all probability quoted from memory, so that bad grammar, trivial terminations to otherwise well-worded lines, and passages ruthlessly compressed by omissions are frequent. In the fourth place we have to thank Aristotle for a few most precious, though, alas, laconic, criticisms pronounced in the *Rhetoric* and the *Poetics* upon his contemporaries, and for occasional quotations in the *Ethics* to Nicomachus and Eudemus. These criticisms help us to understand the history of the Greek drama by throwing a dim light upon the serious art of many defunct poets, who in their day shook the Attic scene. To Plutarch, to Pausanias, and to the Scholiasts we owe similar obligations, though the value of their critical remarks is slight compared with that of every word which fell from Aristotle's pen.

This rapid enumeration of the resources at our command will prepare any one familiar with such matters for spare and disappointing entertainment. The chief interest of such a survey as that which I propose to make, consists in the variety and extent of the lost dramatic literature that it reveals. Nothing but a detailed examination of existing fragments suffices to impress the mind with the quantity of plays from which malignant fortune has preserved samples, fantastically inadequate, and, in many cases, tantalisingly uncharacteristic. The quotations from Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, meanwhile, have already supplied matter of more sterling and intrinsic value.

When we take up the collection of *Perditorum Tragicorum Omnium Fragmenta* published at Paris by the care of M. Ambroise Firmin Didot, our first sensation, on seeking what may possibly be left of poets before Æschylus, is one of liveliest disappointment. Thespis, to begin with, is a name: we know that he made tragedy dramatic instead of dithyrambic, by introducing monologue in order to support and rest the Chorus; but that is all. Chœrilus is a name: we know that he exhibited above fifty plays, that he was reckoned worthy by the comic poet Alexis to be cited together with Hesiod, Homer, and Epicharmus, and that Aristotle devoted three lost books of critical discussions to the

elucidation of difficult passages in his poems as well as in those of Archilochus and Euripides. All the rest is obscure, except that we have reason to believe that Choerilus excelled in the satyric drama. Pratinas, again, is a name. Dim tradition reports that he invented the satyric drama; and it has thence been inferred with probability that the 150 plays ascribed to him were chiefly composed in tetralogies of one comic and three serious pieces. He was also celebrated for the excellence of his lyrics; while a story, preserved by Suidas, relates how an accident that happened to the wooden stage at Athens during the exhibition of one of his tragedies, led to the building of the recently discovered theatre of Dionysus. A few unimportant fragments have survived, in two of which Pratinas avows his preference for the Æolian mood in music. Phrynichus, though his poems have fared no better than those of his contemporaries, stands before us with a more distinguished personality. Herodotus tells the famous tale of his tragedy upon the *Taking of Miletus*, which moved the Athenian audience to tears, and so angered them by the vivid presentation of a recent disaster that they fined the author in a sum of 1000 drachmas, and forbade the acting of his drama. The sweetness of the songs of Phrynichus has reached us like the echo of a bird's voice in a traveller's narrative. Aristophanes, who loved the good old music of his youth, delighted in it, and invented one of his rare verbal conglomerates to express its quality: *καὶ μυνρίζοντες μέλη ἀρχαιομελησιδωνοφρυνιχήρατα* is a phrase he puts into the mouth of Bdelycleon in the *Wasps*, while in the *Frogs* he describes Phrynichus as making harvest in the meadows of the Muses. Agathon, again, in the *Thesmophoriazusæ* is represented saying:—

“ And Phrynichus—this surely you have heard—
 Was beautiful, and beautifully dressed;
 And this, we cannot doubt, was why his plays
 Were beautiful; for 'tis a natural law
 That like ourselves our work must ever be.”

From the passage just referred to in the *Frogs* (1298–1307) it is clear that much of a tragic poet's reputation for originality at Athens depended upon the invention of melodies, and that the merit of Phrynichus consisted to some extent in the excellence and sweetness of his tunes. No real light can now be thrown upon the dark subject of Greek music in general, and of its relation to lyrical and tragic poetry in particular. All we know serves to excite our inquisitiveness without satisfying it. Thus Plutarch informs us that Phrynichus and Æschylus preferred the harp (*κίθαρα*) and adhered to the enharmonic scale (*ἄρμονία*) instead of employing chromatic modulations (*χρῶμα*). The general drift of this remark is that the early tragic poets maintained a simple and severe style of music, and avoided the allurements of what Aristotle termed the most artificial of the Greek scales. Collateral value is given to Plutarch's observation by the Aristophanic criticism of the melodies in Agathon and Euripides. For speculations on its deeper significance, it is impossible to do more than refer the curious

to Professor Donkin, General Perronet Thompson, and Mr. Chappell, with the reiterated warning that the obscurity of the subject is impenetrable. Phrynichus, in conclusion, was celebrated as a ballet-master for his Pyrrhic dances, and as a practical dramatist for the introduction of female characters. One line, among the few ascribed to him, calls for quotation by reason of its beauty :—

λάμπει δ' ἐπὶ πορφυρέαις παρῆσι φῶς ἔρωτος,

“The light of love burns upon crimson cheeks.”

Aristias, the next in order of these lost poets, was a son of Pratinas, who lived long enough to compete with Sophocles. The names of his plays, *Antæus*, *Atalanta*, *Cyclops*, *Orpheus*, and *The Fates*, show, like similar lists which might be quoted from the meagre notices of his predecessors, that the whole material of Greek mythology was handled and rehandled by the Attic playwrights.

The tragedians who follow can certainly not be considered older than Æschylus, and are, all of them, most probably his juniors. Aristarchus, a native of Tegea, calls for notice because he is reported by Suidas to have determined the length of tragedies, whatever that may mean. Ennius translated his drama of *Achilles* into Latin, which proves that he retained the fame of a first-rate poet till the beginning of the Græco-Roman period. His fragments recall the Euripidean style ; and the two best of them have been preserved by Stobæus, the notorious admirer of Euripides. To omit these, in the dearth of similar heirlooms from antiquity, would be wasteful, especially as they serve to determine the date at which he wrote, and to confirm the report of Suidas that he was a contemporary of Euripides. Here is one that savours strongly of agnosticism : ¹—

καὶ ταῦτ' ἴσον μὲν εὖ λέγειν ἴσον δὲ μὴ·
 ἴσον δ' ἐρευνᾶν, ἐξ ἴσου δὲ μὴ εἰδέναι·
 πλείων γὰρ οὐδὲν οἱ σοφοὶ τῶν μὴ σοφῶν
 εἰς ταῦτα γιγνώσκουσιν· εἰ δ' ἄλλου λέγει
 ἀμεινον ἄλλος, τῷ λέγειν ὑπερφέρει.

The second treats of love : ²—

ἔρωτος ὅστις μὴ πεπειραται βροτῶν,
 οὐκ οἶδ' ἀνάγκης θεσμόν· ᾧ πεισθεὶς ἐγὼ
 οὗτω κρατηθεὶς τάσδ' ἀπεστάλην ὁδοῦς·
 οὗτος γὰρ ὁ θεὸς καὶ τὸν ἀσθενῆ σθένειν
 τίθησι, καὶ τὸν ἀπορον εὐρίσκειν πόρον.

¹ “Fair speech in such things and no speech are one :
 Study and ignorance have equal value :
 For wise men know no more than simple fools
 In these dark matters ; and if one by speaking
 Conquer another, mere words win the day.”

² “That man who hath not tried of love the might
 Knows not the strong rule of necessity,
 Bound and constrained, whereby this road I travel ;
 Yea, our lord, Love, strengthens the strengthless, teaches
 The craftless how to find both craft and cunning.”

Next to Aristarchus of Tegea we find Neophron of Sikyon, who claims particular attention as the author of a tragedy acknowledged by antiquity to have been the original of the *Medea* of Euripides. There are few students of literature who do not recognise in the *Medea* the masterpiece of that poet, and who have not wondered why it only won the third prize at Athens, in the year 431 B.C. Is it possible that because Euripides borrowed his play from Neophron—*τὸ δρᾶμα δοκεῖ υποβαλέσθαι παρὰ Νεόφρονος διασκευάσας* (he seems to have appropriated and revised the drama from Neophron) are the words of the Greek argument to *Medea*, while Suidas says of Neophron *οὐ φάσιν εἶναι τὴν τοῦ Εὐριπίδου Μήδειαν* (by whom, as it is said, was the *Medea* of Euripides)—therefore the public and the judges thought some deduction should be made from the merit of the drama?

Stobæus has handed down a long and precious fragment from the speech in which Neophron's *Medea* decides to kill her children. A comparison of this passage with the splendid rhesis composed for *Medea* by Euripides proves the obligation owed by the younger poet to the elder, both in style and matter.

Here, then, is the monologue of Neophron's *Medea*:¹—

εἶεν· τί δράσεις θυμέ; βούλεσαι καλῶς
πρὶν ἢ ἔξαμαρτεῖν καὶ τὰ προσφιλέστατα
ἐχθίστα θέσθαι. ποῖ ποτ' ἐξῆξας τάλας;
κάτισχε λῆμα καὶ σθένος θεοστρυγές.
καὶ πρὸς τί ταῦτ' ὀδύρομαι, ψυχὴν ἐμὴν
ὀρώσ' ἔρημον καὶ παρημελημένην
πρὸς ὧν ἐχρῆν ἦκιστα; μαλθακοὶ δὲ δὴ
τοιαῦτα γιγνόμεσθα πάσχοντες κακὰ;
οὐ μὴ προδώσεις θυμέ σαιτὸν ἐν κακοῖς.
οἴμοι δέδοκται· παῖδες ἐκτὸς ὀμμάτων
ἀπέλθου· ἦδη γὰρ με φοινῖα μέγαν
δέδουκε λύσσα θυμόν· ὦ χέρες, χέρες,
πρὸς οἷον ἔργον ἐξοπλιζόμεσθα· φεῦ·
τάλαινα τόλμης, ἢ πολλὴν πόνον βραχεῖ
διαφθερούσα τὸν ἐμὸν ἔρχομαι χρόνῳ.

It is hardly possible not to recognise in these lines the first sketch of the picture afterwards worked out so elaborately in detail by Euripides.

¹ "Well, well; what wilt thou do, my soul? Think much
Before this sin be sinned, before thy dearest
Thou turn to deadliest foes. Whither art bounding?
Restrain thy force, thy god-detested fury.
And yet why grieve I thus, seeing my life
Laid desolate, despitefully abandoned
By those who least should leave me? Soft, forsooth,
Shall I be in the midst of wrongs like these?
Nay, heart of mine, be not thy own betrayer!
Ah me! 'Tis settled. Children, from my sight
Get you away! for now bloodthirsty madness
Sinks in my soul and swells it. Oh, hands, hands,
Unto what deed are we accoutred? Woe!
Undone by my own daring! In one minute
I go to blast the fruit of my long toil."

Ion was a native of Chios, who came while still quite a boy (*παντάρπασι μειράκιον*) to Athens, and enjoyed the honour of supping with Cimon in the house of a certain Laomedon. Of his life and work very little is known, although his reputation among the ancients was so great that the Alexandrians placed him among the first five tragic poets. The titles of eleven of his plays have been preserved; but these were only few out of many that he wrote. He was, besides, a voluminous prose-author, and practised every kind of lyrical poetry. From the criticism of Longinus we gather that his dramas were distinguished for fluency and finish rather than for boldness of conception or sublimity of style. After praising their regularity, Longinus adds that he would not exchange the *Œdipus* of Sophocles for all the tragedies of Ion put together. Personally, Ion had the reputation of a voluptuary: *φιλοπότην καὶ ἐρωτικώτατον* (a wine-bibber and inordinately given to love) are the words of Athenæus which describe him. There is also a story that he passed some portion of his life at Corinth in love-bondage to the beautiful Chrysis. In short, both as a man and as an artist, Ion was true to his name and race. It is unfortunate that the few fragments we possess of Ion's tragedies have been transmitted for the most part by Hesychius and Athenæus in illustration of grammatical usages and convivial customs. The following gnomic couplet, preserved by Plutarch, is both interesting in itself and characteristic of the poet's style: ¹—

τὸ γνῶθι σαυτὸν, τοῦτ' ἔπος μὲν οὐ μέγα,
ἔργον δ', ὅσον Ζεὺς μόνος ἐπίσταται θεῶν.

Another passage, quoted by Sextus Empiricus, contains an elegant description of the power of Sparta: ²—

οὐ γὰρ λόγοις Λάκαινα πυργούται πόλις,
ἀλλ' εὖτ' Ἄρης νεοχμὸς ἐμπέσῃ στρατῶ,
βουλή μὲν ἄρχει, χεὶρ δ' ἐπεξεργάζεται.

Almost less can be said about Achæus of Eretria, the fifth, with Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, and Ion, in the Alexandrian *πρώτη τάξις* or first class of tragic worthies. Diogenes Laertius records his skill in the satyric drama; Athenæus remarks that his style was obscure, and that he filled his plays with riddles. The names of some of his dramas—*Linus*, *The Fates*, *Philoctetes at Troy*, *Omphale*, *Peirithous*—excite our curiosity; but the fragments are, as usual, cited for some merely frivolous or pedantic purpose.

The following corrupt passage from a play called *Ἄθλοι* or *Ἄθλα*, *The Games*—the loss of which is greatly to be regretted, since it might have thrown a new light upon the feeling of the Greeks for their public

¹ "Know thou thyself—the saw is no great thing;
To do it, Zeus alone of gods is able."

² "The town of Sparta is not walled with words;
But when young Ares falls upon her men,
Then reason rules and the hand does the deed."

contests—presents a lively picture of the physical splendour of trained athletes :¹—

γυμνοὶ γὰρ ὤθων φαίδιμοις βραχίονας
ἦβη σφριγῶντες ἔμπορεύονται, νέφ
στίλβοντες ἀνθει καρτερὰς ἐπωμίδας·
ἀδην δ' ἐλαίου στέρνα καὶ ποδῶν κύτος
χρίουσιν, ὡς ἔχοντες οἰκοθεν τρυφήν.

Another glimpse of athletes may be got from three lines torn out of the same play :²—

πότερα θεωροῖς εἶτ' ἀγωνισταῖς λέγεις ;
πόλλ' ἐσθλοῦσιν, ὡς ἐπασκούντων τρόπος.
ποδαπὸν γὰρ εἰσιν οἱ ξένοι ; Βοιώτιοι.

In this portrait we recognise the young men satirically described by Euripides in a fragment, translated above, of the lost *Autolyceus* as roaming about the city in the radiant insolence of youth, like animated statues.

Mourn as we may the loss of Ion and Achæus, our grief for that of Agathon must needs be greater. Though he was not placed in the first class by the Alexandrian critics, it is clear from the notices of Plato, Aristophanes, and Aristotle, that he enjoyed the widest popularity at Athens, and was, besides, a poet of marked originality. Personally, he was amiable, delicate, pleasure-loving, and extremely beautiful. He is always called—even by Plutarch and Athenæus—*Ἀγάθων ὁ καλός*, Agathon the beautiful ; while the passionate friendship with which he had inspired Pausanias is celebrated by Plato in *Protagoras*, by Xenophon in the *Symposium*. Plato himself is supposed to have composed an epigram on the kiss of Agathon, which has been translated by Shelley. Later authors, like Maximus Tyrius, gave him the title of *ἀβρότατος* (most delicate), while Lucian compared him to Cinyras or Sardanapalus. Apparently he was rich enough to indulge the most luxurious tastes. One of the best comic scenes in the *Thesmophoriazusæ* is that in which Aristophanes described Agathon surrounded by all the appliances of a voluptuary, while engaged in the composition of an effeminate play. Euripides, entering this study of a Sybarite, implores him to put on female attire, using these arguments :³—

σὺ δ' εὐπρόσωπος, λευκὸς, ἐξυρημένος,
γυναικόφωνος, ἀπαλὸς, εὐπρεπῆς ἰδεῖν.

¹ It is clear that γὰρ ὤθων is wrong. The best suggestion seems to be γ' ἀνωθεν, adopting which we may render the lines thus :—

“Naked above, their radiant arms displaying,
In lustihood of ruffling youth, and bloom
Of beauty bright on stalwart breasts, they fare ;
Their shoulders and their feet in floods of oil
Are bathed, like men whose homes abound in plenty.”

² “Ambassadors or athletes do you mean ?
Great feeders are they, like most men in training.
Of what race are the strangers, then ? Bœotians.”

³ “While you are smooth-faced, white-skinned, closely shaven,
Voiced like a woman, tender, fair to see.”

In poetry Agathon adopted innovations consistent with his own voluptuous temperament. His style was distinguished by melodious sweetness and rhetorical refinement; in particular, we are told that he affected the flowery tropes and the antitheses of Gorgias. Sophistry was fashionable in his youth, and Aristophanes recognised in Agathon the true companion of Euripides. Leaving the severer music of the elder tragedians, he invented chromatic melodies, which seem to have tickled the sensuality of his Athenian audience.¹

We are therefore justified in regarding Agathon as the creator of a new tragic style combining the verbal elegances and ethical niceties of the sophists with artistic charms of a luxurious kind. Aristotle observes that he separated the Chorus from the action of the drama to such an extent that his lyrics became mere musical interludes (*ἐμβόλιμα*) equally adapted to any tragic fable.² He also remarks that Agathon composed plays upon romantic subjects, inventing the story for himself, instead of adhering to the old usage of rehandling mythological material.³ The title of one of these dramatic romances, *The Flower*, has been preserved; but unhappily we are told nothing about its subject, and have no extracts to judge from. That the form of tragedy suffered other changes at the hands of Agathon, may be inferred from another passage in the *Poetics*, where Aristotle censures him for having included a whole epic, *The Taking of Troy*, in one play.⁴ This play, it may be said in passing, was hissed off the stage. The popularity of Agathon may be gathered from the fact that the first tetralogy he exhibited was crowned in 416 B.C. Plato has chosen the supper-party which he gave in celebration of this victory for the scene of the *Symposium*; and it is there that we must learn to know this brilliant man of letters and of fashion in the wittiest period of Attic social life. It is not a little curious that the most interesting fragments of Agathon are embedded in the *Ethics* and the *Rhetoric* of Aristotle, who must have made attentive study of his works. While discussing the subject of free-will, the sage of Stageira quotes this couplet: ⁵—

μόνον γὰρ αὐτοῦ καὶ θεὸς στερίσκεται,
ἀγένητα ποιεῖν ἄσπ' ἂν ἦ πεπραγμένα.

Again, on the topic of art and chance, he cites: ⁶—

τέχνη τύχην ἔστερξε καὶ τύχη τέχνην.

¹ This is strongly expressed in an untranslatable speech of Mneciloehus (Ar. *Thesmoph.* 130 *et seq.*) which reminds one of the first satire of Persius:—

“Cum carmina lumbum
Intrant et tremulo scalpuntur ut intima versu.”

² *Poet.* cap. 18.

³ *Ibid.* cap. 9.

⁴ *Ibid.* cap. 18.

⁵ “For from this one thing God himself is barred—
To make what's done as though it ne'er had been.”

⁶ “Art is true friend of chance, and chance of art.”

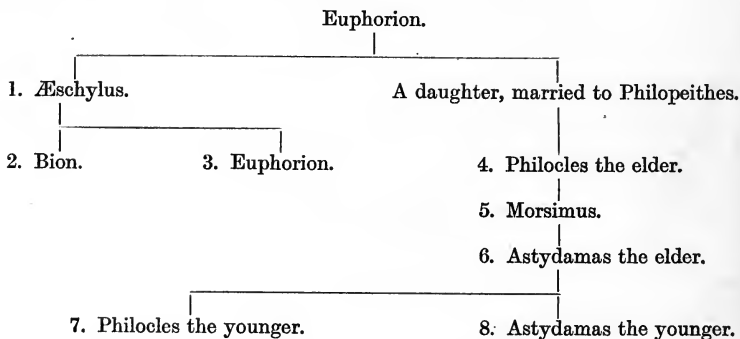
Speaking in the *Eudemian Ethics* about the true and spurious kinds of courage, he adds :¹—

καθάπερ καὶ Ἀγάθων φησὶ·
φαῦλοι βροτῶν γὰρ τοῦ πονεῖν ἠσώμενοι
θανεῖν ἐρώσι.

Another quotation, for the sake of both the poet and the philosopher, may be adduced from the *Rhetoric* :²—

καὶ μὴν τὰ μὲν γε τῇ τέχνῃ πράσσειν, τὰ δὲ
ἡμῶν ἀνάγκη καὶ τύχη προσγίγνεται.

One of the peculiarities to be noticed in the practice of the poetic art among the Greeks was the formation of schools by families of artists, in whom talent continued to be hereditary for several generations. We observe this among the lyrists ; but the tragedians offer even more remarkable instances, proving how thoroughly the most complicated of all the arts, the tragic drama—including, as it did, the teaching of music and of dancing to Choruses, the arrangement of stage effects, and the training of actors—was followed as a profession at Athens. That Phrynichus founded a school of playwrights distinguished for their musical rather than their dramatic ability, appears from the nineteenth section of the *Problemata* of Aristotle ; but we do not know whether the οἱ περὶ Φρύνιχον (set or coterie of Phrynichus) there mentioned belonged to the poet's family. It is possible, on the other hand, to draw the pedigree of Æschylus, in which every name will represent a tragic poet. Here it is :—



The οἱ περὶ Ἀἴσχυλον, therefore, of whom the Scholiasts often speak, numbered, together with Æschylus himself, eight dramatists. Their common characteristic consisted in the adherence to the Æschy-

¹ "Even as saith also Agathon :
Worsted by suffering, cowards dote on death."

² I have followed Grotius in transposing *τύχη* and *τέχνη*, and translate :—
"Thus some things we can do by art, while some
Are thrust on us as fate and fortune will."

lean style, in the presentation of tetralogies, and in the privilege successively enjoyed by them of bringing out old plays of Æschylus in competition with the works of younger poets. The dramas of Æschylus were in fact "a property" to his descendants. The Athenians had publicly decreed that they might be from year to year produced upon the scene, and Euphorion, his son, spent his time in preparing them for exhibition. In this way he gained four prizes, taking the first crown upon the notable occasion in 431 B.C., when Sophocles was second, and Euripides, with the *Medea*, third. It appears that, as time went on, the original compositions of Æschylus suffered mutilations and alterations at the hands of his posterity, who pretended to improve them—after the manner of Davenant, presumably—and adapt them to the modern taste. At last Lycurgus, about 340 B.C., decreed that after accurate copies had been taken of the authorised text and deposited in the public archives, the clerk of the city should collate them with the acted plays, and see that no deviations from the original became established. We gather from the comic poets that the family of Æschylus also produced their own tragedies, none of which, however, appear to have been very excellent. Philocles the elder was laughed at by Aristophanes partly because he was an ugly, snub-nosed, little man, with a head like a hoopoe, partly because he introduced a comic incident into his tragedy of *Pandionis* by exhibiting Tereus dressed out with the feathers of a bird. The Scholiasts to Aristophanes, in like manner, inform us that Morsimus owed a certain celebrity to his ugliness, to the tameness of his tragic style, and to his want of skill as a professional oculist. Astydamas the elder achieved the same sad sort of immortality through the accident of having received the honour of a public statue before Æschylus. It is lost labour trying to form a clear conception of poets who are only known to us in anecdotes like these.

Frederick Wagner, the collector of the tragic fragments, reckons Meletus, the accuser of Socrates, and Plato, the divine philosopher, among the school of Æschylus, because it appears that both of them composed tetralogies. From a passage in the Scholiast to Aristophanes (*Frogs*, 1302) it may be inferred that Meletus, the tragedian, and Meletus, the informer, were one and the same person: *κωμωδεῖται δὲ καὶ ὡς ψυχρὸς ἐν τῇ ποιήσει καὶ ὡς πονηρὸς τὸν τρόπον*—"he is satirised both for want of genius as a poet and also for the badness of his moral character." This sentence constitutes his title to fame. He is known to have composed a series of plays with the title *Œdipodeia*, the plot, as sketched by Hyginus,¹ offering some notable divergences from the Sophoclean treatment of the tale of Thebes. Plato may be numbered among the tragedians on the strength of an anecdote in Ælian,² according to which he had composed a tetralogy, and had already distributed the parts to the actors, when he determined to abandon poetry, and gave his verses to the flames.

¹ *Fab.* 172.

² *Varia Historia*, ii. 30. Compare *Diog. Laert.* iii. 80.

The school of Sophocles includes two sons of the poet, Iophon and Ariston, and his grandson Sophocles. In fact, it combines the actors in that family drama played out before the jury of the tribe, when the singer of Colonus silenced his accuser by the recitation of the Chorus from his second *Œdipus*. Iophon exhibited tragedies with distinguished success during the life of Sophocles, and even entered into competition with his father. After the old man's death he produced the posthumous works that formed his heirloom, completing such as were unfinished, or executing those of which the plan was sketched in outline. He is said to have exhibited fifty plays, and that he was no mean poet appears from the following passage of the *Frogs*:¹—

- “*H.* Is not Iophon a good one?—He's alive, sure.
B. If he's a good one, he's our only good one;
 But it's a question; I'm in doubt about him.
H. There's Sophocles; he's older than Euripides—
 If you go so far for 'em, you'd best bring him.
B. No; first I'll try what Iophon can do,
 Without his father, Sophocles, to assist him.”

The drift of these lines would be obscure without some explanation to readers who have not studied Aristophanes. All the good tragic poets are dead, and Dionysus is journeying to Hades to fetch one back again to rule the Attic stage. Herakles falls into conversation with him on the subject, and reminds him that Iophon is living. The doubt expressed by Dionysus seems to refer to a suspicion prevalent at Athens that Sophocles helped his son in the composition of his plays. Meanwhile, the qualified praise awarded him by Dionysus implies considerable admiration on the part of so severe a castigator of the tragic dramatists as Aristophanes. Only four and a half lines, and these by no means noticeable, remain of Iophon. His half-brother Ariston has fared better, since we possess a long and curious dialogue upon Providence, quoted by Theophilus of Antioch from an unknown play of his. This fragment supports the Christian belief that, though the careless seem to prosper, while the virtuous get no benefit from their asceticism, justice will eventually be dealt with even hand to all:—

χωρίς προνοίας γίνεται γὰρ οὐδὲ ἔν.

“Without foreknowledge there can nothing happen.”

It is right to add that the authorship of these lines must be at least considered doubtful, and that their versification, as it now stands, is unworthy of the Attic drama.

By the middle of the fourth century before Christ the whole dramatic literature of the Athenians, both tragic and comic, was being penetrated with the Euripidean spirit. It is impossible not to notice in the style of these later playwrights either the direct influence of Euripides or else the operation of the laws of intellectual development he illustrated.

¹ Frere's translation, p. 229.

We cannot, therefore, treat the Euripidean school with the definiteness applicable to that of Æschylus or Sophocles. At the same time it is certain that a son or a nephew bearing his name continued to exhibit his posthumous dramas.

A stronger instance of histrionic and dramatic talent transmitted through four generations is presented by the family of Carkinus, some of whom were famous for mimetic dancing, while others contended in the theatre as playwrights. What we know about Carkinus and his children is chiefly derived from the satires of Aristophanes, who was never tired of abusing them. Their very name serves as a scarecrow, and the Muse is invoked to keep them off the stage. To stir the rubbish-heap of obscure allusions and pedantic annotations, in order to discover which of the six Carkinidæ we know by name were poets, and which of them were dancers, is a weary task not worth the labour it involves. Suffice it to say that the grandson of Aristophanes' old butt, himself called Carkinus, produced the incredible number of 160 dramas, was three times mentioned with respect by Aristotle,¹ and has survived in comparatively copious quotations. One passage, though not very remarkable for poetical beauty, is interesting because it describes the wanderings of Demeter through Sicily in search of Persephone. Diodorus, who cites it from an unknown play, mentions that Carkinus frequently visited Syracuse and saw the processions in honour of Demeter.

About the Attic tragedians who lived during the old age of Aristophanes, the first thing to notice is that they may fairly be called the Epigoni of Euripides. Æschylus was old-fashioned. The style of Sophocles did not lend itself to easy imitation. The psychological analyses, casuistical questions, rhetorical digressions, and pathetic situations, wherein the great poet of the *Hippolytus* delighted, were exactly suited to the intellectual tastes and temper of incipient decadence. A nation of philosophers and rhetoricians had arisen; and it is noteworthy that many of the playwrights of this period were either professed orators or statesmen. In his own lifetime Aristophanes witnessed the triumph of the principles against which he fought incessantly with all the weapons of the comic armoury. Listen to the complaint of Dionysus in the *Frogs*:²—

- “ H. But have not you other ingenious youths
That are fit to out-talk Euripides ten times over—
To the amount of a thousand, at least, all writing tragedy ?
D. They're good for nothing—' Warblers of the Grove '—
' Little, foolish, fluttering things '—poor puny wretches,
That dawdle and dangle about with the tragic muse,
Incapable of any serious meaning.”

To translate the Greek for modern readers is not possible. The pith of the passage is found in this emphatic phrase, γόνιμον δὲ ποιητὴν ἄν οὐχ εὔροισ ἔτι, “ there's not a sound male poet capable

¹ *Poet.* cap. 17; *Rhet.* ii. 23, iii. 16.

² *Frere*, p. 229.

of procreation left." Accordingly he vents his venom on Pythangelus, Gnesippus, Akestor, Hieronymus, Nothippus, Morychus, Sthenelus, Dorillus, Spintharus, and Theognis, without mercy. Not a single fragment remains to judge these wretched poets by. It is better to leave them in their obscurity than to drag them forth into the dubious light of comic ribaldry.

Critias, the son of Callæschrus, the pupil of Socrates, who figures in so many scenes of Xenophon and Plato, and who played a memorable part in the political crisis of 404 B.C., was a tragic poet of some talent, if we are to accept a fragment from the *Sisyphus* as his. Sextus Empiricus transcribed forty lines of this drama, setting forth the primitive conditions of humanity. First, says Critias, men began by living like the brutes, without rewards for virtue or punishment for vice. Mere might of hand prevailed. Then laws were framed and penalties affixed to crime. Open violence was thus repressed; but evil-doers flourished in secret. Fraud and hypocrisy took the place of force. To invent the dread of gods and to create a conscience was the next step taken by humanity. Then followed the whole scheme of religion, and with religion entered superstition, and men began to fear the thunder and to look with strange awe on the stars. The quotation is obviously imperfect: yet it may advantageously be compared with the speeches of Prometheus in Æschylus, and also with the speculations of Lucretius. The hypothesis of deliberate invention implied in the following phrases,¹

τηνικαυτὰ μοι
δοκεῖ πυκνὸς τις καὶ σοφὸς γνῶμην ἀνὴρ
γνώναι θεὸν θνητοῖσιν,

and τὸ θεῖον εἰσηγήσατο,² sufficed not only for antiquity but also for those modern theorists who, like Locke, imagined that language was produced artificially by wise men in counsel, or who, like Rousseau and the Encyclopædists, maintained that religions were framed by knaves to intimidate fools.

Cleophon demands a passing notice, because we learn from Aristotle³ that he tried to reduce tragedy to the plain level of common life by using everyday language and not attempting to idealise his characters. The total destruction of his plays may be regretted, since it is probable that we should have observed in them the approximation of tragedy to comedy which ended finally in the new comic style of the Athenians. About Cleophon's contemporary, Nicomachus, of whom nothing is known except that he produced a great many tragedies on the stock subjects of mythology, nothing need be said. The case is somewhat different with a certain Diogenes who while writing seven tragedies

¹ "Then, I think,
A man of subtle counsel and keen wit
Discovered God for mortals."

² "Introduced the notion of deity."

³ *Poet.* caps. 2, 22; *Rhet.* iii. 7.

under the decorous titles of *Thyestes*, *Helen*, *Medea*, and so forth, nevertheless contrived to offend against all the decencies of civilised life. Later grammarians can hardly find language strong enough to describe their improprieties. Here is a specimen: ἀρρήτων ἀρρητότερα καὶ κακῶν πέρα, καὶ οὔτε ὅτι φῶ περι αὐτῶν ἀξίως ἔχω . . . οὔτω πᾶσα μὲν αἰσχρότης, πᾶσα δὲ ἀπόνοια ἐν ἐκείναις τῷ ἀνδρὶ πεφιλοτέχνηται.¹ To ascribe these impure productions to Diogenes the Cynic, in spite of his well-known contempt for literature, was a temptation which even the ancients, though better informed than we are, could not wholly resist. Yet, after much sifting of evidence, it may be fairly believed that there were two Diogenes—the one an Athenian, who wrote an innocuous play called *Semele*, the other a native, perhaps, of Gadara, who also bore the name of *Enomaus*, and who perpetrated the seven indecent parodies. Diogenes of Sinope, meanwhile, was never among the poets, and the plays that defended cannibalism and blasphemed against the gods, though conceived in his spirit, belonged probably to a later period.²

Time would fail to tell of Antiphon and Polyeides, of Crates and Python, of Nearchus and Cleænetus, of the Syracusan Achæus and of Dikaiogenes, of Apollodorus and Timesitheus and Patrocles and Alkimenēs and Apollonius and Hippotheon and Timocles and Ecdôrus and Serapion—of all of whom it may be briefly said we know a few laborious nothings. Their names in a list serve to show how the sacred serpent of Greek tragedy, when sick to death, continued still for many generations drawing its slow length along. Down to the very end they kept on handling the old themes. Timesitheus, for instance, exhibited *Danaiides*, *Ixion*, *Memnon*, *Orestes*, and the like. Meanwhile a few pale shades emerge from the nebulous darkness, demanding more consideration than the mere recording of their names implies. We find two tyrants, to begin with, on the catalogue—Mamercus of Catana, who helped Timoleon, and Dionysius of Syracuse. Like Nero and Napoleon III., Dionysius was very eager to be ranked among the authors. He spared no expense in engaging the best rhapsodes of the day, and sent them to recite his verses at Olympia. To deceive a Greek audience in matters of pure æsthetics was, however, no easy matter. The men who came together attracted by the sweet tones of the rhapsodes, soon discovered the badness of the poems and laughed them down. Some fragments from the dramas of Dionysius have been preserved, among which is one that proves his preaching sounder than his practice: ³—

ἡ γὰρ τυραννὶς ἀδικίας μήτηρ ἔφυ.

¹ "More shameful than the shameful, and extravagant in naughtiness; so that I cannot find words strong enough to qualify them . . . in short, everything that is base and disgraceful has been elaborated by the man in those plays."

² The whole matter is too obscure for discussion in this place. Suffice it to add that a certain Philiscus, the friend and follower of Diogenes, enjoyed a portion of the notoriety attaching to the seven obnoxious dramas.

³ "The rule of one man is of wrong the parent."

The intrusion of professional orators into the sphere of the theatre might have been expected in an age when public speaking was cultivated like a fine art, and when opportunities for the display of verbal cleverness were eagerly sought. We are not, therefore, surprised to find Aphareus and Theodectes, distinguished rhetoricians of the school of Isocrates, among the tragedians. Of Theodectes a sufficient number of fragments survive to establish the general character of his style; but it is enough in this place to notice the fusion of forensic eloquence with dramatic poetry, against which Aristophanes had inveighed, and which was now complete.

Chærêmon and Moschion are more important in the history of the Attic drama, since both of them attempted innovations in accordance with the literary spirit of their age, and did not, like the rhetoricians, follow merely in the footsteps of Euripides. Chærêmon, the author of *Achilles Thersitoctonos* and several other pieces, was mentioned by Aristotle for having attempted to combine a great variety of metres in a poem called *The Centaur*,¹ which was, perhaps, a tragi-comedy or *ἰλαροτραγωδία*. He possessed remarkable descriptive powers, and was reckoned by the critics of antiquity as worthy of attentive study, though his dramas failed in action on the stage. We may regard him, in fact, as the first writer of plays to be read.² The metamorphoses through which the arts have to pass in their development, repeat themselves at the most distant ages and under the most diverse circumstances. It is, therefore, interesting to find that Chærêmon combined with this descriptive faculty a kind of euphuism which might place him in the same rank as Marini and Calderon, or among the most refined of modern Idyllists. He shrank, apparently, from calling things by their plain names. Water, for example, became in his fantastic phraseology *ποταμοῦ σώμα* (the river's body). The flowers were "children of the spring," *ἔαρος τέκνα*—the roses, "nurslings of the spring," *ἔαρος τιθηνήματα*—the stars, "sights of the firmament," *αἰθέρος θεάματα*—ivy, "lover of dancers, youngling of the year," *χορῶν ἔραστῆς ἐνιαυτοῦ παῖς*—blossoms, "children of the meadows," *λειμώνων τέκνα*, and so forth. In fact, Chærêmon rivals Gongora, Lyly, and Herrick on their own ground, and by his numerous surviving fragments proves how impossible it is to conclude that the Greeks of even a good age were free from affectations. Students, who may be interested in tracing the declensions of classic style from severity and purity, will do well to read the seventeen lines preserved by Athenæus from the tragedy of *Æneus*.³ They present a picture of girls playing in a field, too artful for successful rendering into any but insufferably ornate English.

The claim of Moschion on our attention is different from that of his contemporary Chærêmon. He wrote a tragedy with the title of *Themistocles*, wherein he appears to have handled the same subject-

¹ *Poet. caps.* 1, 24.

² See *Ar. Rhet.* iii. 12.

³ *Athen.* xiii. p. 608a.

matter as Æschylus in the *Persæ*. The hero of Salamis was, however, conspicuous by his absence from the history-play of the elder poet. Lapse of time, by removing the political difficulties under which the *Persæ* was composed, enabled Moschion to make the great Themistocles his protagonist. Two fragments transmitted by Stobæus from this drama, the one celebrating Athenian liberty of speech, while the other argues that a small band may get the better of a myriad lances, seem to be taken from the *concio ad milites* of the hero : 1—

καὶ γὰρ ἐν νάπαις βραχεῖ
πολὸς σιδήρω κείρεται πεύκης κλάδος,
καὶ βαιὸς ὄχλος μυρίας λόγχης κρατεῖ.

Another tragedy of Moschion, the *Pheræi*, is interesting when compared with the *Antigone* of Sophocles and the *Sisyphus* ascribed to Critias. Its plot seems in some way to have turned upon the duty which the living owe the dead : 2—

κενὸν θανάτος ἀνδρὸς αἰκίζειν σκιάν·
ζῶντας κολάζειν οὐ θανάτους εὐσεβέες.

And, again, in all probability from the same drama : 3—

τί κέρδος οὐκέτ' ὄντας αἰκίζειν νεκρούς ;
τί τὴν ἀναιδὸν γαίαν ὑβρίζειν πλέον ;
ἐπὶ γὰρ ἢ κρίνουσα καὶ θήδινα
καὶ τάνιαρὰ φροῦδος ἀσθησις φθαρῆ,
τὸ σῶμα κωφοῦ τάξιν εἴληφεν πέτρου.

A long quotation of thirty-four iambs, taken apparently in like manner from the *Pheræi*, sets forth the primitive condition of humanity. Men lived at first in caverns, like wild beasts. They had not learned the use of iron ; nor could they fashion houses, or wall cities, or plough the fields, or garner fruits of earth. They were cannibals and preyed on one another. In course of time, whether by the teaching of Prometheus or by the evolution of implanted instincts, they discovered the use of corn, and learned how to press wine from the grape. Cities arose and dwellings were roofed in, and social customs changed from savage to humane. From that moment it became impiety to leave the dead unburied ; but tombs were dug, and dust was heaped upon the clay-cold limbs, in order that the old abomination of human food might

1 " In far mountain vales

See how one small axe fells innumerable firs ;
So a few men can curb a myriad lances."

2 " 'Tis vain to offer outrage to thin shades ;
God-fearers strike the living, not the dead."

3 " What gain we by insulting mere dead men ?
What profit win taunts cast at voiceless clay ?
For when the sense that can discern things sweet
And things offensive is corrupt and fled,
The body takes the rank of mere deaf stone."

be removed from memory of men. The whole of this passage, very brilliantly written, condenses the speculations of Athenian philosophers upon the origin of civilisation, and brings them to the point which the poet had in view—the inculcation of the sanctity of sepulture.

Nothing more remains to be said about the Attic tragedians. At the risk of being tedious, I have striven to include the names at least of all the poets who filled the tragic stage from its beginning to its ending, in order that the great number of playwrights and their variety might be appreciated. The probable date at which Thespis began to exhibit dramas may be fixed soon after 550 B.C. Moschion may possibly have lived as late as 300 B.C. These, roughly calculated, are the extreme points of time between which the tragic art of the Athenians arose and flourished and declined. When the Alexandrian critics attempted a general review of dramatic literature, they formed, as we have seen already, two classes of tragedians. In the first they numbered five Athenian worthies. The second, called the Pleiad, included seven poets of the Court of Alexandria; nor is there adequate reason to suppose that this inferior canon (*δευτέρα τάξις*) was formed on any but just principles of taste. How magnificent was the revival of art and letters, in all that pertained, at any rate, to scenic show and pompous ritual, during the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus; how superbly the transplanted flowers of Greek ceremonial flourished on the shores of ancient Nile, and how Hellenic customs borrowed both gorgeous colours and a mystic meaning from the contact with Egyptian rites, may be gathered from the chapters devoted by Athenæus in the fifth book of the *Deipnosophistæ* to these matters. The Pleiad and the host of minor Alexandrian stars have fared, however, worse than their Athenian models. They had not even comic satirists to keep their names alive “immortally immerded.” With the exception of Lycophron, they offer no firm ground for modern criticism. We only know that, in this Alexandrian Renaissance, literature, as usual, repeated itself. Alexandria, like Athens, had its royal poets, and, what is not a little curious, Ptolemy Philopator imitated his predecessor Dionysius to the extent of composing a tragedy, *Adonis*, with the same title and presumably upon the same theme.

CHAPTER XVII

ANCIENT AND MODERN TRAGEDY

Greek Tragedy and the Rites of Dionysus—A Sketch of its Origin and History—The Attic Theatre—The Actors and their Masks—Relation of Sculpture to the Drama in Greece—The Legends used by the Attic Tragedians—Modern Liberty in the Choice of Subjects—Mystery Plays—Nemesis—Modern Tragedy has no Religious Idea—Tragic Irony—Aristotle's Definition of Tragedy—Modern Tragedy offers no Katharsis of the Passions—Destinies and Characters—Female Characters—The Supernatural—French Tragedy—Five Acts—Bloodshed—The Unities—Radical Differences in the Spirit of Ancient and Modern Art.

IN order to comprehend the differences between the ancient and the modern Drama—between the tragedy of Sophocles and the tragedy of Shakespeare—it is necessary to enter into the details of the history of the Attic stage. In no other department of art is the character of the work produced so closely dependent upon the external form which the artist had to adopt.¹

Both the Tragedy and Comedy of the Greeks were intimately connected with the religious rites of Dionysus. Up to the very last, they formed a portion of the cultus of the vintage-god, to whom the theatre was consecrated, and at whose yearly festivals the plays were acted. The Chorus, which originally formed the chief portion of the dramatic body, took its station at the altar of Bacchus in the centre of the theatre. Now the worship of Bacchus in Greece had from the first a double aspect—joyous and sorrowful. The joyous festivals were held in celebration of the vigour and the force of nature, in the spring and summer of the year; the sorrowful commemorated the sadness of the autumn and the winter. There were therefore two distinct branches of musical and choral art connected with the Dionysiac rites—the one jovial, the other marked by the enthusiasm of a wild

¹ Since this chapter was written, a great advance has been made in the study of the actual Greek theatre, the building, scenery, machinery, actors, etc. English readers may be referred to the excellent book upon this subject, called *The Attic Theatre*, by Mr. A. E. Haigh. At the same time the recently developed habit of performing Greek plays in our theatres or in the open air has enabled the public to acquire some more precise notion of what the dramatic art of Athens aimed at.

grief. From the former of these, or the Revel Song, sprang Comedy; from the latter, or the Dithyramb, sprang Tragedy. Arion is named as the first great poet who cultivated the Dithyramb and wrote elaborate odes for recitation by the Chorus in their evolutions round the Bacchic altar. His Chorus were attired like Satyrs in goat-skins, to represent the woodland comrades of the god; hence came the name of Tragedy or Goat-song. At first the Dithyrambic Odes celebrated only the mystical woes of Dionysus: then they were extended so as to embrace minor mythical incidents connected with his worship; and at last the god himself was forgotten, and the tragic sufferings of any hero were chanted by the Chorus. This change is marked by an old tradition concerning Sicyon, where it is said that the woes of the hero Adrastus were sung by the Bacchic choir, and that Cleisthenes, wishing to suppress the national mythology, restored the antique Dionysiac function. It also may explain the Greek proverb: "What has this to do with Dionysus?"—a question which might reasonably have been asked when the sacred representation diverged too widely from the line of Bacchic legend.

Thus the original element of Greek Tragedy was the Dithyramb, as cultivated by Arion; and the first step in the progress of the dithyrambic chorus toward the Drama was the introduction of heroic legends into the odes. The next step was the addition of the Actor. It has been ingeniously conjectured that the actor was borrowed from the guild of Rhapsodes. The iambics of Archilochus and other poets were recited, as we know, at the feasts of Demeter, whose cult had points of similarity with that of Bacchus. It is not improbable that when the heroic element was added to the dithyramb, and the subjects handled by the professional reciters of the Homeric and Cyclic epics began to form a part of the Dionysiac celebration, a rhapsode was then introduced to help the Chorus in their office. That he declaimed iambics and not hexameters may be accounted for by the prevalence of the iambic in the sister-cult of Demeter. This then was the third step in the development of tragedy. To the dithyrambic chorus of Arion was added an interlocutor, who not only recited passages of narrative, but also exchanged speech with the Chorus, and who in course of time came to personate the hero whose history was being celebrated. Thus far had the art advanced in the age of Thespis. The Chorus stood and danced round the altar of Bacchus. The rhapsode, whom we now begin to call the actor, stood on a raised stage (*λογεῖον*) above them. The whole history of Greek tragedy exhibits a regular expansion of these simple elements. The function of the Chorus, the peculiar nature of the masks and dresses, and the very structure of the theatres, can only be explained by reference to this primitive constitution of the dramatic art.

To Thespis the Athenian, whose first regular exhibition of the tragic show preceded the birth of Æschylus by about ten years, belongs the credit of having brought the various elements of tragedy into harmony,

and of having fixed the outlines of the tragic art. The destruction of Athens by the Persian army, like the burning of London, which inflicted so severe an injury upon our early dramatic literature, obliterated the monuments of the genuine Thespian tragedy. Some of the names of these dramas—*Pentheus*, *Phorbas*, *The Funeral Games of Pelias*, *The Priests*—have been preserved; from which we may conjecture that Thespis composed interludes with regular plots, combining choric passages and monologues uttered by the actor with elucidatory dialogues. His chorus was the traditional band of mummers clad in goat-skins—the *τράγοι* of the ancient Dionysiac festival. The poet himself was the actor, and his portion of the interlude was written either in iambic, or, as we may gather from a passage in the *Poetics* of Aristotle, in trochaic metre. The next great name after Thespis is Phrynichus, who composed a tragic interlude on the taking of Miletus by the Persians. This fact is important, since it proves that even at this early period a dramatist felt justified not merely in departing from the myths of Dionysus, but also in treating the events of contemporary history in his choric tragedy. The Athenians, however, were indignant at so abrupt a departure from usage, and at the unæsthetical exhibition of disasters which had recently befallen their race. They fined the poet, and confirmed their tragedians in the custom of handling only ancient and religious legends. It is well known that the single exception to this custom which has been preserved to us is the splendid triumph of Æschylus composed upon the ruin of the godless Xerxes. Phrynichus introduced one important change into the Thespian Drama: he established female characters. After him came Pratinas, who altered the old form of the Chorus. Hitherto, whatever may have been the subject of the play, the Bacchic *τράγοι* (goats) stood in their quaint goat-skins round the thymélé or altar of the god. Pratinas contrived that in future the Chorus should be attired to suit the action of the piece. If the play were written on the fall of Troy, for instance, they appeared as ancient Trojans; or if it had reference to the house of Laius, they came forth as senators of Thebes. At the same time special pieces for the traditional tragic chorus were retained, and these received the name of Satyric Dramas. Henceforth it was customary for a tragic author to produce at the same time three successive dramas on the subject he selected, together with a satyric play. The only essential changes which were afterwards made in Greek Tragedy, were the introduction of a second actor by Æschylus and of a third actor by Sophocles, the abandonment of the stricter rule of the tetralogy, and the gradual diminution of the importance of the Chorus. The choric element, which had been everything at the commencement, gave way to the dialogue, as the art of developing dramatic situations and characters advanced; until in the days of Euripides the Chorus formed a comparatively insignificant part of the tragic machinery. This curtailment of the function of the Chorus was a necessary consequence of progress in the art of exhibiting an imitation of human action and

passion. Yet the Chorus never lost its place in Greek tragedy. It remained to mark the origin of the Drama, and as a symbol of the essentially religious purpose of the tragic spectacle.

An event is said to have happened during the age of Pratinas which greatly influenced the future of the Attic Drama. The Thespian interludes had been acted on a wooden scaffolding. This fell down on one occasion, and caused so much alarm that the Athenians erected a permanent stone theatre, which they constructed on the south-east side of the Acropolis. Whether this old story is a fiction, and whether the time had not naturally arrived for a more substantial building, may admit of question. At any rate the new theatre was designed as though it were destined to exist for all time, as though its architects were prescient that the Attic Drama would become the wonder of the world. It contained 30,000 spectators, seated in semicircular tiers scooped out of the rock of the Acropolis. Their faces were turned towards Hymettus and the sea. The stage fronted the Acropolis: the actors had in view the cliffs upon which stood the Parthenon and the gleaming statue of Protective Pallas. The whole was open to the air. Remembering these facts, we are enabled to understand the peculiar grandeur and propriety of those addresses to the powers of the earth and sky, to the temples of the gods, to the all-seeing sun and glittering ocean-waves, which are so common in Greek tragedy. The Athenian theatre was brought into close connection with all that was most brilliant in the architecture and the sculpture of Athens, with all that is most impressive in the natural environments of the city, with the very deities of the Hellenic worship in their visible manifestations to the senses of men. This circumstance alone determined many peculiarities of the Greek Drama, which make it wholly unlike our own. If the hero of a modern play, for instance, calls the sun to witness, he must point to a tissue-paper transparency in the centre of a painted scene: if he apostrophises ocean, he must turn towards a heaving mass of agitated canvas. But Ajax or Electra could raise their hands to the actual sun, gilding the statue of Athene with living rays; Prometheus, when he described the myriad laughter of the dimpling waves, knew that the sea was within sight of the audience; and sun and sea were regarded by the nation at large, not merely as phenomena of our universe, but as beings capable of sympathising with humanity in its distress. For the same reason nearly all the scenes of the Greek tragedies are laid in daytime and in the open air. The work of art exhibited an unparalleled combination of æsthetical definiteness with the actual facts of nature. The imagination is scarcely more wrought upon than the senses; whereas the tragedy of Shakespeare makes a direct appeal to the inner eye and to the highly stimulated fancy of the audience. It is generally before a temple or a palace that the action of a Greek play proceeds. Nor was there anything artificial in this custom; for the Greeks lived in the air of heaven, nor could events of such magnitude as those which their tragedy represented, have been

appropriately enacted beneath the shadow of a private roof. Far different were the conditions which the modern dramatist undertook to illustrate. The hesitations of Hamlet, the spiritual conflict of Faustus, the domestic sufferings of the Duchess of Malfi, are evolved with peculiar propriety within the narrow walls of palace-chambers, college-cells, and prisons or mad-houses. Scenery, in our sense of the word, was scarcely required by the Greeks. The name of a tragedy sufficed to determine what palace-gate was represented by the stage: the statue of a god was enough to show whose temple was intended. This simplicity of theatrical arrangement led to a corresponding simplicity of dramatic construction, to rarity of changes in the scene, and to the stationary character of Greek tragedy in general.

Hollowed out of the hillside, the seats of the Athenian spectators embraced rather more than a full semicircle, and this large arc was subtended by a long straight line,—the *σκηνή* (*lit.* booth or tent), or background of the stage.¹ In front of this wall ran a shallow platform, not coextensive with the *skênê*, but corresponding to the middle portion of it. This platform was the stage proper. It was in fact a development of the Thespian *λογεῖον* (*lit.* speaking-place). The stage was narrow and raised from ten to twelve feet above the ground, to which a flight of steps led from it. On the stage, very long in proportion to its depth, all the action of the play took place: the actors entered it through three openings in the *skênê*, of which the central was larger and the two side ones smaller. When they stood upon the stage, they had not much room for grouping or for complicated action: they moved and stood like the figures in a bas-relief, turning their profiles to the audience, and so arranging their gestures that a continually harmonious series of figures was relieved upon the background of the *skênê*. The central and side openings had doors capable of being thrown back and exhibiting a chamber, in which, at critical moments of the action, such spectacles as the murdered body of Agamemnon, or the suicide of Jocasta, were revealed to the spectators.² The chorus had their own allotted station in the centre of the whole theatre—the semicircular pit left between the lowest tier of spectators and the staircase leading to the stage. In the middle of this pit or orchestra was placed the *thymelé*, or altar of Bacchus, round which the chorus moved on its first entrance, and where it stood while witnessing the action on the stage. The chorus entered by side passages leading from the back of the *skênê*, on a lower level than that of the stage: nor did they ever leave their orchestra to mount the stage and mingle with the actors. The dressing-rooms and offices of the theatre were concealed behind the *skênê*. Above the stage was suspended an aerial

¹ The *skênê* properly included the dressing-room for actors behind the stage.

² It is probable that this chamber was not discovered *behind* the stage-wall, but was a kind of platform wheeled on to the *logeion* from the rooms behind the *skênê*. Upon this movable platform appeared a group formed to represent the act which has just taken place and been described by the Messenger. This appears to be the real meaning of the so-called *Ekkyklêma*.

platform for the gods, while subterranean stairs were constructed for the appearance of ghosts ascending from the nether regions.

These details about the vast size of the theatre, its system of construction, and its exposure to the air, make it clear that no acting similar to that of the modern drama could have been possible on the Attic stage. Any one who has visited the Roman theatre of Orange, where the skênê is still in tolerable preservation, must have felt that a classical audience could not have enjoyed the subtle intonations of the voice and the delicate changes in the features, expressive of varying passions, which constitute the charm of modern acting. Our intricate and minute effects were out of the question. Everything in the Greek theatre had to be colossal, statuesque, almost stationary. The Greeks had so delicate a sense of proportion and of fitness that they adjusted their art to these necessities. The actors were raised on thick-soled and high-heeled boots: they wore masks, and used peculiar mouth-pieces, by means of which their voices were made more resonant. The dresses which they swept along the stage, were the traditional costumes of the Bacchic festivals—brilliant and trailing mantles, which added volume to their persons. All their movements partook of the dignity befitting demigods and heroes. To suppose that these pompous figures were of necessity ridiculous would be a great mistake. Everything we know about Greek art makes it certain that in the theatre, no less than in sculpture and architecture, this nation of artists achieved a perfectly harmonious effect. How dignified, for example, were their masks, may be imagined from the sculptured heads of Tragedy and Comedy preserved in the Vatican—marble faces of sublime serenity, surmounted by the huge mass of curling hair, which was built up above the mask to add height to the figure. But in order to maintain the grandeur of these personages on the stage, it was necessary that they should never move abruptly or struggle violently. This is perhaps the chief reason why Greek Tragedy was so calm and so processional in character, why all its vehement action took place off the stage, why some of its most impassioned expressions of emotion were cadenced in elaborate lyrics with a musical accompaniment. An actor, mounted on his buskins, and carrying the weight of the tragic mask, could never have encountered a similar gigantic being in personal combat without betraying some awkwardness of movement or exhibiting some unseemly gesture. It was therefore necessary to create the part of the Messenger as an artistic correlative to the peculiarly artificial conditions of the stage. We find in the same circumstance a reason why the tragic situation was sustained with such intensity, why the action was limited to a short space of time and to a single locality, and why few changes were permitted in the characters during the conduct of the same piece. For the mask depicted one fixed cast of features; and though, as in the case of *Œdipus*, who tears out his eyes in a play of Sophocles, the actor might appear twice upon the stage with different masks, yet he could not be constantly changing them. Therefore the

strong point of the Greek dramatist lay in the construction of such plots and characters as admitted of sustained and steady passion, whereas a modern playwright aims at providing parts which shall enable a great actor to exhibit lights and shades of varying expression. It still remains a problem how such parts as the Cassandra of Æschylus and the Orestes of Euripides could have been adequately acted with a mask to hide the features ; but such effects as those for which Garrick, Rachel, and Talma were celebrated would have been utterly impossible at Athens.

In order to form any conception of a Greek drama, we must imbue our minds with the spirit of Greek sculpture, and animate some frieze or bas-relief, supplying the accompaniment of simple and magnificent music, like that of Gluck, or like the recitatives of Porpora. Flaxman's designs for Æschylus are probably the best possible reconstruction of the scenes of a Greek tragedy, as they appeared to the eyes of the spectators, relieved upon the background of the skênê. Schlegel is justly indignant with those critics who affirm that the modern opera affords an exact parallel to the Greek drama. Yet the combination of music, acting, scenery, and dancing in such an opera as Gluck's *Orfeo* or Cherubini's *Medea*, may come nearer than anything else towards giving us a notion of one of the tragedies of Euripides. This remark must be qualified by the acknowledgment of a radical and fundamental difference between the two species of dramatic art. Music, dancing, acting, and scenery, with the Greeks, were sculptural, studied, stately ; with the moderns they are picturesque, passionate, mobile. If the opera at all resembles the Greek drama, it is because of the highly artificial development of the histrionic art which it exhibits. The expression of passion in a stationary and prolonged aria, with which we are familiar in the opera, and which is far removed from nature, was of common occurrence in Greek Tragedy.¹

So far we have been occupied with those characteristics of the ancient drama which were immediately determined by the external circumstances of the Attic stage. I have tried to show that some of the most marked qualities of the work of art were necessitated by the conditions of its form. But other and not less important points of difference between the ancient and the modern drama were due to the subject-matter of the former. The Greek playwrights confined themselves to a comparatively narrow circle of mythical stories ; each in

¹ The scene in which Antigone takes leave of the Chorus within sight of her tomb is a good instance of this artificial treatment of passionate situations in the Attic Drama. It has been censured by some critics as being unreasonably protracted. In reality it is in perfect accordance with the whole spirit of Greek Tragedy. The emotions are brought into artistic relief : the figures are grouped like mourners on a sculptured monument : the antiphonal dirges of the princess and her attendants set the pulses of our sympathy in rhythmic movement, so that grief itself becomes idealised and glorified. The depth of feeling expressed, and the highly wrought form of its expression, together tend to rouse and chasten all that is profound and dignified in our emotions. Strophé after strophé, heart-beat by heart-beat, this wonderfully cadenced funeral song of her who is the bride of Acheron proceeds until the marble gates are shut upon Antigone.

succession had recourse to Homer and to the poets of the Epic Cycle. Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, not to mention their numerous forgotten rivals, handled and re-handled the same themes. We have, for example, extant three tragedies, the *Choëphoræ* of Æschylus, the *Electra* of Sophocles, and the *Electra* of Euripides, composed upon precisely the same incident in the tale of Agamemnon's children. Modern dramatists, on the contrary, start with the whole stuff of human history; they seek out their subjects where they choose, or invent motives with a view to the exhibition of varied character, force of passion, tragic effect; nor have they any fixed basis of solid thought like the doctrine of Nemesis whereon to rear their tragic superstructure. In this respect the Mystery Plays of the Catholic Church offer a close parallel to the Greek Drama. In these dramatic shows the whole body of Christian tradition—the Bible, the acts of the saints, and the doctrines of the Church about the Judgment and the final state of the soul—was used as the material from which to fashion sacred plays. But between the Mysteries and the early Attic tragedies there was one great point of difference. The sanctity of the Christian tradition, by giving an immovable form to the legends, precluded all freedom of the fancy. There could be no inventive action of the poet's mind when he was engaged in setting forth the mysteries of the Incarnation, the Atonement, or the final Judgment. His object was to instruct the people in certain doctrines, and all he could do was to repeat over and over again the same series of events in which God had dealt with man. Therefore, when the true dramatic instinct awoke in modern Europe, the playwrights had to quit this narrow sphere of consecrated thoughts. Miracle plays were succeeded by Moralities, by Histories, and by those unfettered creations of which Marlowe in England offered the first illustrious examples. Had the Thespian interludes been as purely didactic in their object as the early Mystery plays of the Church, we should either have possessed no Attic Drama at all or else have received from the Greek poets a very different type of tragedy. As it was, the very essence of Greek religion reached its culminating point in art. Epical mythology attained to final development in the free artistic creations of Sophocles. Meanwhile the dramatists were hampered in their choice of subjects by the artificial restraints imposed upon them. They were never at liberty to invent. They were always bound to keep in view the traditional interpretation of legends to which a semi-religious importance attached.

Many distinctions between the ancient and the modern drama may be deduced from this original difference in the sources of their materials. The conception of retributive justice pervades the whole tragedy of the Greeks; and the maintenance of this one animating idea is due no doubt in a great measure to the continued treatment of a class of subjects which not only remarkably exhibited its working, but which also were traditionally interpreted in its light. The modern drama has no such central idea. Our tragedy imports no dominant religious

or moral conception into the sphere of art. Even Shakespeare and Goethe, the most highly moralised of modern dramatists, have been contented with bringing close before our eyes the manifold spectacle of human existence, wonderful and brilliant, from which we draw such lessons only as can be learned from life itself. They do not undertake, like the Greek tragedians, to supply the solution as well as the problem. It is enough for them to exhibit humanity in conflict, to enlist our sympathies on the side of what is noble, or to arouse our pity by the sight of innocence in misery. The struggle of Lear with his unnatural daughters, the death of Cordelia when the very doors of hope have just been opened; Desdemona dying by her husband's hand, without one opportunity of explanation; Imogen flouted as a faithless wife; Hamlet wrestling with Laertes in the grave of Ophelia; Juliet and Romeo brought by a mistake to death in the May-time of their love; Faust inflicting by his bitter gift of selfish passion woe after woe on Margaret and her family—these are the subjects of our tragedy. We have to content ourselves as we can with this "mask and antimask of impassioned life, breathing, moving, acting, suffering, laughing," and to moralise it as we may. The case is different with Greek Tragedy. There we always learn one lesson—*τῷ δράσαντι παθεῖν*, the guilty must suffer. It is only in a few such characters as Antigone or Polyxena that pure pathos seems to weigh down the balance of the law.

A minor consequence of the fixed nature of Attic Tragedy was that the dramatists calculated on no surprise in order to enlist the interest of their audience. The name, *Œdipus* or *Agamemnon*, informed the spectators what course the action of the play would take. The art of the poet therefore consisted in so displaying his characters, so preparing his incidents, and so developing the tragic import of the tale, as to excite attention. From this arose a peculiar style of treatment, and in particular that Irony of which so much is spoken. The point, for example, about the *Œdipus Tyrannus* was that the spectators knew his horrible story, but that he did not. Therefore, every word he uttered in his pride of prosperity was charged with sinister irony, was pregnant with doom. Every minute incident brought him nearer to the final crash, which all the while was ready waiting for him. In reading this tragedy of Sophocles we seem to be watching a boat full of careless persons gliding down a river, and gradually approaching its fall over a vast cliff. If we take interest in them, how terrible is our anxiety when they come within the irresistible current of the sliding water, how frightful is their cry of anguish when at last they see the precipice ahead, how horror-stricken is the silence with which they shoot the fall, and are submerged! Of this nature is the interest of a good Greek tragedy. But in the case of the modern drama all is different. When our Elizabethan ancestors went to the theatre to hear *Othello* for the first time, very few of them knew the story: as the play proceeded, they could not be sure whether Iago would finally prevail. At every moment the outcome was doubtful. Tragic irony

is therefore not a common element in the modern drama. The forcible exhibition of a new and striking subject, the gradual development of passions in fierce conflict, the utmost amount of pathos accumulated round the victims of malice or ill-luck, exhaust the resources of the tragedian. The ancient dramatist plays with his cards upon the table : the modern dramatist conceals his hand. Euripides prefixed a prologue descriptive of the action to his pieces. Our tragedies open only with such scenes as render the immediate conduct of the play intelligible.

Aristotle's definition of tragedy, founded upon a vast experience, we need not doubt, of the best Greek dramas, offers another point of contrast between the ancient and the modern art. "Tragedy," he says, "is an imitation of an action that is weighty, complete, and of a proper magnitude ; it proceeds by action and not by narration ; and it effects through pity and terror a purgation of the like passions in the minds of the spectators." This definition, which has caused great difficulty for commentators, turns upon the meaning of the *κάθαρσις*,¹ or purgation, which Tragedy is supposed to effect. It is quite clear that *all* poetry which stirs the feelings of pity and terror need not at the same time purge them in or from the souls of the listeners, except only in so far as true art is elevating and purifying. Therefore Aristotle must have had some special quality of the Tragic art to which he was accustomed, in his mind. His words seem to express that it is the function of the Tragic Drama to appeal to our deepest sympathies and strongest passions, to arouse them, but at the same time to pacify them, and, as it were, to draw off the dangerous stuff that lies upon our soul, —to resolve the perturbation of the mind in some transcendental contemplation.² This is what the greatest Greek Tragedies achieve. They are almost invariably closed by some sentence of the Chorus in which the unsearchableness of God's dealings is set forth, and by which we are made to feel that, after the fitful strife and fever of human

¹ The word Katharsis may possibly have been borrowed from medicine by Aristotle, and his meaning may therefore be that the surplus of the passions of which he speaks is literally purged out of the mental system by the action of Tragedy. This suggestion was, I think, made by Bernays. It has been pointed out to me by my friend, Mr. E. Abbott of Balliol College, that Aristotle, in another passage of the *Poetics* (xviii. 8), uses the word in a lustral meaning. The reference to it in a weighty passage of the *Politics* (viii. 7, 4) seems to prove that the purification was for the individual, not, as Goethe thought, for the passions as exhibited in the work of art itself.

² Milton's description of the poet's function, in the *Reason of Church Government urged against Prelacy*, contains a fine expansion of the phrase Katharsis in these words : "To allay the perturbation of the mind, and set the affections in right tune." Milton in his own *Samson Agonistes* followed the Greek usage closely, and concluded the whole drama with a choric reflection upon the wisdom of God's dealings with the race of men. There again he expresses in the very last words of his play the same doctrine of Katharsis :—

"His servants He, with new acquit
Of true experience from this great event,
With peace and consolation hath dismissed,
And calm of mind, all passion spent."

Hegel, in his doctrine of the *Versöhnung*, or reconciliation of opposite passions in a contemplation which is above them and includes them, seems to have aimed at the same law as Aristotle.

wills, the eternal counsels of Zeus remain unchanged, while the moral order of the world, shaken and distorted by the passions of heroic sufferers, abides in the serenity of the Ideal. Furthermore, there is in the very substance of almost all Greek tragedies a more obvious healing of wounds and restoration of harmony than this. The Trilogy of Prometheus was concluded by the absorption of the Titan's vehement will in that of Zeus. The Trilogy of Orestes ends with the benediction of Pallas and Phœbus upon the righteous man who had redeemed the errors of his house. Sophocles allows us a glimpse of Antigone bringing peace and joy to her father and brothers in Hades. The old Œdipus, after his life-wanderings and crimes and woes, is made a blessed Dæmon through the mercy of propitiated deities. Hippolytus is reconciled to his father, and is cheered and cooled in his death-fever by the presence of the maiden Artemis. Thus the terror and pity which have been roused in each of these cases are allayed by the actual climax of the plot which has excited them: grief itself becomes a chariot for surmounting the sources of grief. But the modern drama does not offer this Katharsis: its passions too often remain unreconciled in their original antagonism: the note on which the symphony terminates is not unfrequently discordant or exciting. Where is the Katharsis in *King Lear*? Are our passions purged in any definite sense by the close of the first part of *Faust*? We are rather left with the sense of inexpiable guilt and unalleviated suffering, with yearnings excited which shall never be quelled. The greatest works of modern fiction—the novels of Balzac, with their philosophy of wickedness triumphant; the novels of George Eliot, with their dismal lesson of the feebleness of human effort; the tragedies of Shakespeare, with the silence of the grave for their conclusion—intensify and embitter that “struggle to be what we are not, and to do what we cannot” which Hazlitt gives as an equivalent for life.¹ The greatest creative poet of this generation writes *ἀνάγκη* (Necessity) upon his title-page. The chief poet of the century makes his hero exclaim:—

“Entbehren sollst du, sollst entbehren.”

Such purification of the passions as modern art achieves, is to be found most eminently in the choric movements of Handel, in the symphonies of Beethoven, in all the great achievements of music. Ancient art aimed at the perfect within definite limits, because human life in the ancient world was circumscribed by mundane limitations, and its conditions were unhesitatingly accepted. Our art aims at the infinite, because we are for ever striving after a completion which cannot be attained. It was not for nothing that Christianity, with its widening

¹ In the Greek Drama the notion of Fate was primarily theological: the hero was conducted to his end by gods. In Shakespeare Fate is psychological; Hamlet's own character is his destiny. In Goethe, Victor Hugo, and George Eliot the conception of Fate has passed into the region of Positivism: the laws of blood, society, and race rule individuals in the *Elective Affinities*, *Les Misérables*, the *Spanish Gypsy*.

of spiritual horizons, closed the ancient and inaugurated the modern age :—

“ Une immense espérance a traversé la terre ;
Malgré nous vers le ciel il faut lever les yeux.”

In that fixed mood of restless expectation, in that persistent attitude of the soul upraised to sweep the heavens, there lies the secret of modern art. Life to the Greek belonged to the category of τὸ πέρας (the defined): it was like a crystal in its well-defined consistency. Our life, whether we regard it from the point of view of science or of religion, belongs to the ἄπειρον (the indefinite): it is only one term of an infinite series, the significance whereof is relative to the unknown quantities beyond it. Consequently modern art is nowhere satisfied with merely æsthetic forms. The soul with its maladies imperiously demands expression. Michael Angelo was not contented, like Pheidias or Praxiteles, with carving the serenity of godlike men and women. In the figures upon the tombs of the Medici he fashioned four moods of the tortured, aching, anguished soul, to whom the burden of this life is all but intolerable. His frescoes in the Sistine Chapel are subordinated to the expression of one thought—the doom of God which will descend upon the soul of man. Christianity destroyed beyond all possibility of reconstruction the free, frank sensuality of Paganism. It convicted humanity of sin, and taught men to occupy themselves with the internal warfare of their flesh and spirit as that which is alone eternally important. Life itself, according to the modern formula, is a conflict which will be concluded one way or the other beyond the grave. Meanwhile upon this earth the conflict is undetermined. Therefore art, which reflects life, represents the battle, and dares not to anticipate its outcome. In this relation the very pathology of the soul becomes poetic. Ἐρᾶν ἀδυνάτων, said the Greek proverb, νόσος τῆς ψυχῆς—“ to desire impossible things is a disease of the soul.” But *l'amour de l'impossible*—the straining of the soul after the infinite, the desire to approximate in this world to a dream of the ecstatic fancy—all the rapture of saints, the self-denial of solitaries, the death in life of penitents—is not defined by us as a disease. On the contrary, this passion for the impossible has been held through many centuries of modern history to be the truest sign of the soul's health; and even where such superstition has not penetrated, poets like Byron have prided themselves upon the same temper displayed in their extravagant yearnings. Don Juan, enormous in his appetite for pleasure, and rebellious on the grave's brink beneath the hand of God; Faust, insatiable of curiosity, and careless of eternity in his lust for power; Tannhäuser, pursuing to the end his double life of love too sweet to be abandoned and of conscience too acutely sensitive to be stilled; these are our modern legends.¹ These, with so little

¹ A contemporary German writer of distinction, Prince Emil von Carolath Sch'naich, has in his poem on Don Juan's death invented a splendid allegory, whereby both Faust and Don Juan are imaged as the sons begotten by the Wandering Jew upon the exiled goddess Venus.

of mere action in them, so much of inner meaning and mental experience, yield the truest materials to our artists. Over and over again have Faust, Tannhäuser, and Don Juan supplied the poet with subjects wherein no merely local or temporary tragedy is set forth, but the destiny of the modern man is shown as in a magic mirror. Nor has the advent of science as yet restored our mind to that "passionless Bride, divine Tranquillity," which the Greeks enjoyed, and which alone could be the mother of such art as the antique. Although the sublime cheerfulness of Goethe shows by way of forecast how the scientific mood may lead to this result hereafter, for the present at any rate science has deepened and complicated our most distressing problems, has rendered the anxiety of man about his destiny still more cruel, has made him still more helpless in the effort to comprehend his relations to the Universe, by seeming to prove that his most cherished hypotheses are mere illusions. Like a spoiled child, who has been taught to expect too much, to think about himself too much, and to rely too much on flattery, humanity, shrinking from the cold calm atmosphere of science, still cries in feverish accents with St. Paul: "If Christ be not risen, then are we of men most wretched!" How strange would that sentence have sounded to Sophocles! How well it suits the tragedy of Shakespeare, which has for its ultimate *Versöhnung* the hope, felt, though unexpressed, of St. Paul's exclamation!

As a corollary to what has hitherto been said about the differences between the drama of Sophocles and that of Shakespeare it follows that the former aims at depicting the destinies, and the latter the characters of men.¹ Shakespeare exhibits individual wills and passions clashing together and producing varied patterns in the web of life. Sophocles unfolds schemes and sequences of doomed events, where individual wills and passions play indeed their part, but where they are subordinated to the idea which the tragedian undertakes to illustrate. A play of Æschylus or Sophocles strikes us by the grandeur of the whole: a play of Shakespeare or Goethe overwhelms us by the force and frequency of combined and interacting motives. No analysis can be too searching or acute for the profound conception which pervades the *Oresteia* of Æschylus; but there is no single character in Æschylus or in Sophocles so worthy of minute investigation as that of Hamlet or of Faust. If a critic looks to the general effect of a tragedy, to the power of imagination displayed in its conception as a single work of art, he will prefer the *Agamemnon* to *Macbeth*; but if

¹ Character in a Greek play is never so minutely anatomised as in a modern work of fiction. We do not actually see the secret workings of the mainsprings of personality. We judge a hero of Sophocles by his actions and by his relations to other men and women more than by his soliloquies or by scenes specially constructed to expose his qualities. In this respect Greek Tragedy again resembles Greek sculpture. As in their sculpture the Greek artists felt the muscular structure of the human frame with exquisite sensibility, while they did not obtrude it upon the spectator; so in their tragedy the poets preferred to exhibit the results rather than to lay bare the process of mental and emotional activity. The modern tragedian shifts his ground somewhat, but he chooses an equally legitimate province of poetry when he discloses the inmost labyrinths in the character of a Hamlet or a Faust.

he seek for the creation of a complete and subtle human soul, he will abandon Clytemnestra for the Thane of Cawdor's wife. The antique drama aims at the presentation of tragic situations, determined and controlled by some mysterious force superior to the agents. The modern aims at the presentation of tragic situations, immediately produced and brought about by the free action of the *dramatis personæ*.

One advantage which the modern dramatist has over the ancient is that he may introduce very numerous persons in concerted action without the danger of confusion, and that of these many may be female. It has been ingeniously argued by De Quincey that the Attic tragedians had small opportunity of studying the female character, and that it would have been indecorous for them to have painted women with the perfect freedom of a Cleopatra or a Vittoria Corombona.¹ Consequently their women are either superficially and slightly sketched like Ismene and Chrysothemis; or else they are marked by something masculine, as in the case of Clytemnestra and Medea; or again they move our sympathy not by the perfection of their womanliness but by the exhibition of some simple and sublime self-sacrifice—notable examples being the filial devotion of Antigone, the sisterly affection of Electra, the uncomplaining submission of Iphigeneia and Polyxena, the wifely self-abandonment of Alcestis, the almost frigid acquiescence in death of Makaria. The later Greek drama, and especially the drama of Euripides, abounded in these characters. They are incarnations of certain moral qualities. Like the masks which concealed the actor's face, they show one fixed and sustained mood of emotion: we find in them no hesitancy and difficult resolve, no ebb and flow of wavering inclination, but one immutable, magnificent, heroic fixity of purpose. In a word, they are conformed to the sculptural type of the Greek tragic art.

Owing to the very structure of the Attic stage, Greek tragedy could never have recourse to those formless, vague, and unsubstantial sources of terror and of charm which the modern dramatist has at his command. How could such airy nothings as the elves of the *Tempest*, the fairies of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, or the witches of *Macbeth* have been brought upon that colossal theatre in the full blaze of an Athenian noon? Figures of Thanatos and of Lyssa did indeed appear: the ghost of Clytemnestra roused the sleeping Furies in the courts of Delphi: the phantom of Darius hovered over his grave. But these spectres were sculpturesque—such as Pheidias might have carved in marble, and such as we see painted on so-called Etruscan vases. They were not Banquo-apparitions gliding into visible substance from the vacant gloom and retiring thitherward again. When such creatures of the diseased imagination had to be suggested, the seer, like Cassandra, before whose eyes the phantoms of the children of Thyestes passed,

¹ This seems to have been the gist of one of the grudges of Aristophanes against Euripides, as I have indicated above, p. 331. He made the love of Sthenobœa, the vengeance of Medea, too interesting.

or Orestes, who drew his arrows upon an unseen cohort of threatening fiends, stared on vacancy. Shakespeare dares at times to realise such incorporeal beings, to give to them a voice and a visible form. Yet it may be doubted whether even in his tremendous supernatural apparatus the voice which shrieked to Macbeth "Sleep no more!" the mutterings of Lady Macbeth in her somnambulism, the spectre which Hamlet saw and his mother could not see, the dream of Clarence with its cry of injured ghosts, are not really the most appalling.

The Greek drama owed its power to the qualities of regularity and simplicity: the strength of the modern lies in subtlety and multiplicity. The external conditions of the Attic theatre no less than the prevailing spirit of Greek tragic art forced this simplicity and regularity upon the ancient dramatists. These conditions do not occur in the modern world. We have our little theatres, our limited audience, our unmasked actors, our scenical illusions, our freedom in the choice of subjects. Therefore to push the subtlety and multiplicity of tragic composition to the utmost—to arrange for the most swift and sudden changes of expression in the actor, for the most delicate development of a many-sided character, for the most complicated grouping of contrasted forms, and for the utmost realisation of imaginative incidents—is the glory of a Shakespeare or a Goethe. The French dramatists made the mistake of clinging to the beggarly elements of the Attic stage, when they had no means of restoring its colossal grandeur. When it was open to them to rival the work of the ancients in a new and truly modern style, they hampered their genius by arbitrary rules, and thought that they were following the principles of the highest art, while they submitted to the mere necessities of a bygone form of presentation. If Racine had believed in Nemesis, if Versailles had afforded him a theatre and an audience like that of Athens, if his actors had worn masks, if sculpture had been the dominant art of modern Europe, he would have been following the right track. As it was, he became needlessly formal. The same blind enthusiasm for antiquity led to the doctrine of the unities, to the abstinence from bloodshed on the stage, and to the restriction of a play to five acts. Horace had advised a dramatist not to extend his tragedy beyond the fifth act, nor to allow Medea to murder her children within sight of the audience. All modern playwrights observe the rule of five acts: nor is there much to be said against it, except that the third act is apt to be languid for want of matter. But the Greeks disregarded this division: judging by the choric songs, we find that some of their tragedies have as many as seven, and some as few as two acts. Again, as to bloodshed on the stage, it is probable that if the Greek actors had not been so clumsily arrayed, we should have had many instances of their violation of this rule. Æschylus discloses the shambles where Agamemnon and Cassandra lie weltering in their blood, and hammers a stake through the body of Prometheus. Sophocles exhibits Œdipus with eyes torn out and bleeding on his cheeks. Euripides allows the mangled corpse

of Astyanax to be brought upon the stage in his father's shield. There is nothing more ghastly in an actual murder than in these spectacles of slaughter and mutilation. With reference to the unities, the French critics demand that a drama shall proceed in the same place, and the playwrights are at infinite pains to manage that no change of scene shall occur. But Aristotle, whose authority they claim, is silent on the point; while the usage of the Greek Drama shows more than one change of place,—especially in the *Ajax* of Sophocles, and in the *Eumenides* of Æschylus, where the scene is shifted from the temple of Phœbus at Delphi to the Areopagus at Athens. Still the exigencies of the Greek theatre made it advisable to alter the centre of action as little as possible; and as a matter of convenience this requirement was complied with. The circumstances of our own stage have removed this difficulty, and it is only on the childish principle of maintaining an impossible illusion that the unity of place can be observed with any propriety. The unity of time has more to say for itself. Aristotle remarks that it is better to have a drama completed within the space of a day: this rule flows from his just sense of the proportion of parts; a work of art ought to be such that the mind can easily comprehend it at a glance. Yet many Greek plays, such as the *Agamemnon* of Æschylus, where Agamemnon has time to return from Troy, or the *Eumenides*, where Orestes performs the journey from Delphi to Athens, disregard this rule in cases where it required no strain of the mind to bridge over the space of a few unimportant days or hours. When in the modern drama we are introduced to the hero of a play first as a child and then as a full-grown man, and are forced meanwhile to keep our attention on his acts in the interval as important to the dramatic evolution, there is a gross violation of æsthetical unity. About the unity of action all critics are agreed. It is the same as unity of interest, or unity of subject, the interest and the subject of a play being its action. A good tragedy must have but one action, just as a good epic or a good poem of any sort must have but one subject; for the simple reason that, as the eye cannot look at two things at once, so the mind cannot attend to two things at once. Modern poets have been apt to disregard this canon of common sense: the underplots of many plays and the episodes of such epics as the *Orlando* of Ariosto are not sufficiently subordinated to the main design or interwoven with it. Aristotle is also right in saying that the unity of the hero is not the same as the unity of action: a play, for example, on the labours of Hercules could only be made a good drama if each labour were shown to be one step in the fulfilment of one divinely appointed task. Shakespeare has complied with the canon of the unity of action in all his tragedies. Whether Goethe has done so in *Faust* may admit of doubt. The identity of his hero seems to him sufficient for the tragic unity of his piece: yet he has given us another centre of interest in Margaret, whose story is but a mere episode in the experience of Faust. Unity of action in a tragedy, the very soul of which is action, is the same

as organic coherence in a body; and therefore, as every work of art ought, according to the energetic metaphor of Plato, to be a living creature, with head, trunk and limbs all vitalised by one thought, this unity is essential. Admitting this point, we may fairly say that the other rules of French dramatic criticism are not only arbitrary but also founded on a mistake with regard to the Greek theatre and a misapprehension of the proper functions of the modern stage. Composing in obedience to them is like walking upon stilts in a country where there are no marshes to make the inconvenience necessary.

In this review of the differences between our own tragedy and that of the Greeks I have scarcely touched upon those primary qualities which differentiate all modern from ancient art. The "sentiment of the infinite," which Renan regards as the chief legacy of mediævalism to modern civilisation, and the preoccupation with the internal spirit rather than the external form which makes Music the essentially modern, as Sculpture was the essentially ancient art, are causes of innumerable peculiarities in our conception of tragedy. I have hardly alluded to these, but have endeavoured to show that the immersion of Greek Tragedy in religious ideas, the fixed body of mythical matter handled by the Greek dramatists in succession, and the actual conditions of the Attic theatre will account for the greater number of those characteristics which distinguish Sophocles from Shakespeare, the prince of Greek from the prince of modern tragic poets.

CHAPTER XVIII

ARISTOPHANES

Heine's Critique on Aristophanes—Aristophanes as a Poet of the Fancy—The Nature of his Comic Grossness—Greek Comedy in its Relation to the Worship of Dionysus—Greek Acceptance of the Animal Conditions of Humanity—His Burlesque, Parody, Southern Sense of Fun—Aristophanes and Menander—His Greatness as a Poet—Glimpses of Pathos—His Conservatism and Serious Aim—Socrates, Agathon, Euripides—German Critics of Aristophanes—Ancient and Modern Comedy—The *Birds*—The *Clouds*—Greek Youth and Education—The Allegories of Aristophanes—The *Thesmophoriazuseæ*—Aristophanes and Plato.

“A DEEP idea of world-destruction (*Weltvernichtungsidee*¹) lies at the root of every Aristophanic comedy, and, like a fantastically ironical magic tree, springs up in it with blooming ornament of thoughts, with singing nightingales, and climbing, chattering apes.” This is a sentence translated from the German of Heinrich Heine, who, of all poets, was the one best fitted to appreciate the depth of Aristophanes, to pierce beneath his smiling comic mask, and to read the underlying *Weltvernichtungsidee* with what he calls its “jubilee of death and fireworks of annihilation.” Perhaps, as is common with German writers of imagination, Heine pushes his point too far, and insists with too much force upon the “jubilee of death,” “the fireworks of annihilation.” The strong wine of his own paradox intoxicates his judgment, and his taste is somewhat perverted by the Northern tendency to brood upon the more fantastic aspects of his subject. It is not so much Aristophanes himself whom Heine sees, as Aristophanes reflected in the magic mirror of his own melancholy and ironical fancy. Yet, after making these deductions, the criticism I have quoted seems to me to be the proper preface to all serious study of the greatest comic poet of the world. It strikes the true key-note, and tunes our apprehension to the right pitch; for, in approaching Aristophanes, we must divest our minds of all the ordinary canons and definitions of

¹ It is almost impossible to translate this word, which will frequently recur in the chapter, and which seems to depend for its force upon the conception of the satiric spirit, as that which “stets vernichtet,” the Mephistophilistic “verneinender Geist.”

comedy: we must forget what we have learned from Plautus and Terence, from Molière and Jonson. No modern poet, except perhaps Shakespeare and Calderon in parts, will help us to understand him. We must not expect to find the gist of Aristophanes in vivid portraits of character, in situations borrowed from everyday life, in witty dialogues, in carefully constructed plots arriving at felicitous conclusions. All these elements, indeed, he has; but these are not the main points of his art. His plays are not comedies in the sense in which we use the word, but scenic allegories, Titanic farces in which the whole creation is turned upside down; transcendental travesties, enormous orgies of wild fancy and unbridled imagination; Dionysiac dances in which tears are mingled with laughter, and fire with wine; Choruses that, underneath their oceanic merriment of leaping waves, hide silent deeps of unstirred thought. If Coleridge was justified in claiming the German word *Lustspiel* for the so-called comedies of Shakespeare, we have a far greater right to appropriate this wide and pregnant title to the plays of Aristophanes. The brazen mask which crowns his theatre smiles indeed broadly, serenely, as if its mirth embraced the universe; but its hollow eye-sockets suggest infinite possibilities of profoundest irony. Buffoonery carried to the point of paradox, wisdom disguised as insanity, and gaiety concealing the whole sum of human disappointment, sorrow, and disgust, seem ready to escape from its open but rigid lips, which are moulded to a proud perpetual laughter. It is a laughter which spares neither god nor man—which climbs Olympus only to drag down the immortals to its scorn, and trails the pall of august humanity in the mire; but which, amid its mockery and blasphemy, seems everlastingly asserting, as by paradox, that reverence of the soul which bends our knees to heaven and makes us respect our brothers. There is nothing sinister or even serious in Aristophanes. He did not write in the sarcastic, cynical old age of his nation or his era. He is rather the voice of its superabundant youthfulness: his genius is like a young man, sporting in his scorn of danger with the thought of death; like Achilles, in the sublimity of his beauty, mimicking the gestures of Thersites. Nor, again, are his thoughts shaded down, concealed, wrapped up in symbols. On the contrary, the very “*Weltvernichtungsideo*” of which Heine speaks, leaps forth and spreads its wings beneath the full blaze of Athenian noonday, showing a glorious face, as of sculptured marble, and a comely person unashamed. It is not the morbid manifestation of sour secretions and unnatural juices, but the healthy product of keen vitality and perfectly harmonious functions. Into the clear light his paradoxes, and his irony, and his unblushing satire spring like song-birds rejoicing in their flight.

Then, again, how miraculously beautiful are “the blooming ornament of thoughts,” “the nightingales and climbing apes,” of which we spoke! No poet—not even Shelley—has exceeded the choruses of the *Birds* and *Clouds* in swiftness, radiance, and condensed imagina-

tion. Shakespeare alone, in his *Midsummer Night's Dream*, and the *Tempest*; or Calderon, in some of his allegorical dramas, carries us away into the same enchanted land, where the air is purer and the skies seem larger than in our world; where the stars burn with treble lustre, and where the flowers harbour visible spirits—elves and Ariels clinging to the branches, and dazzling fireflies tangled in the meadow-grass beneath our feet. Nor is it only by this unearthly splendour of visionary loveliness that Aristophanes attracts us. Beauty of a more mundane and sensual sort is his. Multitudes of brilliant ever-changing figures fill the scene; and here and there we find a landscape or a piece of music and moonlight glowing with the presence of the vintage god. Bacchic processions of young men and maidens move before us, tossing inspired heads wreathed with jasmine flowers and wet with wine. The *Mystæ* in the meadows of Elysium dance their rounds with the clash of cymbals and with madly twinkling snow-white feet. We catch glimpses at intervals of Athenian banquets, of midnight serenades, of the palæstra with its crowd of athletes, of the Panathenaic festival as Pheidias carved it, of all the busy rhythmic coloured life of Greece.

The difficulty of treating Aristophanes in an essay is twofold. There are first of all those obstacles which every writer on so old a subject has to meet. Aristophanes, like all Greek poets, has been subjected to prolonged and most minute criticism. He has formed a part of classical education for centuries, and certain views about his poetry, substantially correct, have become a fixed element in our literary consciousness. Thus every fresh writer on the old comedy of Athens must take a good deal of knowledge for granted in his readers—but what, and how much, he hardly knows. He may expect them to be acquainted with the details furnished by scholars like Donaldson about the times at which comedies were exhibited, the manner of their presentation on the stage, and the change from the old to the middle and new periods. He may suppose that they will know that Aristophanes stood in the same relation to Cratinus as Sophocles to Æschylus; that the *Clouds* had not so much to do with the condemnation of Socrates as some of the later Greek gossips attempted to make out; that Aristophanes was conservative in politics, philosophy, and literature, vehemently opposing the demagogues, the sophists, and Euripides. Again, he may, or rather he must, avoid the ground which has been so well trodden by Schlegel, Müller, and Mitchell, in their familiar criticisms of Aristophanes: and he may content himself with a passing allusion to Grote's discussion of the *Clouds*. But though, from this point of view, Aristophanes is almost stale from having been so much written about and talked about and alluded to—though in fact there is a *primâ facie* obligation imposed on every one who makes his plays the subject of fresh criticism to pretend at least to some originality of view or statement—still Aristophanes has never yet been fairly dealt with or submitted to really dispassionate consideration. Thus he shares

in common with all poets of antiquity the disabilities of being hackneyed, while he has the peculiar and private disability of never having been really appreciated at his worth except by a few scholars and enthusiastic poets. The reason for this want of intelligence in the case of Aristophanes is not hard to see. First of all, his plays are very difficult. Their allusions require much learned illustration. Their vocabulary is copious and rare. So that none but accomplished Grecians or devoted students of literature can hope to read him with much pleasure to themselves. In a translation his special excellence is almost unrecognisable. Next—and this is the real reason why Aristophanes has been unfairly dealt with, as well as the source of the second class of difficulties which meet his interpreters—it is hard for the modern Christian world to tolerate his freedom of speech and coarseness. Of all the Greeks, essentially a nude nation, he is the most naked—the most audacious in his revelation of all that human nature is supposed to seek to hide. The repugnance felt for his ironical *insouciance* and for his profound indelicacy has prevented us from properly valuing his poetry. Critics begin their panegyrics of him with apologies; they lift their skirts and tread delicately, passing over his broadest humour *sicco pede*, picking their way among his heterogeneous images, winking and blinking, hesitating and condoning, omitting a passage here, attempting to soften an allusion there, until the real Aristophanes has almost disappeared. Yet there is no doubt that this way of dealing with our poet will not do. The time has come at which any writer on Greek literature, if not content to pass by Aristophanes in silence, must view him as he is, and casting aside for a moment at least the veil of modern propriety, must be prepared to admit that this great comic genius was “far too naked to be shamed.”

So important is this point in the whole of its bearing upon Aristophanes, that I may perhaps be allowed to explain the peculiar position which he occupies, and, without seeking to offer any exculpation for what offends us in the moral sensibilities of the Greeks, to show how such a product as the comedy of Aristophanes took root and grew in Athens. His plays, I have already said, are not comedies in the modern sense, but Lustspiele—fantastic entertainments, debauches of the reason and imagination. The poet, when he composed them, knew that he was writing for an audience of Greeks, inebriated with the worship of the vintage god, ivy-crowned, and thrilling to the sound of orgiastic flutes. Therefore, we who read him in the cool shades of modern Protestantism, excited by no Dionysiac rites, forced to mine and quarry at his jests with grammar, lexicon, and commentary, unable, except by the exercise of the historical imagination, to conceive of a whole nation agreeing to honour its god by frantic license, must endeavour to check our natural indignation, and by no means to expect from Aristophanes such views of life as are consistent with our sober mood. We cannot, indeed, exactly apply to the case of Aristophanes those clever sophistries by which Charles Lamb defended the comic poets

of our Restoration, when he said that they had created an unreal world, and that, allowing for their fictitious circumstances, the perverse morality of their plays was not only pardonable but even necessary. Yet it is true that his audacious immodesty forms a part of that Weltvernichtungsidee, of that total upturn and Titanic revolution in the universe, which he affects; and so far we may plead in his defence, and in the defence of the Athenian spectators, that his comedies were consciously exaggerated in their coarseness, and that beyond the limits of the Dionysiac festival their jokes would not have been tolerated. To use a metaphor, his plays were offered as a sacrifice upon the thymelé or orchestral altar of that Bacchus who was sire by Aphrodité of Priapus: this potent deity protected them; and the poet, as his true and loyal priest, was bound, in return for such protection, to represent the universe at large as conquered by the madness of intoxication, beauty, and desire. Thus the Aristophanic comedies are in one sense a radiant and pompous show, by which the genius of the Greek race chose, as it were in bravado, to celebrate an apotheosis of the animal functions of humanity; and from this point of view we may fairly accept them as visions, Dionysiac day-dreams, from which the nation woke and rose and went about its business soberly, until the Bacchic flutes were heard again another year.

On the religious origin of Greek comedy some words may perhaps be reckoned not out of place in this connection. It has frequently been pointed out to what a great extent the character of the Aristophanic comedy was determined by its sacred nature, and by the peculiar condition of semi-religious license which prevailed at Athens during the celebration of the festival of Bacchus. We know that much is tolerated in a Roman or Venetian carnival which would not be condoned at other seasons of the year. Yet the Italian carnival, in its palmiest days, must have offered but a very poor and frigid picture of what took place in Athens at the Dionysia; nor was the expression of the crudest sensuality ever thought agreeable to any modern saint. That the Greeks most innocently and simply wished to prove their piety by these excesses is quite clear. Aristophanes himself, in the *Acharnians*, gives us an example of the primitive Phallic hymn, which formed the nucleus of comedy in its rudest stage. The refrain of *φαλῆς, ἑταῖρε Βακχίου, ξύγκωμε, νυκτεροπλάνητε, μοιχέ*, sufficiently indicates its nature. Again the Choruses of the *Mystæ* in the *Frogs* furnish a still more brilliant example of the interminglement of debauchery with a spirit of true piety, of sensual pleasure with pure-souled participation in divine bliss. Their hymns to Iacchus and Demeter alternate between the holiest strains of praise and the most scurrilous satire. At one time they chant the delights of the meadows blooming with the rose; at another they raise cries of jubilant intoxication and fierce frenzy. In the same breath with the utterance of sensual passion, they warn all profane persons and impure livers to avoid their rites, and boast that for them alone the light of heaven is

gladsome who have forsworn impiety and preserved the justice due to friends and strangers. We must imagine that this Phallic ecstasy, if we may so name it, had become, as it were, organised and reduced to system in the Aristophanic Lustspiel. It permeates and gives a flavour to the comic style long after it has been absorbed and superseded by the weightier interests of developed art. This ecstasy implied a profound sympathy with nature in her large and perpetual reproductiveness, a mysterious sense of the sexuality which pulses in all members of the universe and reaches consciousness in man. It encouraged a momentary subordination of the will and intellect and nobler feelings to the animal propensities, prompting the same race which had produced the sculptures of the Parthenon, the tragedies of Æschylus, the deeds of Pericles and Leonidas, the self-control of Socrates, the thought of Plato, to throw aside its royal mantle of supreme humanity, and to proclaim in a gigantic work of art the irreconcilable incongruity which exists between the physical nature and the spirit of the man, when either side of the antithesis is isolated for exclusive contemplation. We need not here point out how far removed was the Phallic ecstasy from any prurient delight in licentious details, or from the scientific analysis of passions. Nor, on the other hand, need we indicate the vein of a similar extravagant enthusiasm in Oriental poetry. It is enough to remember that it existed latent in all the comic dramas of the earlier period, throbbing through them as the *sève de la jeunesse* palpitates in youthful limbs and adds a glow and glory to the inconsiderate or unseemly acts of an Alcibiades or Antony. Christianity, by introducing a new conception of the physical relations of humanity, by regarding the body as the temple of the spirit, utterly rejected and repudiated this delirium of the senses, this voluntary acceptance of merely animal conditions. Christianity taught mankind, what the Greeks had never learned, that it is our highest duty to be at discord with the universe upon this point. Man, whose subtle nature might be compared to a many-stringed instrument, is bidden to restrain the resonance of those chords which do not thrill in unison with purely spiritual and celestial harmonies. Hence the theories of celibacy and asceticism, and of the sinfulness of carnal pleasure, which are wholly alien to Greek moral and religious notions. Never since the age of Athenian splendour has a rational and highly civilised nation dared to express by any solemn act its sense of union with merely physical nature. Aristophanes is therefore the poet of a past age, the "hierophant of a now unapprehended mystery," the unique remaining example of an almost unlimited genius set apart and consecrated to a cultus which subsequent civilisation has determined to annihilate. The only age which offers anything like a parallel to the Athenian era of Aristophanes is that of the Italian Renaissance. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, at Venice, Florence, and Rome, it seemed as if the Phallic ecstasy might possibly revive, as if the animal nature of man might again be deified, in sentiment at least, and as if the highest arts might

stoop once more to interpret and to consecrate the poetry of the senses. But the conscience of the world was changed ; and this could no longer be. The image of Christ crowned with thorns had passed across the centuries ; hopes undreamed of by the Greeks had aroused a new spirit in the soul of man, and had forced him in spite of inclination to lift his eyes from earth to heaven. Over the joys of the flesh, which were connected with a future doom of pain unending and disgrace, was shed a hue of gloom and horror. Conception was looked upon as sin : birth as disaster. It was even doubted whether for any but for virgins, except by some special privilege of election, salvation could be hoped. Therefore, while the Greeks had been innocent in their serene unconsciousness of sin or shame, the extravagances of the Renaissance were guilty, turbid, and morbid, because they were committed defiantly, in open reprobacy, in scorn of the acknowledged law. What was at worst bestial in the Greeks has become devilish in the Renaissance. How different from a true Greek is Benvenuto Cellini : how unlike the monsters even of Greek mythic story is Francesco Cenci : how far more awful in his criminality is the Borgia than any despot of Greek colony or island ! I have been somewhat led astray from the point in view, which was to prove that the comedies of Aristophanes embody a peculiar and temporary, though recurring and recognised, phase of Greek feeling—that they owe their license in a great measure to their religious origin, and to the enthusiasm of the Bacchic ecstasy.

But what has just been said about the difference between Athenian Greece and the Italian Renaissance will show that Aristophanes has a still more solid ground of defence in the fact that he was thoroughly in harmony with the moral sense of his age and nation, and that the Bacchic license was only an exaggeration of more ordinary habits both of thought and action. It must be acknowledged that the Greeks were devoid of what we call shame and delicacy in respect of their bodies. It was only in the extreme old age of the Greek race, and under the dominion of Oriental mysticism, that the Alexandrian Plotinus was heard to exclaim that he blushed because he had a body. The true Greeks, on the contrary, were proud of the body, loved to display their physical perfections, felt no shame of any physical needs, were not degraded by the exercise of any animal function, nay poetised the pleasures of the flesh. Simonides, in his lines on happiness, prays first for health and next for beauty ; and a thousand passages might be quoted to prove how naturally and sincerely the Greeks reckoned physical beauty among the chief goods of life, and how freely they exhibited it in all its splendour. As a slight indication of the popular feeling, we might quote the reproof for effeminacy which Aristophanes utters against the young men who thought it necessary to appear clothed at the Panathenaic festival ; from which it is clear that the Greek conscience connected nudity with purity. The immense value attached to physical beauty is evident even from their military history—from the record, for instance, of Callicrates among the heroes of

Plataea, simply because he was the fairest of the Greeks who fought that day. Again, Herodotus tells of one Philippus, who joined in the expedition of Dorieus against Eryx, and who being slain and stripped by the people of Segeste, was taken up by his foes and nobly buried, and thereafter worshipped as a hero on account of his exceeding beauty. The influence which the sight of beauty exercised over the gravest of the Greeks is proved by the story of Phryne before the Areopagus, and by what Plato tells of Socrates at the beginning of the *Charmides*. How it could electrify a nation assembled in the theatre, is shown by Plutarch's story of the slave whom Nicias set free for winning the applause of all Athens when acting Dionysus, and by Xenophon's tale about another Dorieus whom the Athenians, though he was their deadly foe, released ransomless and scatheless, after he had been captured and sent to Attica, because he was a very goodly man. Nor was it the sense of beauty only, or the open exhibition of the person, which marked the Greeks. Besides this, and perhaps flowing from it, we find in them an extraordinary callousness with regard to many things which we think shocking and degrading in the last degree. The mere fact that Alcibiades, while a minister of the Athenian people, could have told the tales of his youth, recorded in Plato's *Banquet*, or that grave men could have contended without reserve for the favour of distinguished courtesans, proves that the Athenian public was ready to accept whatever Aristophanes might set before them—not to take his jokes scornfully, as a Roman patron trifled with the *facetiae* of his *Graculus esuriens*, but while enjoying them, to respect their author.

Nor is Aristophanes without another solid ground of defence, on the score of sincerity and healthiness. In his immodesty there is nothing morbid, though it is expressed more crudely than suits the moral dignity of man. Aristophanes is never prurient, never in bad taste or vulgar. He has none of the obscenity which revolts us in Swift, who uses filth in order to degrade and violate our feelings; none of the nastiness of Molière or Pope, whose courtly and polished treatment of disgusting subjects is a disgrace to literature; none of the coarseness of Ben Jonson; none of the far more indecent innuendo which contaminates the writings of humourists like Sterne and satirists like Voltaire, who seem always trying, childishly or apishly, to tamper with forbidden things. Aristophanes accepts licentiousness as a fact which needs no apology: he does not, as the moderns do, mingle it with sentiment, or indulge in it on the sly. He has no *polissonnerie*: the *vice égrillard* of the French (from whom we are obliged to borrow these phrases) is unknown to him. His license is large, serene, sane, statuesque, self-approved. His sensuality is nonchalant and natural—so utterly devoid of shame, so thoroughly at home and well contented with itself, that it has no perturbation, no defiance, no mysterious attractiveness. Besides he is ironical: his dissolute young men (the *ἀπεψωλημένοι* and *εὐρύπρωκτοι*) promenade in noonday, and get laughed at, instead of being stoned and hooted down. About the

audacious scene between Kinesias and Murrhiné, in the *Lysistrata*, there is no Aretine hircosity. It is merely comic—a farcical incident, selected, not for the rankness of its details, but for its dramatic capabilities. The same may be said about the termination of the *Thesmophoriazusa* and the scene in the *Ecclesiazusa*, which so vividly illustrates the working of one law in the new commonwealth. So innocent in his unconsciousness is Aristophanes, that he rarely condescends even to satirise the sensual vices. The lines about Aripgrades in the *Knights*, however, are an instance of his having done this with more than the pungency of Martial, and it must be admitted that his pictures of the drunkenness and incontinence of the Athenian women have something Swiftish in their brutal sarcasm. If we are to seek for an approximation to Aristophanic humour, we shall find it perhaps in Rabelais. Rabelais exhibits a similar disregard for decency, combining the same depth of purpose and largeness of insight with the same coarse fun. But in Aristophanes there is nothing quite grotesque and homely, whereas Rabelais is full of these qualities. Even the opening of the *Peace*, fantastic as it is in absurdity, does not touch the note of grossness peculiar to French Pantagruelism. Aristophanes is always Greek, while Rabelais inherits the mediæval spirit. In reading Aristophanes we seem to have the serene skies of Attica above our heads; the columns of the Propylæa and the Parthenon look down on us; noble shapes of youths and maidens are crowding sacred marble steps; below, upon the mirror of the sea, shine Salamis and Ægina; and far off, in hazy distance, rise Peloponnesian hills. With these pictures of the fancy his comedy harmonises. But Rabelais carries us away to Gothic courts and monkish libraries: we fill his margin with etchings in the style of Gustave Doré. What has been said of Rabelais applies with even greater force to Hogarth, whose absolute sincerity is as great as that of Aristophanes, but who is never light and careless. His coarseness is the product of a coarse nature, of coarse manners, of a period of national coarseness. We tolerate it because of the moral earnestness beneath: the artist is striving diligently to teach us by warning us of vice. This is hardly ever the case with Aristophanes. When he is coarse, we pardon him for very different reasons. In his wilful degradation of humanity to the level of animals we recognise a portion of the Weltvernichtungsidee. In the intellectual arrogance of the Athenian prime a poet could afford thus to turn the world upside down. But those who cannot subscribe to the following dictum of Taine, which is very applicable to Aristophanes,—“*Elevées à cette énormité et savourées avec cette insouciance, les fonctions corporelles deviennent poétiques*”—those who

“Wink and shut their apprehension up
From common sense of what men were and are,
Who would not know what men must be”—

will need to “hurry amain” from the masque of moral anarchy which the great comedian displays. With these remarks I may finally dismiss

what has to be said about the chief disability under which Aristophanes labours as a poet.¹

For the enjoyment of Aristophanic fun a sort of southern childishness and swiftness of gleeful apprehension is required. It does not shine so much in its pure wit as in its overflowing humour and in the inexhaustible fertility of ludicrous devices by which laughter is excited. The ascent of Trugaïos to heaven upon the dung-beetle's back, and the hauling of Peace from her well in the *Eirene*, or the wine-skin dressed up like a baby in the *Thesmophoriazusæ*, may be mentioned as instances of this broad but somewhat peculiar drollery. Burlesquing the gods was always a capital resource of the comic poets. If we in the nineteenth century can find any amusement whatever in Byron's or Burnand's travesties of Olympus, how exquisitely absurd to an Athenian mob must have been the figures of Prometheus under an umbrella, Heracles the glutton, Hermes and Æacus the household slaves, Bacchus the young fop, and Iris the soubrette. The puns of Aristophanes for the most part are very bad, but the parodies are excellent. Then the surprises (*παρὰ προσδοκίαν*), both of language and of incident, with which his comedies abound, the broad and genial caricatures which are so largely traced and carried out in detail with such force, the brilliant descriptions of familiar things seen from odd or unexpected points of view, and lastly the enormous quantity of mirth-producing matter which the poet squanders with the prodigality of conscious omnipotence, all contribute to heighten the comic effect of Aristophanes. Perhaps the most intelligible piece of fun, in the modern sense of the word, is the last scene in the *Thesmophoriazusæ*, which owes its effect to parody and caricature more than to allusions which are hard to seize. A great deal of the fun of Aristophanes must have depended upon local and personal peculiarities which we cannot understand: the constant references to the effeminate Cleisthenes, the skin-flint Pauson, miserly Patrocles, cowardly Cleonymus, Execes-tides the alien, Agyrrhius the upstart, make us yawn because we cannot catch the exact point of the jests against them. Indeed, as Schlegel has said, "we may boldly affirm that, notwithstanding all the explanations which have come down to us—notwithstanding the accumulation of learning which has been spent upon it, one half of the wit of Aristophanes is altogether lost to the moderns."

Having dismissed these preliminary considerations, we may now ask what has caused the comedy of Aristophanes to triumph over the obstacles to its acceptance. Why have his plays been transmitted to posterity when those of Eupolis and Cratinus have perished, and when only scattered lines from the eight hundred comedies of the middle period read by Athenæus have survived destruction? No one has

¹ Since this chapter was written, Mr. Browning's interesting piece of criticism in verse, *Aristophanes' Apology*, containing a most clever caricature of Aristophanes, and a no less clever defence of Euripides, has appeared. I do not see any reason to alter the view expressed above concerning Greek Comedy.

asked of Aristophanes the question which the Alexandrian critic put to Menander: "Oh, Nature and Menander, which of you copied the other?" Yet Menander is scarcely more to us than the memory of a departed greatness, or at best an echo sounding somewhat faintly from the Roman theatre, while Aristophanes survives among the most highly cherished monuments of antiquity. The answer to this question is, no doubt, that Aristophanes was more worth preservation than his predecessors or successors. It is wiser to have confidence in the ultimate good taste and conservative instinct of humanity, than to accept Bacon's half-ironical, half-irritable saying, that the stream of time lets every solid substance sink, and carries down the froth and scum upon its surface. As far, at least, as it is possible to form a judgment, we may be pretty certain that in the province of the highest art and of the deepest thought we possess the greater portion of those works which the ancients themselves prized highly; indeed, we may conjecture that had the great libraries of Alexandria and Byzantium been transmitted to us entire, the pure metal would not very greatly have exceeded in bulk what we now possess, but would have been buried beneath masses of inferior matter from which centuries of criticism would have scarcely sufficed to disengage it. Aristophanes was preserved in his integrity, we need not doubt, because he shone forth as a *poet* transcendent for his splendour even among the most brilliant of Attic playwrights. Cratinus may have equalled or surpassed him in keen satire; Eupolis may have rivalled him in exquisite artistic structure; but Aristophanes must have eclipsed them, not merely by uniting their qualities successfully, but also by the exhibition of some diviner faculty, some higher spiritual afflatus. If we analyse his art, we find that he combines the breadth of humour, which I have already sought to characterise, with the utmost versatility and force of intellect, with the power of grasping his subjects under all their bearings, with extraordinary depth of masculine good sense, with inexhaustible argumentative resources, and with a marvellous hold on personalities. Yet all these qualities, essential to a comic poet who pretended also to be the public censor of politics and morals, would not have sufficed to immortalise him had he not been essentially a poet—a poet in what we are apt to call the modern sense of the word—a poet, that is to say, endowed with original intuitions into nature, and with the faculty of presenting to our minds the most varied thoughts and feelings in language uniformly beautiful, as the creatures of an exuberant and self-swayed fancy. Aristophanes is a poet as Shelley, or Ariosto, or Shakespeare is a poet, far more than as Sophocles, or Pindar, or Lucretius is a poet. In spite of his profound art, we seem to hear him uttering "his native wood notes wild." The subordination of the fancy to the fixed aims of the reason, which characterises classical poetry, is not at first sight striking in Aristophanes; but he splendidly exhibits the wealth, luxuriance, variety, and subtlety of the fancy working with the reason, and sometimes superseding it, which we

recognise in the greatest modern poets. If we seek to define the peculiar qualities of his poetic power, we are led to results not easily expressed, because all general critical conclusions are barren and devoid of force when worded, but which may perhaps be stated and accepted as the text for future illustration.

The poetry of Aristophanes is always swift and splendid. We watch its brilliant course as we might watch the flight of a strong rapid bird, whose plumage glitters by moments in the light of the sun; for, to insist upon the metaphor, the dazzling radiance of his fancy only shines at intervals, capriciously, with fitful flashes, coruscating suddenly and dying out again. It is as if the neck alone and a portion of the feathers of the soaring bird were flecked with gold and crimson grain, so that a turn of the body or a fluttering of the pinions is enough to bring the partial splendour into light or cast it into shadow. Aristophanes passes by abrupt transitions from the coarsest or most simply witty dialogue to passages of pure and plaintive song; he quits his fiercest satire for refreshing strains of lark-like heaven-aspiring melody. These again he interrupts with sudden ruthlessness, breaking the melody in the middle of a bar, and dropping the unfinished stanza. He seems shy of giving his poetic impulse free rein, and prefers to tantalise¹ us with imperfect specimens of what he might achieve; so that his splendour is like that of northern streamers in its lambency, though swift and piercing as forked lightnings in its intensity. Even his most impassioned and sustained flights of imagination are broken by digressions into satire, fantastic merriment, or parody, by which the more dull-witted Athenians must have been sorely puzzled in their inability to decide on the serious or playful purpose of the poet. Perhaps the most splendid passages of true poetry in Aristophanes are the Choruses of the initiated in the *Frogs*, the Chorus of the Clouds before they appear upon the stage, the invitation to the nightingale, and the parabasis of the Birds, the speech of Dikaios Logos in the *Clouds*, some of the praises of rustic life in the *Peace*, the serenade (notwithstanding its coarse satire) in the *Ecclesiazusæ*, and the songs of Spartan and Athenian maidens in the *Lysistrata*. The charm of these marvellous lyrical episodes consists of their perfect simplicity and freedom. They seem to be poured forth as "profuse strains of unpremeditated art" from the fulness of the poet's soul. Their language is elastic, changeful, finely-tempered, fitting the delicate thought like a veil of woven air. It has no Pindaric involution, no Æschylean pompousness, no studied Sophoclean subtlety, no Euripidean conceits. It is always bright and Attic, sparkling like the many-twinkling laughter of the breezy sea, or like the light of morning upon rain-washed olive-branches. But this poetry is never very deep or passionate. It cannot

¹ As a minor instance of these sudden transitions from the touching to the absurd, take Charon's speech (*Frogs*, 185):—

τίς εἰς ἀναπαύλας ἐκ κακῶν καὶ πραγμάτων;
τίς εἰς τὸ Λήθης πέδιον, ἢ ἔς ὄνου πόκας,
ἢ ἔς Κερβερίου, ἢ ἔς κόρακας, ἢ πὶ Ταίραρον;

stir us with the intensity of Sappho, with the fire and madness of the highest inspiration. Indeed, the conditions of comedy precluded Aristophanes, even had he desired it (which we have no reason to suspect) from attempting the more august movements of lyric poetry. The peculiar glories of his style are its untutored beauties, the improvised perfection and unerring exactitude of natural expression, for which it is unparalleled by that of any other Greek poet. In her most delightful moments the muse of Aristophanes suggests an almost plaintive pathos, as if behind the comic mask there were a thinking, feeling human soul, as if the very uproar of the Bacchic merriment implied some afterthought of sadness.

A detailed examination of the structure of the comedies would be the best illustration of these remarks. At present it will be enough to bring forward two examples of the tender melodies which may at times be overheard in pauses of the wild Aristophanic symphony. The first of these is the well-known *Welcome to the Nightingale*, sung by the Chorus before their *Parabasis*:¹—

ὦ φίλη, ὦ ξουθή, ὦ
 φίλτατον ὄρνέων,
 πάντων ξύνομοι τῶν ἐμῶν
 ὕμνων ξύντροφ' ἀηδοί,
 ἦλθες, ἦλθες, ὦφθης,
 ἡδὺν φθόγγον ἐμοὶ φέρουσ'.
 ἀλλ' ὦ καλλιβόαν κρέκουσ'
 αὐλὸν φθέγμασιν ἡρινοῖς,
 ἄρχου τῶν ἀναπαίστων.

With what a fluent caressing fulness one word succeeds another here! How each expresses love and joy! Remember, too, that all the birds are singing together, and that the wild throat of their playfellow, the nightingale, is ready to return the welcome with its throbbing song of Maytime and young summer. Take another poetic touch, brief and unobtrusive, yet painting a perfect picture with few strokes, and transfusing it with the spirit of the scene imagined:²—

ἀλλ' ἀναμνησθέντες, ὦνδρες,
 τῆς διαίτης τῆς παλαιᾶς,
 ἣν παρέιχ' αὐτῆ ποθ' ἡμῖν,
 τῶν τε παλασίων ἐκείνων,
 τῶν τε σύκων, τῶν τε μύρτων,
 τῆς τρυγός τε τῆς γλυκείας,
 τῆς ἰωνίας τε τῆς πρὸς τῷ φρέατι,
 τῶν τε ἐλαῶν, ὧν ποθοῦμεν—

“The violet-bed beside the well, and the olive-trees we long to see again.” Trugaios is reminding his fellow-villagers of the pleasures of peace and of their country life. Those who from their recollection

¹ No translation will give any sense of the Greek. But this version is tolerably literal: “O dear one, O tawny, O dearest of birds! Singer in tune with all my songs, nurtured with me, thou nightingale! Thou art here, thou art here, on our eyes thou hast shone, bringing a sweet voice to me! Come, thou who settest the fair-tuned flute to the warblings of spring; come, let the anapaest measure begin!”

² “Nay, comrades, bethink ye of the former happy life of which she once was giver to us all: those cakes of fruit, those figs, those myrtle-berries, the honeyed must of the new wine, the violet-bed beside the well, the olive-trees we long to see once more.”

of southern scenery can summon up the picture, who know how cool and shady are those wells, mirroring maiden-hair in their black depth—how fragrant and dewy are the beds of tangled violets—how dreamy are the olive-trees, ærial, mistlike, robed with light, will understand the peculiar longing of these lines.

But we must not dwell too much upon the glimpses of pathetic poetry in Aristophanes, which after all are but few and far between, mere swallow-flights of song, when compared with the serious business of his art. It is well known that the old comedy of the Athenians performed the function of a public censorship. Starting from the primitive comic song, in which a rude Fescennine license of what we now call "chaffing" was allowed, and tempering its rustic jocularity with the caustic bitterness of Archilochian satire, comedy became an instrument for holding up to public ridicule all things of general interest. Persons and institutions, nay, the gods themselves, are freely laughed at. Bacchus seems to have enjoyed the jokes even when directed against himself: *καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἴσως χαίρει φιλόγελως τις ὢν* are the words of Lucian.¹ So no one else had a right to resent the poet's merriment, when the presiding god of the festival approved of sarcasms against his deity, and trod his own stage as a cowardly effeminate young profligate. This being the more serious aim of comedy, it followed that Aristophanes always had some satiric, and in so far didactic purpose, underlying his extravagant caricatures. What that purpose was, is too well known to need more than passing mention. From his earliest appearance under the name of Callistratus, to the last of his victories, Aristophanes maintained his character as an Athenian conservative. He came forward uniformly as a panegyrist of the old policy of Athens, and a vehement antagonist of the new direction taken by his nation subsequently to the Persian war. This one theme he varied, according to circumstances and convenience. In the first of his plays, the *Daitaleis*, he attacked the profligacy and immodesty of the rising generation, who neglected their Homer for the lessons of the sophists, and engaged in legal quarrels. The *Acharnians*, the *Peace*, and the *Lysistrata* are devoted to impressing on the Athenians the advantages of peace, and inducing them to lay aside their enmity against Sparta. In the *Knights*, the demagogues are attacked through the person of Cleon, with a violence of concentrated passion that surpasses the most savage onslaughts of Archilochus. The *Clouds* and *Wasps* exhibit different pictures of the insane passion for litigation and the dishonest arts of rhetoric which prevailed at Athens, fostered partly by the influence of sophists who professed to teach a profitable method of public speaking, and partly by the flattery of the demagogues. The *Birds* is a fantastic satire upon the Athenian habit of building castles in the air, and indulging in extravagant dreams of conquest. In the *Ecclesiazusæ* Aristophanes seems bent on ridiculing

¹ "And the god too peradventure takes pleasure in them, since he is a laughter-loving fellow."

the visionary utopias of political theorists like Plato, and also on caricaturing the social license which prevailed in Athens, where everything, as he complains, had been tried, except for women to appear in public like their masters. In the *Thesmophoriazusa* and the *Frogs* we exchange politics for literature; but in his treatment of the latter subject, Aristophanes exhibits the same conservative spirit. His hostility against Euripides, which is almost as bitter as his hatred of Cleon, is founded upon the sophistical nature of his art. Indeed, the demagogues, the sophists, and Euripides were looked upon by him as three forms of the same poison which was corrupting the moral character of his nation. We have now indicated the serious intention of all the plays of Aristophanes, except the *Plutus*, which is an ethical allegory conceived under a different inspiration from that which gave the impulse to his other creative acts. Yet it must not be forgotten that the subject-matter of these plays is often varied: in the *Acharnians*, for example, we have a specimen of literary criticism, while the *Lysistrata* is aimed as much at the follies of women as intended to set forth the advantages of peace. We must also remember that it was the poet's purpose to keep his serious ground-plan concealed. His Comedy had to be the direct antithesis to Greek Tragedy. If it taught, it was to teach by paradox. In this respect, Aristophanes realised a very high ideal. Preach as he may be doing in reality, and underneath his merriment, there is hardly a passage in all his plays, if we except the pleadings of Dikaïos Logos in the *Clouds*, and the personal portions of the *Parabases*, in which we catch him revealing his own earnestness. Every ordinary point of view is so consistently ignored, and all the common relations of things are so thoroughly reversed, that the topsyturvy chaos which a play of Aristophanes presents, is quite harmonious. It is, in fact, madness methodised and with a sober meaning. Perhaps we ought to seek in this consideration the key to those problems which have occupied historians when dealing with the Aristophanic criticism of Socrates. How, it is always asked, could Aristophanes have been so consciously unjust to the great moralist of Athens? If we keep in sight the intentional absurdity of everything in one of the Aristophanic comedies, we may perhaps understand how it was possible for the poet to travesty the friend with whom he conversed familiarly at supper parties. That Plato understood the ridicule of his great master from some such point of view as this, is clear from his express recommendation of the *Clouds* to Dionysius, from the portrait which he draws of Aristophanes in the *Symposium*, and from the eulogistic epigram (if that is genuine) which he composed upon him. It is curious as a parallel, that Agathon should have been even more ignobly caricatured than Socrates at the beginning of the *Thesmophoriazusa*; yet we know from his own lips, as well as from the dialogue of Plato, that Aristophanes was a friend of the tragic poet, for he elsewhere calls him

ἀγαθὸς ποιητῆς καὶ ποθεινὸς τοῖς φίλοις.

“A good poet and longed for by his friends.”

The lash applied to Socrates and Agathon is scarcely less stinging than that applied to Cleon and Euripides. Yet the fact remains, that Aristophanes was the friend of Agathon, and a member of the Socratic circle. Much of the obscurity attending the interpretation of the *Clouds* arises from our having lost the finer *nuances* of Athenian feeling respecting the persons satirised in the old comedy. We do not, for example, understand Cratinus when he joins the name of Euripides with that of his great satirist in one epithet descriptive of the quibbling style of the day—*εὐριπιδαριστοφανίζειν* (to Euripido-Aristophanise).¹ But to return from this digression, we may observe that it was only in a democracy that an institution unsparing of friend and foe, like the old comedy, in which persons were openly exposed to censure and the solemn acts of the government were called in question, could be tolerated. Accordingly we find that the early development of comedy, after the date of Susarion, was checked by the accession of Pisistratus to power, and that the old comedy itself perished with the extinction of Athenian liberty. It is only a democracy that likes to criticise itself, that takes pride in its indifference to ridicule, and in its readiness to acknowledge its own errors. In this respect, we English are very democratic. We abuse ourselves and expose our own follies more than any other nation; the press and the platform do for us in a barren, unæsthetic fashion, what Aristophanes did for the Athenian public.

Perhaps we may now be able to see that a middle course must be followed between the extremes of regarding Aristophanes as an indecent parasite pandering to the worst inclinations of the Athenian rabble, and of looking upon him as a profound philosopher and sober patriot. The former view is maintained by Grote, who, though he is somewhat hampered by his pronounced championship of all the democratic institutions of Athens, among which the comedy of Aristophanes must needs be reckoned, yet clearly thinks that the poet was a meddling monkey, full indeed of genius, but injurious to the order of the state, and to the peace of private persons. The latter has been advocated by the German scholars, Ranke, Bergk, and Meineke, against whom Grote has directed an able and conclusive argument in the notes to his eighth volume. Truly, it is absurd to pretend that Aristophanes was the prudent and far-seeing moralist described by his German admirers. To imagine him thus, would be to falsify the whole purpose of the Athenian Comic Drama, and to test its large extravagance by the narrow standard of modern morality. We might as well fancy that Alexander was an unselfish worker in the service of humanity, as bring ourselves to see in Aristophanes the sage of uniformly staid sobriety. Not to mention that such a notion is at total variance with the only authentic portrait we possess of him, in the *Symposium* of

¹ This epithet contains the gist of the objection often brought against Aristophanes, that he assisted the demoralisation which he denounced. If he did so, it was not by his grossness and indelicacy, but by his subtilty and refinement and audacity of universal criticism. The sceptical aquafortis of his age is as strong in Aristophanes as in Euripides.

Plato, every line of his comedies cries out against so pedantic and priggish a calumny. For it is a calumny thus to misrepresent the high-spirited muse of Aristophanes, with her dishevelled hair and Coan robe of flimsiest gauze, and wild eyes swimming in the mists of wine. She never pretends to be better than a priestess of the midnight Bacchus and Corinthian Aphrodite, though she believes sincerely in the inspiration of these deities. To see in her a Vestal or a Diotima, to set the owl of Pallas on her shoulder, and to strap the ægis round her panting breasts is a piece of elaborate stupidity and painful impertinence, which it remained for German pedagogues to perpetrate. Yet it is equally wrong to think of Aristophanes merely as a pernicious calumniator, who killed Socrates, and put an ineffectual spoke in the wheel of progress. Granted that he was more of a merry-andrew than a moralist (more of a *γελωτοποιός* than a *μετewρολέαχης*), we must surely be blind if we fail to recognise the deep undernote of good sense and wisdom which gives eternal value to his jests—worse than blind if we do not honour him for valiant and unflinching service in the cause which he had recognised as right. Nor are the enemies of Aristophanes less insensible to his real merits as an artist, than his ponderous German friends. What are we to think of the imaginative faculties of a man, who after gazing upon the divine splendours of the genius of Aristophanes, after tracking the erratic flight of this most radiant poet, “with his singing robes about him,” can descend to earth and wish that he had never existed, or shake his head and measure him by the moral standards of Quarterly Reviews and British respectability? Alas, that from the modern world should have evanesced all appreciation of art that is not obviously useful, palpably didactic! If we would rightly estimate Aristophanic comedy, we must be prepared to accept it in the classical spirit, and separating ourselves from either sect of the Pharisees, refuse to picture its great poets to ourselves, on the one hand as patriots *eximii morum gravitate*, or on the other, as foul slanderers and irreverent buffoons. Far beyond and outside the plane of either standing-ground are they. The old comedy of Athens is a work of art so tempered and so balanced, that he who would appreciate it must submit, for a moment at least, to forego his modern advantages of improved morality, and public decency, and purer taste, and parliamentary courtesy, and to become—if he can bend his moral back to that obliquity—a “merry Greek.”

It is now clear that Aristophanic comedy is in the history of art unique—the product of peculiar and unrepeated circumstances. The essential differences between it and modern comedy are manifold. Modern comedy partakes of the tragic spirit; it has a serious purpose, acknowledged by the poet; a lesson is generally taught in its catastrophe; it is fond of poetical justice. Aristophanic comedy, as we have seen, whatever may be its purpose, is always ludicrous to the spectators and to itself. *Tartuffe*, *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*, and *Volpone*, are tragedies without bloodshed: you only laugh at them

incidentally. The *Clouds*, the *Knights*, and the *Frogs* excite inevitable laughter. Nor is this difference manifest only in the matter and spirit of the two comedies: it expresses itself externally in their several forms. The plays of Aristophanes, upon the stage, must have been like our pantomimes, or rather, like our operas. If we wish to form a tolerable notion of the appearance of an Aristophanic comedy, we cannot do better than keep in mind the *Flauto Magico* of Mozart. Had Mozart received a good translation of the *Birds* instead of the wretched libretto of the *Zauberflöte*, what a really magic drama he might have produced! Even as it is, with the miserable materials he had to work upon, the master musician has given us an Aristophanic specimen of the ludicrous passing by abrupt but delicate transitions to the serious, of parody and irony playing in and out at hide and seek, of pathos lurking beneath merriment, and of madness leaping by a bound into the regions of pure reason. And this he has achieved by the all-subduing witchery of music—by melodies which solve the stiffest contradictions, by the ebb and flow of measured sound rocking upon its surface the most varied thoughts and feelings of the soul of man. In the *Zauberflöte* we are never surprised by any change, however sudden—by any incident, however whimsical. After first lamenting over the stupidity of the libretto, and then resigning ourselves to the caprices of the fairy story, we are delighted to follow the wanderings of music through her labyrinth of quaint and contradictory absurdities. Just so, we fancy, must have been the case with Aristophanes. Peisthetærus and Euelpides were not more discordant than Papageno; the *Birds* had their language as Astrifiammante has hers; nor were the deeper tones of Aristophanic meaning more out of place than the bass notes of Sarastro, and the choruses of his attendant priests. Music, which has harmonised the small and trivial contradictions of the *Zauberflöte*, harmonised the vast and profound contradictions of Aristophanic comedy. It was the melodramatic setting of such plays as the *Birds* and the *Clouds* which caused their Weltvernichtungsidee to blossom forth melodiously into the magic tree, with all its blossoms and nightingales and merry apes, to which I have so often referred.

With this parallel between the *Birds* and an opera like the *Zauberflöte* in our minds, we may place ourselves among the thirty thousand Athenian spectators assembled in the theatre about the end of March, 414 B.C. We must remember that the great expedition had recently gone forth to Sicily. It was only in the preceding year that the Salaminian galley had been sent for Alcibiades, who escaped to Sparta, where he was now engaged in stirring up evil for his countrymen. But as yet no disaster had befallen the army of invasion. Gylippus had not arrived. Lamachus was still alive. Every vessel brought news to the Athenians of the speed with which their forces were carrying on the work of circumvallation, and of the despondency of the Syracusans. The spectators of the plays of Aristophanes and Ameipsias were nearly

the same persons who had listened to the honeyed eloquence of Alcibiades persuading them to undertake the expedition, and promising them not merely the supremacy of Hellas, but also the empire of the Mediterranean and the subjugation of Carthage. Alcibiades, indeed, had turned a traitor to his country; but the charm of his oratory and the spirit he had roused remained. Each father in the audience might fairly hope that his son would share in raising Athens to her height of splendour: not a man but felt puffed up with insolent prosperity. The only warning voice which spoke while Athens trembled on the very razor-edge of fortune, was that of Aristophanes—but with how sweet and delicate a satire, with sarcasms that had the sound of flattery, with prognostications of failure that wore the shape of realised ambitions, with musical banter and multitudinous jests that seemed to apologise for folly rather than to censure it! There is no doubt but that Aristophanes intended in the *Birds* to ridicule the ambition of the Athenians and their inveterate gullibility. Peisthetærus and Euelpides represent in comic caricature the projectors, agitators, schemers, flatterers, who, led by Alcibiades, had imposed upon the excitable vanity of the nation. Clouduckootown is any castle in the air or South Sea Bubble, which might take the fancy of the Athenian mob. But it is also more especially the project of Western dominion connected with their scheme of Sicilian conquest. Aristophanes has treated his theme so poetically and largely, that the interests of the *Birds* is not, like that of the *Wasps* or the *Knights*, almost wholly confined to the Athens of his day. It transcends those limitations of place and time, and is the everlasting allegory of foolish schemes and flimsy ambition. A modern dramatist—Ben Jonson or Molière for instance, perhaps even Shakespeare—could hardly have refrained from ending the allegory with some piece of poetical justice. We should have seen Peisthetærus disgraced and Clouduckootown resolved into “such stuff as dreams are made of.” But this is not the art of Aristophanes. He brings Peisthetærus to a successful catastrophe, and ends his comedy with marriage songs of triumph. Yet none the less pointed is the satire. The unreality of the vision is carefully maintained, and Peisthetærus walking home with Basileia for his bride, like some new sun-eclipsing star, seems to wink and strut and shrug his shoulders, conscious of the Titanic sham.

To analyse in detail a work of art so well known to all students as the *Birds* would be needless. It is enough to notice in passing that it is quite unique of its kind, combining as it does such airy fancies as we find in the *Midsummer Night's Dream* with the peculiar pungency of Aristophanic satire, untainted by the obscenity which forms an integral part of the *Ecclesiastusæ* or *Lysistrata*. Most exquisite is the art with which Aristophanes has collected all the facts of ornithology, all the legends and folk-lore connected with birds, so as to create a fanciful birdland and atmosphere of true bird life for his imaginary beings. Not less wonderful is the imagination with which he has conceived the whole universe from the bird's point of view, his sympathy

with the nightingale, the drollery of his running footman Trochilus, the pompous gravity of his King Epps, and so on through the whole of his winged *dramatis personæ*. The triumph of his art is the Parabasis, in which the birds pour forth melodious compassion for the transitory earth-born creatures of an hour. Poor men, with their little groping lives! The epithets of pity which the happier birds invent to describe man, are woven as it were of gossamer and dew, symbols of fragility. Then the music changes as the vision of winged Erôs, upsoaring from the primeval wind-egg, bursts upon the fancy of the chorus. Again it subsides into still more delicate irony, when the just reign of the birds on earth and over heaven is prophesied; and the whole concludes with semi-chorus answering to semi-chorus in antiphonal strains of woodland poetry and satire—the sweet notes of the flute responded to by shouts of Bacchic laughter.

We have seen in dealing with the *Birds* how Aristophanes converted the whole world into a transcendental birdland, and filled his play with airy shapes and frail imaginings. This power of alchemising and transmuting everything he touches into the substance of his thought of the moment, is no less remarkable in the comedy of the *Clouds*. And here we are able to mark the peculiar nature of his allegory more clearly than in the choruses of the *Birds*, with greater accuracy to distinguish the play of pure poetry alternating with satire, to trace the glittering thread of fancy drawn athwart the more fantastic arabesque of comic caricature. In the *Clouds* Aristophanes ridicules the rising school of teachers who professed to train the youth of Athens in the arts of public speaking and successful litigation. He aims at the tribe of sophists, who substituted logical discussion for the old æsthetic education of the Greeks, and who sought to replace mythological religion by meteorological explanations of natural phenomena. The pedantry of this dialectic in its boyhood offended the artistic sense of a conservative like Aristophanes: the priggishness of upstart science had the air to him of insolent irreligion. Besides, he saw that this new philosophy, while it undermined the moral temper of his nation, was capable of lending itself to ignoble ends—that its possessors sought to make money, that their disciples were eager to acquire mere technical proficiency, in order to cut a fine figure in public and to gain their selfish purposes. The sophists professed two chief subjects, τὰ μετέωρα, or the science of natural phenomena; and rhetoric, or the art of conquering by argument. Aristophanes, in the *Clouds*, satirises both under the form of allegory by bringing upon the stage his chorus of Clouds, who, in their changeful shapes—heaven-obscuring, appearing variously to various eyes, coming into being from the nothing of the air, and passing away again by imperceptible dissolution, usurping upon the functions of Zeus in the thunder and the rain, hurrying hither and thither at the will of no divine force, but impelled by the newly discovered abstraction Vortex—are the very forms and symbols of the airy, misty Proteus of verbal falseness and intangible irreligion which had begun

to possess the Athenians. In order to understand the force of this allegory, we must remember the part which the clouds played in the still vital mythology of the Greeks. It was by a cloud that Hera in her divine scorn had deluded the impious desires of Ixion, who, embracing hollow shapes of vapour, begat Centaurs. The rebellious giants who sought to climb Olympus, were forms of mist and tempest invading the serenity of highest heaven: this Strepsiades indicates when he quotes the words *πλοκάμους θ' ἑκατογκεφάλα Τυφῶ* (the locks of hundred-headed Typhos) as referring to the clouds. It was in cloudy vision that gods appeared to mortals, or escaped their sight; in cloud that the Homeric heroes were snatched from death by their Olympian patrons; in clouds that Æolus dwelt and Danaë was prisoned. The Harpies were wind-tossed films of frothy cloud; the Sirens daughters of foam and mist. Everything that deceived and concealed, that shifted and eluded, that stole away "the enchanted gazer's mind," all Maya or delusion, all fascination and unrealisable desire, was symbolised by clouds. Nor was it without meaning that the clouds ascended from ocean, from the wily parent of wave and storm, the inscrutable hoarder of secrets locked within the caverns of the murmuring deep, who might never be taken in any one clear form, who loved to cozen and betray, whose anger was swift and fretful against such as caught him in their toils. The clouds were his daughters, and so was Aphrodite—beautiful, deceitful, soul-subduing—these his offspring of the air, this his child of the foam—these pouring glamour on the eyes of men, this folding their hearts in snares. Without being fanciful, we might follow this analysis through a hundred labyrinths, all tending to show how exquisite to the apprehension of a Greek steeped in mythological associations must have been the allegory of the clouds. We might, moreover, have pointed out the care of Aristophanes to maintain this mythological propriety. Even in the *Parabasis*, for instance, where the Chorus comes forward in its human character as the representative of the poet, there occurs a semi-choric strain of great beauty, hymning the elemental deities of Sun, Air, Ocean, and all-covering Heaven, who are the parents and especial patrons of the clouds; for the Sun begets them from the fountains of the Sea, the Air receives and gives them shape as they drift through her yielding realm, and the great Zeus of the sky compels them to his service, stores them with his thunder, and makes a palace for them in his adamant home, and wreathes their dances round his footstool of the firmament. But it is enough to have pointed out the main features of the allegory. The scope which it afforded for the display of splendid poetry was of course immense. From the first moment of the appearance of the Chorus to the end we never lose sight of their cloudy splendour, and, as in the case of the *Birds*, every thought, playful or imaginative, which can be conceived relating to the world of clouds, is pressed by Aristophanes into his service.

Early in the play the fount of poetry which they suggest, springs pure and clear from the flinty rock of previous satire. Socrates, who

has just been displayed to us as the insignificant anatomiser of fleas and gnats, rises suddenly to this height in his invocation :—

“ O Sovereign King, immeasurable Air, who keepest the earth balanced, and blazing Ether, and sublime goddesses, ye Clouds of lightning and of thunder, arise, appear, dread queens, in mid-air to your Thinker ! ”

It is only in the last word, notice, that the comic smile breaks out.

“ Come, then, ye reverend Clouds, honour this neophyte with your dread beauty ! whether upon Olympus’ holy snow-swept peaks ye sit, or in the gardens of father Ocean weave the dance with nymphs, or in golden pitchers draw the waters of Nile, or in Mæotis bide, or on the white eyries of Mimas : listen, receive our sacrifice, be gracious to our rites.”

With what radiance of imagination the haunts of the clouds are here enumerated. Sometimes we see them floating in virginal processions above unfooted snows, sometimes enthroned like queens in solemn silence on ærial watch-towers, sometimes dissolved in dew far down among the Oceanides, or brooding, filmy vapours, on the face of broad untroubled lakes.

Aristophanes, it may be said in passing, never dwells upon the more tempestuous functions of the clouds as stormy and angry powers : that would be to violate his allegory, which must always show them deceitfully beautiful, spreading illusion over earth and sky.

In answer to the invitation of Socrates, the Clouds are heard behind the stage chanting a choric hymn ;¹ and here it must be remarked that the poet has revealed subtle instinct, for before exhibiting his Chorus, arrayed in veils of filmy gauze, to the people, by which he might have risked the possibility of exciting ludicrous instead of solemn ideas, he enlists the imagination of the audience by a sublime strain of preparatory music, vocally realising the splendour of the coming Clouds before they strike the eyes of the spectators.

It is to the repeated roll of distant thunder that they sing their untranslatable entrance hymn. Behold them rising, silent domes and pinnacles and towers, from the burnished mirror of the noonday

¹ *ἀέναοι Νεφέλαι,
ἀρθῶμεν φανεραὶ δροσερὰν φύσιν εὐάγῃον,
πατρός ἀπ’ Ὀκεανοῦ βαρναχέος
ὑψηλῶν ὀρέων κορυφὰς ἐπὶ
δενδροκόμους, ἵνα
τηλεφανεῖς σκοπιὰς ἀφορώμεθα,
καρπούς τ’ ἀρδομένην ἱερὰν χθόνα,
καὶ ποταμῶν ζαθέων κελαδήματα,
καὶ πόντον κελάδοντα βαρύβρομον·
ἴμμα γὰρ αἰθέρος ἀκάματον σελαγεῖται
μαρμαρέαις ἐν αὐγαῖς.
ἀλλ’ ἀποσεισάμεναι νέφος ἄμβριον
ἀθανάτας ἰδέας ἐπιδώμεθα
τηλεσκόπῳ ἴμματι γαίαν.*

sea : how the sunlight flashes on their pearly slopes and fills their deeply-cloven valleys : how dewy bright and glistening they are. Then watch them scale the vault of heaven, quitting the horizon with its mists, marching in tranquil state across the spaces of blue ether, gliding to their thrones among the mountain pines. There they repose, and at their feet is heard the clamour of the streams, the deep rebounding boom of sea-waves ; but they are seated in serenity, and below them lies the champaign with its fruits of holy earth, and on their broad immortal marble fronts the unwearied light of the sun-god plays. From their girdles to their sandals falls the robe of mist that wrapped them round, and on the watch-towers of the world they sit, bare in their beauty, godlike forms.

Such is the vision which this inimitable Chorus evokes. Its truth has been felt by all who have seen the rising of summer clouds from the waters of the Mediterranean. Indeed, this Chorus belongs to the highest order of poetry. Not only does it furnish an example of the freshness which is peculiar to Aristophanes, but it is in the deepest sense an intuition into the inmost life of nature. We hear in it the voice of a true seer or interpreter, who knows by choice of words and rhythms how to convey his own impressions to our mind. Even Shelley, when he wrote his *Cloud*, had grasped perhaps the secret of the pomp and splendour of cloudland less firmly than Aristophanes has done, though his images are piled so multitudinously, and every thought or fancy that a cloud suggests is whirled, as it were, in the drift of brilliant and radiant shapes. Aristophanes has this advantage—that something of the mythopœic still survived in Greece, and that he shared the sculptural genius of his race. Moreover, his audience were prepared by their religious associations to conceive of his Clouds as living creatures, and he was writing for the stage, where the poetry of personification is made easy by direct appeal to the eyesight.

In the *Clouds* as it has been transmitted to us, Aristophanes employs another and more direct form of allegory. He brings upon the stage the *δίκαιος λόγος* (Right Reason) in controversy with the *ἄδικος λόγος* (False Reason)—the former representing the old conservative education of Athens, the other the new theories and modes of life which were beginning to spring up. It has been conjectured that *δίκαιος λόγος* wore the mask of Aristophanes himself, and *ἄδικος λόγος* that of Thrasymachus the Sophist. If this conjecture hits the truth, it is curious that the vulgar logician whom Socrates handles so severely in Plato's *Republic* should have been chosen as the ideal of his doctrine and influence—the special pleader of the Phrontisterion. The contest between these two impersonations of modesty and impudence, of manliness and effeminacy, offers an unique example in Greek comic literature of what was common on our own stage about three centuries ago. The Just and Unjust Logoi dispute and wrangle for the favour of Pheidippides precisely like the abstractions in *Hycke Scorners* or *Lusty Juventus*.

Of course this kind of allegory is much coarser and affords less scope for poetical treatment than the exquisite mythus of the *Clouds*. The Logoi are but masks or hollow automata, from behind which the poet utters his arguments : there is no illusion of the senses, no enchantment of the fancy in their presentation. Yet the speech of Dikaios Logos forms one of the purest and most beautiful passages that Aristophanes has written, in its simple and affectionate picture of old Athenian life. The poet, we fear, was very far behind his age : he looked back to the good times when the sailor only knew enough to sing out "Ahoy!" and call for biscuit : he wanted the Athenian lads to have broad backs and sluggish tongues : he was dead to the advantages of dialectic and Socratic definition : he kept trying to bring back the days of Marathon, when nothing could avert the coming days of Syracuse and Ægospotami and Chæronea. We who read the history of Athens by the light of our Grote, we who are rolling our waves towards the rising instead of the setting sun, know now how very perverse and unadvanced the poet was. Yet, for all that, can we fail to be charmed with the picture that he draws of Greek boyhood in the good old times, and to contrast it favourably with the acknowledged impudence and profligacy of Critias and Agathon and Alcibiades—the friends and pupils of Socrates? "In that blissful time," says Dikaios Logos, "when I flourished, and modesty and temperance were practised, a boy's voice was never heard ; but he would set off at daybreak, in snow or sunshine, with his comrades to the school of the harper, where he learned the ballads of our forefathers in praise of Pallas ; and from the harper he would run to the training-ground and exercise himself with the decorum befitting virtuous youth." The rules for the behaviour of boys which Aristophanes here enunciates, provoke a modern smile ; for the morality of Athens obliged lads to observe the same sort of propriety which we expect from girls. But for all his modesty, the youth of those days was not a milksop. He did indeed shun the public baths and the agora, repel the advances of profligate persons, respect his parents, avoid hetairai, and form in his breast an image of Modesty : yet he frequented the wrestling-ground, and grew fair in form and colour with generous exercises, not "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought," nor bent and jaded by the restless wrangling of the law courts : but among the sacred olive-trees of the Academy he ran races with his comrade, "crowned with white reeds, smelling of bindweed and careless hours and leaf-shedding poplar, rejoicing in the prime of spring, when the plane-tree whispers to the elm." In these last lines we touch the very core of Greek aristocratic conservatism—that imperious demand for leisure, for *σχολή τῶν ἀναγκαίων* (freedom from care about daily necessities), of which Aristotle speaks as an essential in the life of free men ; that contempt of all serious time-consuming business which we find in Plato ; that respect for the beauty of the body, and that dislike of every occupation tending to degrade its form or spoil the freshness of its colour ; that sympathy with nature in her graceful moods ; that

well-bred nonchalance; that love of the gymnasium with its poplar sacred to Herakles, the god of endurance, and its plane-tree of swift Hermes—in a word, those accumulated æsthetical prejudices which marked the race pre-eminent for its artistic faculty, the caste of rich and idle citizens supported by a nation of slaves, the unique and never again to be imitated people, who once and for all upon this earth of ours attained perfection, realised the ideal toward which we vainly strive.

With the last lines of this speech in our memory, we may turn to the Dialogues of Plato, whose Phædrus and Charmides and Lysis are true children and disciples of Dikaios Logos; or to the Autolyceus of Xenophon's *Symposium*, whose breast is as smooth, and skin as bright, and shoulders as broad, and tongue as short, as even Aristophanes could wish; or we may set before us some statue like the Apoxyomenos of Lysippus, or the Discobolos of Myron, and feel that we have gathered, in fancy at least, the flower of the perfection of the pride of Hellas.

Much of the allegory of Aristophanes consists of metaphors taken literally and expressed by appropriate symbolism to the audience. Thus, Trugaios actually drags the goddess Peace, with her attendants Opora and Theoria, from the well, the Chorus, while they help him, singing "Yoho!" like sailors at a capstan. In the same comedy, War and Havoc are exhibited with a gigantic mortar, in which they bray the States of Greece. Socrates suspended in his basket is a metaphorical allegory of this sort, his posture being peculiarly expressive of star-gazing and abstract speculation at a time when the objects of such contemplations were called τὰ μετέωρα (things high in air). Of the same kind is the balance in which the lines of Æschylus and Euripides are weighed. Any poet might use the metaphor (weighed in the balance and found wanting); but it is a stretch of metaphorical license to exhibit an actual pair of scales upon the stage. Many of the figurative actions of the Hebrew prophets were practical appeals to the imagination, similar to these allegories of Aristophanes. Indeed, such dramatic metaphors may be reckoned among the most powerful instruments in the hands of a great master. Had Dante conceived a masque upon the politics of Italy, we doubt not but that he would have employed some energetic symbols of this sort; and in passing, it may be said that no artist has appeared in modern times so capable of constructing an allegorical drama in the style of Aristophanes as Dante. The symbolism of the *Wasps* is somewhat different from that with which we have been dealing. In this play the chorus were armed, no doubt, with lance-like stings; but there was no attempt on the poet's part, as in the case of the *Clouds* and *Birds*, to maintain the illusion of their being wasps. They talk and act like old men; their waspishness is merely metaphorical, and the allegory ends in an appeal to the eyesight. The *Plutus*, on the other hand, presents an example of allegory in the strictly modern sense. It is a Greek anticipation of our moralities,

of such a play as might be founded on a portion of the *Pilgrim's Progress*. Wealth and Poverty appear upon the stage, and speak appropriately. Avarice and Prodigality are satirised. The use and abuse of riches are contrasted in a series of incidents framed with expressly moral purpose. The whole play is singularly un-Aristophanic. We have here no "Weltvernichtungsidee"—no nightingales or climbing apes, to speak of. For this very reason it has been copied in modern times (its inner nature rendering it capable of adaptation to our tastes) by Ben Jonson in the *Staple of News*, and by Goethe in the second part of *Faust*.

One word must be devoted to the *Thesmophoriazuszæ*. In the history of dramatic literature, the chief interest of the play is that it differs from the other works of Aristophanes in its structure. It has a regular plot—an intrigue and a solution—and its persons are not allegorical but real. Thus it approaches the standard of modern comedy. But the plot, though gigantic in its scale, and prodigious in its wealth of wit and satire, is farcical. The artifices by which Euripides endeavours to win Agathon to undertake his cause, the disguise of Mnesilochus in female attire, the oratory of the old man against the women in the midst of their assembly, his detection, the momentary suspension of the dramatic action by his seizure of the supposed baby, his slaughter of the swaddled wine-jar, his apprehension by Cleisthenes, the devices and disguises by which Euripides (in parody of his own tragic scenes) endeavours to extricate his father-in-law from the scrape, and the final ruse by which he eludes the Scythian bowmen, and carries off Mnesilochus in triumph—all these form a series of highly diverting comic scenes. There is no passage in Aristophanes more amusing than the harangue of Mnesilochus. The other women have abused Euripides for slandering their sex in his tragedies. Mnesilochus, the humorous and coarse old rustic, gets up in his flimsy female gear, and eloquently reminds them of the truths which Euripides *might* have divulged. One crime after another is glibly and facetiously recorded, until the little heap of calumnies uttered by Euripides disappears beneath the mountain of confessions piled up by the supposed matron. The portrait, too, of Agathon in the act of composition is exquisitely comic. By comparing it with that drawn by Plato in the *Banquet*, we may to some extent estimate the amount of truth in Aristophanic caricature. The meaningless melodious style—the stream of honeyed words,¹ *summá delumbe salivá*—with which Agathon and his Chorus greet our ears, is scarcely more a parody of his poetry than the speech on love is of his prose. Agathon is discovered lying on a sofa, arrayed in female garments and smelling of cosmetics; when asked why thus attired,

¹ Mnesilochus' criticism reminds us of Persius:—

ὡς ἦδὺν τὸ μέλος ὦ πότνια Γενετυλλίδες,
καὶ θηλυδριῶδες καὶ κατεγλωττισμένον
καὶ μανδαλωτόν, ὥστ' ἐμοῦ γ' ἀκρωμένον
ὑπὸ τὴν ἔδραν αὐτὴν ὑπέλθε γάργαλος.

Thesm. 130.

he lisps a languid answer that he is composing a tragedy about women, and wants to be in character :—

“ The poet ought to keep in harmony
 With any subject that he has to treat :
 If women be his theme, then must his person
 Be toned and fashioned to a female mood ;
 But when he writes of men he has no need
 To study change ; 'tis only what we have not,
 We seek to supplement by dressing up.
 Besides, how unæsthetic 'tis to see
 A poet coarse and hairy ! Just remember
 Famed Ibycus, Anacreon, Alcæus,
 Who made our music and our metres flow,
 Wore caps, and followed soft Ionian fashions :
 And Phrynichus—this surely you have heard—
 Was beautiful, and beautifully dressed ;
 And this, we cannot doubt, is why his plays
 Were beautiful, for 'tis a natural law
 That like ourselves our work must ever be.”

Modern writers upon whose lips *in udo est Mænas et Attis* might take some of this satire not inaptly to themselves. But the crowning sport of the *Thesmophoriazuse* is in the last scene, when Mnesilochus adapts the *Palamedes* and the *Helen* of Euripides to his own forlorn condition, jumbling up the well-known verses of these tragedies with coarse-flavoured rustical remarks ; and when at last Euripides himself acts Echo and Perseus to the Andromeda of his father-in-law, and both together mystify the policeman by their ludicrous utterance of anti-phonal lamentations.

I have but scanty space for touching on one of the topics which the *Thesmophoriazuse* suggests—the satire of Aristophanes upon Athenian women, whom he invariably represents as profligate, licentious, stupid, drunken, thieves and liars. Whether they were in any sense as bad as he has painted them—and he has given them a worse character than any other Greek poet, not even excepting Simonides of Amorgos—or whether their absence from the comic spectacles encouraged a paradoxical misrepresentation of their worst and most exceptional qualities, is not easy to decide. This at least is clear that, while comic exaggeration is obvious in every detail, the picture, overdrawn and coarse as it may be, accords with that of other and less copious Greek satirists ; nor could it have been tolerated in a society where women held a station of respect and honour.¹

¹ One of the most interesting chapters in Greek history still remains to be written. It should deal in detail with the legal and domestic position of free women at Athens, with the relation of their sons and husbands to Hetairai, and with the whole associated subject of pãiderastia. Since this chapter on Aristophanes was first published, Dr. Mahaffy has done much in his excellent book on *Social Life in Greece* toward clearing up our views upon these matters. But the topic still requires a fuller and more scientific handling. Dr. Mahaffy is particularly felicitous in marking the distinctions of the Herodotean, Thucydidean, and Euripidean estimates of women, in bringing into prominence the *Æconomicus* of Xenophon, and in laying

The point of the *Thesmophoriazusa*, so far as the women are concerned, is that while Aristophanes pretends to show up Euripides for his abuse of them, his own satire is far more searching, and penetrates more deeply into the secrets of domestic life. What are the crimes of Phædra in comparison with the habits he imputes to Athenian wives and daughters? The *Lysistrata* will not bear discussion; but in passing I may notice the humour of the oath by wine which the inexorable heroine and her Spartan friend administer. Other oaths might be broken, but no Athenian wife or maid would incur the penalty of this dread imprecation: "If I fail, may the bowl be filled with water." Of the three comedies which treat of women, the *Ecclesiazusa* has the most permanent interest. Indeed, *mutatis mutandis*, its satire might almost be adapted to the present day, or to the future which our theorists upon the rights of women are preparing. The Athenian ladies disguise themselves as men, and crowd the assembly, where they out-vote their husbands, sons, and brothers, and proclaim the supremacy of women in the state. Praxagora, the agitator of the scheme, is chosen Strategis. She decides that a community of property and free trade between the sexes are the two things wanted to ensure general felicity. The point of the satire consists in this: that the arguments by which the women get the upper hand, all turn on their avowed conservatism; men change and shift, women preserve their old customs, and will maintain the type of the state; but no sooner have they got authority than they show themselves more democratic than the demagogues, more new-fangled in their political notions than the philosophers. They upset time-honoured institutions and make new ones to suit their own caprices, squaring the laws according to the logic of feminine instincts. Of course speculations like those of Plato's *Republic* are satirised in the farcical scenes which illustrate the consequences of this female revolution. But perhaps the finest point about the comedy is its humorous insight into the workings of women's minds—its clear sense of what a topsy-turvy world we should have to live in if women were the lawgivers and governors.

In quitting Aristophanes I am forced to reflect upon the inadequacy of my attempts to interpret the secret of his strength and charm. The epithets which continually rise to our lips in speaking of him—radiant, resplendent, swift, keen, changeful, flashing, magical—carry no real notion of the marvellous and subtle spirit that animates his comedy with life peculiar to itself. In dealing with no other poet is the critic

stress upon the warfare of opinion which raged at Athens between conservatives of the Periclean tradition, represented by Aristophanes, and innovators, represented in poetry by Euripides, in philosophy by Plato. I cordially agree with him in his remark that "in estimating women at this time, the *Alcestis* and *Macaria* of Euripides are too high, and the women of Aristophanes are too low" (*Social Greece*, 2nd ed. p. 228). The great difficulty which must have been felt by all thoughtful students of Greek literature is how to reconcile the high ideals of female character, presented by the Attic tragedians, with the contemptuous silence of Thucydides, with the verdict of Plato upon women-lovers as compared with boy-lovers, with the ribaldry allowed to comic poets, and with the comparative absence of female portraits in the biographies of great Athenians composed by Plutarch.

or historian so powerless. No other work of art leaves so incommunicable an impression on the mind of the student. As for my words about Aristophanes, they are "sound and fury signifying nothing": to be known, he must be read with admiration and delight. But those who have submitted themselves to the influence of his genius will understand what I mean when, in conclusion, I say that, with Plato and Aristophanes for guides, we can to some extent reconstruct the life of the Athenians, animate the statues of Myron and Lysippus, and see the aisles of the Parthenon or the benches of the Pnyx crowded with real human beings. Plato introduces us to the graver and more elegant side of Attic life, to the *καλοκαγαθοί* and *χαρίεντες*, to men of sober tastes and good birth and exquisite breeding. Aristophanes acquaints us with men of pleasure, vulgar and uneducated characters, haunters of the law courts and the market-place and the assembly. From Plato we learn what occupied philosophers and people of distinction. Aristophanes tells us the popular jokes at Athens, how the political and military edicts recorded by Thucydides were familiarly discussed, how people slept and walked, and dressed, and dined. In Plato's Dialogues the fine Greek intellect is shown to us trained and tutored into exquisite forms of elevated culture. In Aristophanes, though art even more consummate has been used, we see the same refined intellect running riot and disporting itself with the flexibility of untameable youth. By Plato we are taught how dignified and humane the Greeks could be, by Aristophanes how versatile and human they were.

CHAPTER XIX

THE COMIC FRAGMENTS

Three Periods in Attic History—The Three Kinds of Comedy: Old, Middle, New—Approximation of Comedy to the Type of Tragedy—Athenæus as the Source of Comic Fragments—Fragments of the Old Comedy—Satire on Women—Parasites—Fragments of the Middle Comedy—Critique of Plato and the Academic Philosophers—Literary Criticism—Passages on Sleep and Death—Attic Slang—The *Demi-Monde*—Theophrastus and the Later Rhetoricians—Cooks and Cookery Books—Difficulty of defining the Middle from the New Comedy—Menander—Sophocles and Menander—Epicureanism—Menander's sober Philosophy of Life—Goethe on Menander—Philemon—The Comedy of Manners culminated in Menander—What we mean by Modernism—Points of Similarity and Difference between Ancient and Modern Comedy—The Freedom of Modern Art.

THE two centuries during which comedy flourished at Athens may be divided into three marked periods of national and political existence. Between 448 and 404 B.C., under the Periclean administration and until the end of the Peloponnesian War, the Demos or sovereign people continued through all vicissitudes conscious of sovereignty and capable of indefinite expansion. Then came the dismantlement of Athens by Lysander and the dismemberment of the old democracy. From 404 to 338 B.C., Athens, though humbled to the rank of a second-class State, and confused in foreign and domestic policy, retained her freedom, and exercised an important influence over the affairs of Hellas. She no longer, however, felt within herself the force of youth, the ambition of conquest, or the pride of popular autocracy. Her intellectual activity was turned from political and constitutional questions inwards to philosophy and literature. From 338 to about 260 B.C. this metamorphosis of the nation was carried further and accomplished. Athens ceased to be a city of statesmen and orators, and became the capital of learning. She was no longer in any true sense free or powerful, though populous and wealthy and frequented by cultivated men of all nations. Not only had public interest declined, but the first fervour for philosophy was past. A *modus vivendi* suited

to a tranquil, easy, pleasure-loving people, who rejoiced in leisure and combined refined amusements with luxury, had been systematised in the Epicurean view of life. To accept the conditions of existence and to make the best of them, to look on like spectators at the game of the world, and to raise no troublesome insoluble questions, was the ideal of this period. Fifty years after the last date mentioned, the Romans set their foot on Hellas, and Greek culture began to propagate itself with altered forms in Italy.

To these three periods in the national existence of Athens, the three phases through which comedy passed, correspond with almost absolute accuracy. Emerging from the coarse Megarian farces and the phallic pageants of the Dionysian Kômos, the old comedy, as illustrated by Aristophanes, allowed itself the utmost license. It incarnated the freedom of democracy, caricaturing individuals, criticising constitutional changes, and, through all its extravagances of burlesque and fancy, maintaining a direct relation to politics. Only a nation in the plenitude of self-contentment, conscious of vigour and satisfied with its own energy, could have tolerated the kind of censorship these comic poets dared to exercise. The glaring light cast by Aristophanes upon abuses in the state reminded his audience of the greatness and the goodness that subsisted with so much of mean and bad. From their high standpoint of security they could afford, as they imagined, to laugh, and to enjoy a spectacle that travestied their imperfections. At the same time an under-current of antagonism to the Aristophanic comedy made itself felt from time to time. Laws were passed prohibiting this species of the drama in general (*μη κωμῳδεῖν*), or restricting its personality (*μη κωμῳδεῖν ὀνομαστί*), or prohibiting the graver functionaries of the State from exhibiting comic plays. These laws, passed, abrogated, and repassed, between 440 and 404 B.C., mark the ebb and flow of democratic liberty. After the humiliation of Athens at the close of the Peloponnesian War, the political subject-matter of the old comedy ceased to exist, and the attitude of the audience was so altered as to render its peculiar censorship intolerable. Meanwhile, the speculative pursuits to which the Athenians since the days of the sophists had addicted themselves, began to tell upon the character of the nation, now ripe for the second or literary stage of comedy. The poets of this period had not yet arrived at the comedy of manners which presents a close and faithful picture of domestic life. They directed their wit and humour against classes rather than characters. Philosophers and poets, parasites and hetæra, took the place of the politicians. Nor did they abandon the old art-form of Attic comedy, for it is clear that the Chorus still played an important part in their plays. At the same time, in comedy as in tragedy, the Chorus came to be less and less an integral part of the drama; and while more attention was paid to plot and story, the grotesque allegories of the first period were dropped. The transition from the old to the middle comedy is signalled by the *Frogs*

of Aristophanes, which, maintaining the peculiar character of the elder form of art, relinquished politics for literature. The new comedy, known to us through the fragments of Menander and the Latin imitations, abandoned the Chorus altogether, and produced a form of art corresponding to what we know as the comedy of character and manners in the modern world. Interest was concentrated on the fable, and the skill of the poet was displayed in accurate delineations of domestic scenes. The plot seems to have almost invariably turned on love adventures. Certain fixed types of character—the parasite, the pimp, the roguish servant, the severe father, the professional captain, the spendthrift son, the unfortunate heroine, and the wily prostitute—appeared over and over again. To vary the presentation of these familiar persons taxed the ingenuity of the playwright, as afterwards in Italy and France, during the tyranny of pantaloon and matamore, Leandre and prima amorosa.¹

Tragedy and comedy, though they began so differently, had been gradually approximating to one type, so that between Menander and the latest followers of Euripides there was scarcely any distinction of form and but little difference of subject-matter. The same sententious reflections upon life seasoned both species of the drama. The religious content of the elder tragedy and the broad burlesque of the elder comedy alike gave place to equable philosophy. The tragic climax was sad; the comic climax gay: more license was allowed in the comic than in the tragic iambic: comedy remained nearer to real life and therefore more interesting than tragedy. Such, broadly speaking, were the limits of their differences now. In this approximation toward artistic similarity, comedy rather than tragedy was a gainer. It is clear that the Aristophanic comedy could not have become permanent. To dissociate it from the peculiar conditions of the Athenian democracy was impossible. Therefore the process by which the old comedy passed into the middle, and the middle into the new, must be regarded as a progression from the local and the accidental to the necessary and the universal. The splendour that may seem to have been sacrificed, belonged less to the old comedy itself than to the genius of Aristophanes, who succeeded in engrafting the most brilliant poetry upon the rough stock of the Attic farce. Tragedy, on the contrary, lost all when she descended from the vantage-ground of Æschylus. It must not, however, be imagined that the change in either case depended upon chance. It was necessitated by the internal transmutation of the Athenians into a nation of students, and by the corresponding loss of spontaneity in art. For the full development of the comedy of manners a critical temper in the poet and the audience,

¹ In my work upon Carlo Gozzi (John C. Nimmo, London, 2 vols.) I have published a historical essay upon the so-called *Commedia dell'Arte*, or improvised Comedy with fixed types of character, which flourished in Italy and France during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The similarity between this form of dramatic art and what we know about the later Comedy of Athens is very striking.

complexity of social customs, and inclination to reflect upon them, together with maturity of judgment, were required. These conditions, favourable to art which seeks its motives in a spirit of tolerant, if somewhat cynical, philosophy, but prejudicial to the highest serious poetry, account for the decline of tragedy and the contemporaneous ascent of comedy in the fourth century B.C. The comedy of Menander must therefore be considered as an advance upon that of Cratinus, though it is true that this comedy is the art of refined and senescent, rather than of vigorous and adolescent civilisation, and though it flourished in the age of tragic dissolution.

In the Vatican are preserved two colossal busts in marble, of equal size and beauty, wrought apparently by the same hand, and finished to the point of absolute perfection. One of these is Tragedy, the other Comedy. The two faces differ chiefly in the subtle smile that plays about the lips of Comedy, and in the slight contraction of the brows of Tragedy. They are twin sisters, born alike to royalty, distinguished by such traits of character as tend to disappear beneath the polish of the world. There is no suggestion of the Cordax in the one or of the Furies in the other. Both are self-restrained and dignified in ideality. It was thus that the two species of the drama appeared to the artists of the later ages of Hellenic culture.

The student of Greek fragments may not inaptly be compared to a man who is forming a collection of seaweeds. Walking along the border of the unsearchable ocean, he keeps his eyes fixed upon the pools uncovered at low tide, and with his foot turns up the heaps of rubbish cast upon the shore. Here and there a rare specimen of coloured coralline or delicately fibred alga attracts his attention. He stoops, and places the precious fragment in his wallet, regretting that all his wealth is but the alms of chance, tossed negligently to him by the fretful waves and wilful storms. To tread the submarine gardens where these weeds and blossoms flourish, is denied him. Even so the scholar can do no more than skirt the abysses of the past, the unsearchable sea of oblivion, garnering the waifs and strays offered him by accident.

As Stobæus provides the most extensive repertory of extracts from the later Greek tragedians, so it is to Athenæus we must turn for comic fragments. This glutton of books boasted that he had read eight hundred plays of the middle comedy, and it is obvious that he was familiar with the whole dramatic literature of Athens. Yet the use he made of this vast knowledge was comparatively childish. Interested for the most part in Deipnosophy, or the wisdom of the dinner-table, he displayed his erudition by accumulating passages about cooks, wines, dishes, and the Attic market. From an exclusive study, therefore, of the extracts he transmitted, we might be led to imagine that the Greek comedians exaggerated the importance of eating and drinking to a ridiculous extent. This, however, would be a false inference. The ingenuity of the Deipnosophist was shown in bringing his reading

to bear upon a single point, and in adorning the philosophy of the kitchen with purple patches torn from poetry. We ought, in truth, rather to conclude that Attic comedy was an almost inexhaustible mine of information on Attic life in general, and that illustrations, infinitely various, of the manners, feelings, prejudices, literature, and ways of thinking of the ancient Greeks might have been as liberally granted to us as the culinary details which amused the mind of Athenæus.

When so much remains intact of Aristophanes, it is not worth while to do more than mention a few of the fragments preserved from the other playwrights of the old comedy. The first of these in Meineke's collection may be translated, since it stands, like a motto, on the title-page of all Greek comedy: ¹ "Hear, O ye people! Susarion says this, the son of Philinus, the Megarian, of Tripodiscus: Women are an evil; and yet, my countrymen, one cannot set up house without evil; for to be married or not to be married is alike bad." In turning over the pages of Meineke ² we feel inclined to call attention to the beauty of some lines on flowers written by Pherecrates (*Metalles*, fr. 2, and *Persai*, fr. 2), and to a curious passage on the changes wrought by Melanippides, Kinesias, and Timotheus in Attic music (*Cheiron*, fr. 1). The comic description of the Age of Gold by Telecleides (*Amphictyones*, fr. 1) might be paralleled by Heine's picture of heaven, where the geese flew about ready roasted with ladles of sweet sauce in their bills. "Peace was as plentiful as water for the hands. Earth bore no frights or plagues, but all necessities grew spontaneously. Every torrent-bed ran with wine; wheaten loaves and barley bread quarrelled for the privilege of being swallowed; fishes broiled themselves and lay down at the tables; a river of broth rolling hot meats ran round the couches; conduits of rich soups and sauces flowed for all who listed; sugared cakes were heaped on platters; roast thrushes with milk-biscuits flew down people's throats; there was a wailing of buns that jostled round about men's jaws; the children played at dice with tit-bits cut from swine's paunches; all the folk were fat and huge as giants." What Hermippus says about the Attic market (*Phormophoroi*, fr. 1) is interesting for a different reason, since it throws real light upon the imports into Attica. The second fragment from the same comedy yields curious information about Greek wines. After mentioning the peculiar excellences of several sorts, the poet gives the palm to Saprias, so called because of its old, mellow, richly scented ripeness. "When the jar is opened, a perfume goes abroad of violets and roses and hyacinths, a wonderful scent that fills the house. This nectar is ambrosia and nectar in one. Keep it for my friends, but to my enemies give Peparethian." Eupolis supplies a description of parasites, (*Kolakes*, fr. 1): the first detailed picture of a class that played a

¹ Compare Anaxandrides (*Incert. Fab.* fr. 1); Eubulus (*Chrysisilla*, fr. 2, *Nannion*, fr. 1); Alexis (*Manteis*, fr. 1. *Incert. Fab.* fr. 34, 39); and the anonymous fragments on p. 756 of Didot's *Comici Græci*.

² I shall use the edition of Didot, one vol., 1855, for reference.

prominent part in Attic social life.¹ We may also mention, in passing, the fragment of a parabasis (*Incert. Fab.* fr. 1) which censures the Athenian audience for preferring foreign to native poets, and contains a reference to Aristophanes. Phrynichus yields the beautiful epitaph on Sophocles (*Mousai*, fr. 1) already quoted; ² nor must his amusing caricature of a bad musician be passed over (*Incert. Fab.* fr. 1), for the sake of this line:—

Μουσῶν σκελετός, ἀηδόνων ἠπίαλος, ὕμνος Ἄιδου,

“Mummy of Muses, ague of nightingales, hymn of Hades.”

Those who are curious about Greek games will do well to study the description of the cottabos in Plato (*Zeus Kakoumenos*, fr. 1), and to compare with it a fuller passage from Antiphanes³ (*Aphroditēs Gonai*). Plato, again, presents us with a lively picture of a Greek symposium (*Lacones*, fr. 1), as well as a very absurd extract from a cookery book, whereof the title was Φιλοξένου καινή τις Ὀψαρτυσία, “A new Sauce-science by Philoxenus” (*Phaon*, fr. 1). From Ameipsias might be selected for passing notice an allusion to Socrates (*Konnos*, fr. 1) and a scolion in two lines upon life and pleasure, sung to the flute at a drinking-party (*Incert. Fab.* fr. 1). Finally, Lysippus has spoken the praises of Athens in three burlesque iambs⁴ (*Incert. Fab.* fr. 1): “If you have never seen Athens, you are a stock; if you have seen her, and not been taken captive, a donkey; if you are charmed and leave her, a pack-ass.”

On quitting the old for the middle comedy we find ourselves in a different intellectual atmosphere. The wit is more fine-spun, the humour more allusive; language, metre, and sententious reflections begin alike to be Euripidean. The fertility of the playwrights of this period was astounding. Antiphanes, one of the earliest, produced, according to some authorities, 260, and Alexis, one of the latest, 245 comedies on a great variety of subjects. It is doubtful, however, whether the authorship of these plays was accurately known by the Byzantine Greeks, from whom our information is derived. The fragments show that a strong similarity of style marked the whole school of poets, and that the younger did not scruple to pilfer freely from the elder. On the whole, the question of authorship is of less interest than the matters brought to light by such extracts as we possess. It has been remarked above that ridicule of the philosophers and

¹ Compare Antiphanes (*Didymoi*, fr. 2, *Progonoi*, fr. 1); Alexis (*Kubernetes*, fr. 1); Diodorus (*Epikleros*, fr. 1); Timocles (*Drakontion*, fr. 1); the long passage from an uncertain play of Nicolaus. The invention of the part of the Parasite is usually ascribed to Alexis, but this is clearly a mistake. That he developed it and made it a fixed character of comedy is probable enough. The *Symposium* of Xenophon furnishes curious matter on the professional joker and diner-out, as he existed at Athens.

² See above, p. 279.

³ The following anonymous line (Didot's *Comici Græci*, p. 732), *συνεπινομέν τε καὶ συνεκορταβίζομεν*, “together we drank, and played at cottabos together,” seems to point to the good fellowship of the game.

⁴ Compare the praises of Athens quoted from anonymous comic poets by Athenæus, i. 20 B, and by Dio Chrysost., 64, p. 334, Reiske (Didot's *Comici Græci*, pp. 723, 729).

parodies of the tragic poets were standing dishes in the middle comedy. Antiphanes has a fling at the elegant attire of the academic sages (*Antaios*), while Ehippus describes a philosophical dandy of the same school (*Nauagos*, fr. 1, p. 493). It seems to have been the fashion of the young disciples to wear "a white mantle of fine wool, a dainty tunic, a soft felt hat, and an elegant little walking-stick." Their doctrines are assailed with mild sarcasm. A man, when asked if he has a soul, replies: "Plato would tell me I don't know, but I rather think I have" (Cratinus, *Pseudupobolimaios*, p. 516). In another play some one is gently reminded that he is talking of things about which he knows nothing—like Plato (Alexis, *Ankylion*, p. 518). Again, Plato is informed that his philosophy ends in knowing how to frown¹ (*Amphis*, *Dexidemides*, p. 482). In another place it is discovered that his *summum bonum* consists in refraining from marriage and enjoying life (Philippides, *Ananeosis*, fr. 2, p. 670). Other philosophers, the Pythagoreans (Alexis, *Tarantini*, frs. 1, 2, 3, pp. 565, 566), and Aristippus (*Galatea*, fr. 1, p. 526), for example, come in for their share of ridicule. The playwrights not unfrequently express their own philosophy, sad enough beneath the mask of mirth. Not very cheerful, for example, is the view of immortality recorded by Antiphanes (*Aphrodisios*, fr. 2, p. 358): "Mourn moderately for your relatives. They are not dead, but have gone before upon the same road which we shall all be forced to travel. We too shall arrive at that great caravanserai, and pass the whole of future time in company with them." The comparison by Alexis of human life to a mad pastime enjoyed between two darkneses (p. 566) has something in it that reminds one of a dance of death: "Do you not know then that this so-called life is a name given in joke, a pleasant euphemism for the fate of men? Examination proves that everything which mortals do and suffer is but a mere madness. We who live are sent out, as it were, from death and darkness into a kind of festival, this light and frolic. He who spends the time allowed him in laughing, drinking, wenching, and takes the most of his share in the feast, will go back happiest." Very seldom has the insecurity of all things, leading to devil-may-care self-indulgence, been more elegantly expressed than by Antiphanes (*Stratiotes*, fr. 1, p. 397): "There is nothing sure and certain, except what the day affords of pleasure. Even this cannot be called secure. There is many a slip 'twixt cup and lip. Only when the mouthful is between your teeth, can you call it really yours." Anaxandrides, for his part, formulates theological agnosticism in words memorable for their pithy brevity (*Canephorus*, p. 422):—

ἄπαντές ἐσμεν πρὸς τὰ θεῶ ἀβέλτεροι
κούκ ἴσμεν οὐδέν·

"We're all mere dullards in divinity
And know just nothing."

¹ Compare Alexis (*Hippeus*, p. 536; *Meropis*, p. 550; *Olympiodorus*, p. 552; *Parasitus*, fr. 3, p. 558).

One thing is clear in all such utterances, that the deeper speculations of Plato and Aristotle had taken no hold on the minds of the people at large, and that such philosophy as had penetrated Athenian society was a kind of hedonistic scepticism. Epicurus, in the next age, had nothing to do but to give expression to popular convictions. Take, for one instance more, these lines from Amphis (*Gynæcocratia*, p. 481):—

πίνε, παίξε· θνητὸς ὁ βίος· ὀλίγος οὐπὶ γῆνι χρόνος.
ἀθάνατος δ' ὁ θάνατος ἐστίν, ἂν ἅπαξ τις ἀποθάνῃ.

“Drink and play, for life is fleeting; short our time beneath the sky:
But for death, he's everlasting, when we once have come to die.”

Occasionally, the same keen Attic wit is exercised upon old-fashioned Greek proverbs. Simonides had said that health, beauty, and moderate wealth were the three best blessings. Anaxandrides demurs (*Thesaurus*, fr. 1, p. 421): the poet was most certainly mad; for a handsome man, if he be poor, is but an ugly beast.

A few of the fragments throw some light upon dramatic literature. Antiphanes (*Poesis*, fr. 1, p. 392) compares tragedy and comedy with covert irony: “Blest indeed is the lot of a tragic play, for, to begin with, the spectators know the whole legend by the name it bears, and then, when the poet gets tired, he has only to lift the machine like his finger, and, hocus-pocus, all is ended; but in a comedy everything must be made from the beginning and explicitly set forth—persons, previous circumstances, plot, catastrophe, and episode—and if a jot or tittle is overlooked, Tom or Jerry in the pit will hiss us off the stage.” The cathartic power of tragedy is described by Timocles (*Dionysiazusæ*, p. 614), in lines that sound like a common-sense version of Aristotle: “Man is born to suffer, and there are many painful things in life; accordingly he has discovered consolation for his sad thoughts in tragedies, which lure the mind away to think of greater woes, and send the hearer soothed, and at the same time lessoned, home—the poor man, for example, finds that Telephus was still more poor, the sick man sees Alcmæon mad, the lame man pities Philoctetes and forgets himself; if one has lost a son, Niobe is enough to teach him resignation; and so on through all the calamities of life: gazing at sufferings worse than our own, we are forced to be contented.”

Some of the most charming of the comic fragments are descriptions of sleep. A comedy, variously ascribed to Antiphanes and Alexis, bears the name of *Sleep*, and contains a dialogue (p. 570), of which the following is a version:—

- “A. Not mortal, nor immortal, but of both
Blent in his being, so that gods nor men
Can claim him for their own; but ever fresh
He grows, and then dies off again to nothing,
Unseen by any, but well known to all.
B. Lady, you always charm me thus with riddles.
A. Yet what I say is clear and plain enough.
B. What boy is this that has so strange a nature?
A. Sleep, O my daughter, he that cures our ills.”

Scarcely less delicate are the two following lines (pp. 749, 607) :—

ὅ τι προῖκα μόνον ἔδωκαν ἡμῖν οἱ θεοί,
τὸν ὕπνον,

and—

ὕπνος τὰ μικρὰ τοῦ θανάτου μυστήρια.¹

In this connection I may quote a beautiful fragment from Diphilus (*Incert. Fab. fr. 5*, p. 647) on Death and Sleep :—

“There is no life without its share of evil,
Griefs, persecutions, torments, cares, discases :
Of these death comes to cure us, a physician
Who gives heart's ease by filling us with slumber.”

Before engaging in a group of fragments more illustrative of common Greek life, I will call attention to the examples of Attic slang furnished by Anaxandrides (*Odysseus*, fr. 2, p. 424). To translate them into equivalent English would tax the ingenuity of Frere ; but it is worth noticing that this *argot*, like that of our universities or public schools, is made up of the most miscellaneous material. Religious ritual, the theatre, personal peculiarities, the dust that is the plague of Athens, articles of dress, and current fables, all supply their quota. It is, in fact, the slang of cultivated social life.

Next to cooks, parasites, and fishwives, the *demi-monde* of Athens plays the most prominent part in comedy of the middle period.² The following couplet from a play of Philetærus (*Kunegis*, fr. 3, p. 477) might be chosen as a motto for an essay on this subject :³—

οὐκ ἐπὶς ἑταίρας ἱερὸν ἐστὶ πανταχοῦ,
ἀλλ' οὐχὶ γαμετῆς οὐδαμοῦ τῆς Ἑλλάδος.

This pithily expresses the pernicious relation in which the mistress, dignified by the name of companion, stood in Attic Hellas toward the married wife. The superiority of the former over the latter in popular appreciation is set forth with cynical directness by Amphis (*Athamas*, fr. 1, p. 480) : “Is not the hetaira far pleasanter to live with than the wife ? The reason is obvious. Married women stay at home, disdainful and in dudgeon. The others know that they must purchase a man by concessions to his tastes, or else go in search of another.”

The Greeks had no sort of shame about intersexual relations ; and of this perfect freedom of speech the comic poets furnish ample illustration in their dealing with the subject of adultery. There is not here the faintest trace of French romance. Sentiment of some kind

¹ “The only free gift which the gods gave men,
To sleep.”

“Sleep, that prepares our souls for endless night.”

² The great subject of cooks I leave for discussion in relation to the New Comedy. See below, pp. 450-452.

³ “It is not by mere accident that you find a temple everywhere to the hetairæ and none to married women anywhere in Hellas.”

is required to season the modern breaches of the seventh commandment. To the Greeks, who felt the minimum of romance in intersexual love, adultery appeared both dangerous and silly, when the laws of Solon had so well provided safety-valves for vice.¹ At the same time, the pages of the comic poets abound in violent invectives against licentious and avaricious women who were the ruin of young men. Anaxilas (*Neottis*, fr. 1, p. 501), in a voluble invective against "companions" of this sort, can find no language strong enough. They are serpents, fire-breathing chimæras, Charybdis and Scylla, sea-dogs, sphinxes, hydras, winged harpies, and so forth. Alexis describes the arts whereby they make the most of mean attractions, and suit their style to the current fashion (*Isostasion*, fr. 1, p. 537). Epicrates paints the sordid old age of once-worshipped Lais in language that reads like a classic pendant to Villon's *Regrets de la belle Heaulmière* (*Antilaïs*, fr. 2, p. 510). The lines in question might be written as a motto under that terrible picture (ascribed to Titian) in the Accademia at Venice of the toothless hag holding a scroll inscribed *Col Tempo*—"this have the years brought me to." In no point does the civilised society of great cities remain so constant as in the characteristics of Bohemian life. In this respect Athens seems to have been much the same as Venice in the sixteenth, and Paris in the nineteenth century.

What these playwrights say of love in general scarcely differs from the opinions already quoted from the tragic poets. Amphis (*Dithyrambus*, fr. 2, p. 482), and Alexis (*Helené*, p. 532; *Traumantias*, fr. 2, p. 569; *Phædrus*, fr. 1, p. 571; *Incert. Fab.* fr. 38, p. 582), may be referred to by the curious. It is worth while at this point to mention that some valuable illustrations of the later Attic comedy are to be drawn from the collectors of characteristics like Theophrastus, and from rhetoricians who condensed the matter of the comic drama in their prose. The dialogues of Lucian, the letters of Alciphron, the moral treatises of Plutarch and Maximus Tyrius, and the dissertations of Athenæus are especially valuable in this respect. Much that we have lost in its integrity is filtered for us through the medium of scholastic literature, performing for the middle comedy imperfectly that which Latin literature has done more completely for the new.

In dealing with the old comedy, one reference has been already made to cooks and cookery books. In the middle comedy they assume still more importance, and in the secondary authors of the new comedy they occupy the foreground of the picture, thanks to Athenæus. Cooks at Athens formed a class apart. They had their stations in the market, their schools, their libraries of culinary lore, their pedantries and pride, and special forms of knavery. The Roman custom of keeping slaves to cook at home had not yet penetrated into Greece. If a man wanted to entertain his guests at a dinner-party, or to prepare a wedding feast, he had to seek the assistance of a professional *cordón bleu*, and the

¹ The passages alluded to above are Eubulus (*Nannion*, fr. 1, p. 449), Xenarchus (*Pentathlos*, fr. 1, p. 624), and Philemon (*Adelphoi*, fr. 1).

great *chef* ensconced himself for the day, with his subordinates, in the house of his employer. It is clear that these customs offered situations of rare comic humour to the playwright. Everybody had at some time felt the need of the professional cook, and everybody had suffered under him. In an age, moreover, which was nothing if it was not literary, the cooks caught the prevailing tone, and professed their art according to the rules of rhetoric.

*εἰς τοὺς σοφιστὰς τὸν μάγειρον ἐγγράφω*¹

exclaims one of the characters of Alexis (*Milesia*, fr. 1, p. 551), after a scientific demonstration of the sin of letting sauces cool. A pater-familias in a play of Strato (*Phœnikides*, p. 703) complains that he has brought a "male sphinx" in the shape of a cook into his house. The fellow will not condescend to use any but Homeric language, and the master is quite puzzled. It is in vain that he takes down the Homeric glossary of Philetas. Even this does not mend matters. The cook is a more recondite scholar than the grammarian. A professor of the culinary art in a play of Nicomachus (*Eileithuia*, p. 717) explains to his employer the broad scientific basis upon which the art of cooking rests. Astrology, geometry, medicine, and natural history are all necessary. Another in Damoxenus (*Syntrophi*, p. 697) discusses various schools of philosophy from the culinary point of view. He begins by saying that he has spent four talents and nearly three years in the school of Epicurus, and has learned that a cook who has not mastered metaphysic is worthless. He must have Democritus and Epicurus at his fingers' ends, understand the elements of fire and water, comprehend the laws of harmony, and arrive at a profound contempt for Stoical self-discipline.² The study of cookery books employs as much time and demands as much enthusiasm as the study of the sages. A cook in Baton (*Euergetæ*, p. 685) shakes off sleep and trims the midnight oil that he may meditate the weighty precepts of his masters in the art.³ Another in Euphron (*Adelphi*, p. 679) expounds the various virtues of his predecessors, and remarks that his own peculiar merit consists in clever larceny. The same author makes a cook explain to his pupil the distinctions he ought to observe in catering for a club and for a wedding-party (*Synephebi*, p. 682). One of the fragments of Menander turns, finally, upon the art of treating guests of different nationalities to different dishes (*Trophonius*, p. 46). In this passage Menander seems to have had in mind some lines of Diphilus (*Apolipousa*, fr. 1, p. 633). Another curious extract from the latter poet (*Zographus*, fr. 2, p. 638) consists of a long harangue delivered by a master cook to his *protégé*, a waiter, concerning the advantages and disadvantages of various houses into which he gains admittance by his art. A merchant just returned from sea, a spendthrift heir,

¹ "Mid the philosophers I count the cook."

² Compare Sosipater (*Katapseudomenos*, p. 677) for a similar display of science; Euphron (*Incert. Fab.* fr. 1, p. 682) for a comparison of cooks with poets; Hegesippus (*Adelphi*, p. 676) for an egregious display of culinary tall-talk.

³ Pollux mentions a list of celebrated authors on cookery.

and a leader of the *demi-monde* are good customers because of their prodigality. On the whole, the impression left upon our minds is that, what with democracy, all-pervading pedantry, and professional pride, high life below stairs in Athens was even more difficult to tolerate than it is in England.

To draw a firm line of demarcation between the middle and the new comedy would be impossible. I have already expressed my opinion that the comic drama culminated, within the limits determined for it by antique society, in the art of Menander. The modulations through which it passed before attaining to this final stage were numerous, and there are indications that the types invented for the middle comedy persisted in the new. What really created the third manner, and carried the comic art to its perfection, was the appearance of a truly original genius in the person of Menander. The playwrights who succeeded could not fail to feel his influence, and plied their craft within the sphere he had traced.

Menander was the nephew of Alexis, the pupil of Theophrastus, the exact contemporary and intimate friend of Epicurus. From his uncle he received the traditions of dramatic art; from his master he learned the peripatetic method of analysis; together with his friend he put in practice the philosophy of *ἀραξία* (quietism, freedom from passionate disturbance) which passes by the name of Epicureanism. His adequacy to the spirit of his own age can only be paralleled by that which we observe in Sophocles. As Sophocles exactly represents the period of Attic perfection, so the sadder and more sober years of disillusionment and premature decay find full expression in Menander. His personal beauty, the love of refined pleasure that distinguished him in life, the serene and genial temper of his wisdom, the polish of his verse, and the harmony of parts he observed in composition, justify us in calling Menander the Sophocles of comedy. Like Sophocles, he showed the originality of his genius by defining the limits of his art. He perfected the comic drama by restricting it more closely to real life. The love-tales—*ἔρωτες καὶ παρθένων φθοραὶ*—which Anaxandrides is said to have introduced, became the fixed material of the new comedy. Menander, however, used this subject-matter less for sensational effect or sentimental pathos than for the expression of a deep and tranquil wisdom. If we were to judge by the fragments transmitted to us, we should have to say that Menander's comedy was ethical philosophy in verse; so mature is their wisdom, so weighty their language, and so grave their tone. The brightness of the beautiful Greek spirit is sobered down in him almost to sadness. Middle age, with its maturity, has been substituted for youth with its passionate intensity. Taking Menander for our guide, we cannot cry: "You Greeks are always children." Yet the fact that Stobæus found him a fruitful source of sententious quotations, and that alphabetical anthologies were made of his proverbial sayings, ought not to obscure his fame for drollery and humour. The highest praise awarded by the Romans to Terence

is contained in the apostrophe *dimidiata Menander*; and it appears that what the Latin critics thought their poet wanted, was the salt of Attic wit, the playful ease and lively sparkle of his master. It is certain that well-constructed plots, profound analysis of character, refined humour, and ripe philosophy were blent and subordinated to the harmony of beauty by Menander. If old men appreciated his genial or pungent worldly wisdom, boys and girls read him, we are told, for his love-stories. One thing at least he never could have been—loud or vulgar. And for this reason, perhaps, we learn less from Menander about parasites and cooks than from his fellow-dramatists.

Speaking broadly, the philosophy in vogue at Athens during the period of the new comedy was what in modern days is known as Epicureanism. This is proved by the frequent references made by playwrights to pleasure as the *summum bonum*,¹ as well as by their view of life in general. Yet it would be unjust to confound the grave and genial wisdom of Menander with so trivial a philosophy as that which may be summed up in the sentence "eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."² A fragment from an unknown play of his expresses the pathos of human existence with a depth of feeling that is inconsistent with mere pleasure-seeking (p. 56):—

"When thou wouldst know thyself, what man thou art,
Look at the tombstones as thou passest by:
Within those monuments lie bones and dust
Of monarchs, tyrants, sages, men whose pride
Rose high because of wealth, or noble blood,
Or haughty soul, or loveliness of limb;
Yet none of these things strove for them 'gainst time:
One common death hath ta'en all mortal men.
See thou to this, and know thee who thou art."

Such moralising sounds commonplace to us, who have been lessoned by the *memento mori* of the Middle Ages. Yet it should be remembered that, coming from a Greek of Menander's age, it claims originality of insight, and even now a ring of freshness as well as of truth marks its absolute sincerity. The following fragment (p. 58) again expresses Stoical, rather than Epicurean, philosophy of life:—

"Being a man, ask not release from pain,
But strength to bear pain, from the gods above;
If thou wouldst fain escape all woe for aye,
Thou must become god, or, if not, a corpse."

The exquisite lines in which the life of man is compared to a fair, wherefrom, when he has once seen the shows, he should be glad to pass away again in quiet, might be adduced to prove, if it were necessary,

¹ See in particular Hegesippus (*Philetæri*, p. 676); Baton (*Androphonus*, fr. 1, p. 684, and *Synexapaton*, fr. 1, p. 686), and Damoxenus (*Syntrophi*, pp. 697, 698).

² The fragment from the *Ἀλκείς*, p. 3 of Didot's *Menander*, is clearly dramatic, and cannot be taken as an expression of the poet's mind.

that Menander was no mere hedonist. This fragment I have attempted to paraphrase in the following sonnet:—

“ Whom the gods love, die young ; that man is blest
 Who having viewed at ease this solemn show
 Of sun, stars, ocean, fire, doth quickly go
 Back to his home with calm uninjured breast.
 Be life or short, or long, 'tis manifest
 Thou ne'er wilt see things goodlier, Parmeno,
 Than these ; then take thy sojourn here as though
 Thou wert some playgoer or wedding-guest.
 The sooner sped, the safelier to thy rest,
 Well-furnished, foe to none, with strength at need,
 Shalt thou return ; while he who tarries late,
 Faints on the road out-worn, with age oppressed,
 Harassed by foes whom life's dull tumults breed ;
 Thus ill dies he for whom death long doth wait.”

To the same end might be quoted the passage upon destiny, which explains that chance and providence are only two names for one controlling power, face to face with which human forethought is but smoke and nonsense.¹ There is something even almost awful in the placid acquiescence of Menander. He has come to the end of passions and pleasures ; he expects pain and is prepared to endure it ; his happiness consists in tranquil contemplation of life, from which he no longer hopes for more than what Balzac calls the *à peu près* of felicity.² This tranquillity does not diminish but rather increases his power of enjoyment and the clearness of his vision. He combines the exact knowledge of the scientific analyst with judicial impartiality ; and yet his worldly wisdom is not cold or dry. To make selections from fragments, every word whereof is golden, would be weary work ; nor is it possible to preserve in translation the peculiar savour of this Attic salt. Menander should be spared this profanation. Before we leave him, let us remember what Goethe, a man as like Menander as a modern man can be, has said of him : “ He is thoroughly pure, noble, great, and cheerful, and his grace is unattainable. It is to be lamented that we possess so little of him, but that little is invaluable.”

The name of Philemon will always be coupled with that of Menander. In their lifetime they were competitors, and the Athenian audience preferred Philemon to his rival. Posterity in ancient days reversed this judgment—with justice, if our scanty fragments may be taken as sufficient basis for comparison. The lines in which Philemon praises peace as the Good vainly sought by sages, and declares that no painter or statuary can compete with truth, are fair examples of his fluent and at the same time polished style.³ So are the comparison of men with animals to the disadvantage of the former, and the invective against Prometheus for dividing human nature into complex varieties

¹ These fragments are from the *Ἰπποβόλιμαχος*, pp. 48, 49.

² Compare *Βουωρία*, fr. 2, p. 9 ; *Μισογόνης*, fr. 1, p. 32 ; *Ἰλόκιον*, fr. 8, p. 42.

³ Pp. 114, 115.

of character.¹ Yet there is an element of sophistry in these examples, placing them below the pithy sayings of Menander. If I were to choose one fragment as illustrative of Philemon, and at the same time favourable to his reputation, it should be the following :²—

“ Have faith in God and fear ; seek not to know him ;
 For thou wilt gain nought else beyond thy search :
 Whether he is or is not, shun to ask :
 As one who is, and sees thee, always fear him.”

The comedy of Menander determined the form of the drama in Rome, and, through the influence of Plautus and Terence upon the renescent culture of the sixteenth century, fixed the type of comedy in modern Europe. We are often struck, in reading his fragments, with their modern tone of thought and feeling. We recognise that here, as in the case of Molière, is a man who “ chastised men by drawing them as they are,” and that the men whom he chastised, the social follies he ridiculed, are among us at the present day. This observation leads us to consider what we mean by modernism, when we say we find it in ancient literature. Sometimes the phrase is loosely used to indicate the permanent and invariable qualities of human nature emergent from local and temporary conditions. The Chorus in the *Agamemnon* upon the beautiful dead warriors in the Trojan war is called modern because it comes home directly to our own experience. Not their special mode of sepulture, or the lamentation of captive women over their heaped-up mounds, or the slaughter of human victims, or the trophies raised upon their graves, are touched upon. Such circumstances would dissociate them, if only accidentally, from our sympathies. It is the grief of those who stay at home and mourn, the pathos of youth and beauty wasted, that Æschylus has chosen for his threnos. This grief and this pathos are imperishable, and are therefore modern, inasmuch as they are not specifically ancient. Yet such use of the phrase is inaccurate. We come closer to the true meaning through the etymology of the word modern, derived perhaps from *modo*, or *just now* ; so that what is modern is, strictly speaking, that which belongs to the present moment. From this point of view modernism must continually be changing, for the moment now is in perpetual flux. Still, there is one characteristic of the now which comprehends the modern world, that does not and cannot alter : we are never free from the consciousness of a long past. *Nous vieillards nés d’hier* is essentially true of us ; and to this characteristic may be referred what we mean to express by modernism. When nations have reached a certain growth and pitch of culture, certain sentiments, affectations, ways of thinking, modes of self-expression, habits of life, fashions, and the like, appear as the outcome of complex and long-established social conditions. Whatever may be the political groundwork of the national existence, the phase in question is sure to manifest itself, if only the nation lasts for a sufficient length of time.

¹ Pp. 118, 119.

² *Incert. Fab. fr.* 26, p. 122. Cf. *ib. fr.* 86.

We, who have assuredly arrived at the climacteric in question, when we recognise the signs of it elsewhere, call them modern ; and nowhere can we find them more emphatically marked than in the age of Attic ripeness that produced Menander. "O Menander and life," said the grammarian of Alexandria, "which of you is the imitator of the other?" This apostrophe might also have been addressed to Homer; but what made it more specially applicable to Menander was that, while Homer invested the profound truths of passion and action with heroic dignity, Menander drew a no less faithful picture of human life together with the accidents of civilised and social circumstance. His delicate delineation of Attic society seemed nearer to the Alexandrian scholar, because it reproduced, not the remote conditions of the prehistoric age, but those which are common to periods of advanced culture. For a like reason he seems to us more obviously modern than Homer. He contemplates the drama of human life with eyes and mind not very differently trained from ours, and from a point of view close to ours. As a single instance, take this fragment. He is quietly laughing at the pompous and pretentious sages who said in Athens, as they say now, that a man must go into the wilderness to discover truth :—

εὐρετικὸν εἶναι φασὶ τὴν ἐρημίαν
οἱ τὰς ὄφρυς ἀρροντες.

"The desert is the mother of discovery,
Say supercilious sages."

We must not, however, be blinded by the modernism of Menander to the fact that ancient comedy differed in many most important respects from the comedy of modern Europe. If we only regard dramas of intrigue and manners, such as the *Mandragola* of Machiavelli, the *Volpone* of Ben Jonson, or the *Fourberies de Scapin* of Molière, we are indeed dealing with a type of comedy derived directly through the Latin from the Greek. But modern comedy does not remain within these narrow limits. Its highest products are either works of pure creative fancy, like Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream* and Fletcher's *Pilgrim*, or are so closely allied to tragedy, as in the case of Massinger's *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* and Molière's *Avare*, that only a nominal difference divides the two species. Nothing remains, either in fragments or in critical notices, to justify us in believing that the ancients developed either the serious comedy, essentially tragic in its ruthless revelation of a hell of evil passion, or the comedy of pure imagination. Their strict sense of the requirements of external form excluded the former kind of drama, while for the creation of the latter the free play of the romantic fancy was absolutely necessary. The total loss of Agathon, Chærémon, and other tragic poets of the post-Euripidean period, forces us to speak with reservation on this topic. There are many indications of a confusion of types at Athens during the fourth century B.C. analogous to that which characterises modern dramatic poetry. Yet it may be asserted with tolerable confidence that, while the Greeks under-

stood by comedy a form of art that aimed at exciting mirth and was confined within the limits of domestic life, modern comedy has not unfrequently in her higher flights excited the passions of terror and pity, and has quitted the region of diurnal prose for the dream-world of fairyland. An ancient critic would have probably observed that Molière's *Avare* was too seriously sinister to be rightly called comic, and that the absence of parody or burlesque in Shakespeare's *Tempest* excluded that play from comparison with the *Birds* of Aristophanes. Here, then, as elsewhere, we have to notice the greater freedom demanded by the modern fancy in dealing with the forms of art, together with the absence of those firmly-traced critical canons to which the antique genius willingly submitted. Modern art in general, when it is not directly and consciously imitative of antique models, demands a more complete liberation of the spiritual element. We cannot avoid æsthetical extravagances which are connected with our altered habits of thought and feeling. This superior freedom involves a bewildering complexity and intermixture of the serious and the ludicrous, the lyrical and the dramatic, the positive and the fanciful, defying classification, and in its very caprice approximating to the realities of existence.

CHAPTER XX

HERONDAS

Prose and Idyllic Treatment of Comic Situations—Lucian and Alciphron—
Discovery of Herondas—The Mimiambi—The Go-Between—The Ruffian
—The Schoolmaster—The Women sacrificing to Asklepios—The Jealous
Woman—The Gossips.

It has elsewhere been remarked that the Idyllic poets made use of dramatic material already familiar to the Greeks of the best periods. Theocritus can be fairly accredited with basing certain of his idylls on the interludes of Epicharmus and the mimes of Sophron. This practice of working up scenes from early comedies into refined forms of art became more fashionable as literature in course of time assumed a scholastic and rhetorical character. Unlike their Roman imitators, the Greeks could not translate Menander and Philemon; but they were able to appropriate the wealth of those great dramatists in part at least to the uses of literature which yearly became more and more the plaything of their learned leisure. In this way, we now have means at our disposal for forming a tolerably accurate idea of what we have lost in the Middle and New Comedy of Athens. Lucian, in this process of literary reconstruction, adopted the form of the dialogue. Alciphron preferred that of the epistle. Those elegant letters which he composed upon a variety of topics introduce us to eminent personages like Menander and Hyperides, Phryne and Thais. They also accurately paint the manners of parasites, pimps, money-lenders, professional beauties. We are taken to picnics of young men and ballad-girls, to parties of philosophers, to rustic rambles of gay women, to contests of beauty between ladies of the *demi-monde*. Although Alciphron's *dramatis personæ* include a variety of persons from all ranks of society and numerous professions, by far the larger part of his writings relate to women and their lovers.

One of those lucky accidents which justify the hope that fresh discoveries of antique classics may be yet in store, has recently brought to light seven compositions by another author of this type. They were found, I believe, in papyrus manuscripts, which had been used to stuff

a mummy-case in Egypt—much as one employs waste-paper to wad a box containing valuable glass or china.

Herondas, or Herodas as he is also called by Greek grammarians, wrote what are known as *Mimiambi*.¹ That is to say, he reproduced the substance and followed the form of the mime, which was a short dramatic interlude in prose. But while imitating the creator of that species (Sophron), Herondas adopted the limping iambic, which Hipponax invented. The result is a kind of comedy very close in manner to the dramatic idylls of Theocritus, and partaking of the spirit of the Babrian fable.

That Herondas was an Ionian from some island of the Ægean seems probable. He lays the scene of two of his poems at Cos. He talks, in another, of Chios and Erythræ; but we cannot determine his birth-place. Nor is it possible at present to ascertain his date with absolute accuracy. In the first mime he introduces a panegyric on Alexandria, her monarch, her museum, etc., which might point to the reign of Ptolemy Euergetes. The very conditions, however, under which this sort of literature was produced, render it uncertain whether we are dealing with contemporary allusions or with the *réchauffé* of some previous writer. In the third mime a naughty schoolboy is supposed to be studying the work of Maro. Now no Greek classic of that name exists, and it would be natural, at first sight, to assume that the Maro in question was no other than Vergilius Maro, the Latin poet. We should, in that case, have to choose at least the second century after Christ for the date of Herondas. However, the dramatic setting of the allusion makes it impossible that Kottalos, the schoolboy, could have been reading Virgil. He is obviously a Greek boy, and so grossly illiterate that he can hardly have acquired a foreign language. If, then, this Maro has to be identified with Virgil, we must suppose that Herondas, when he wrote the mime, was translating a Latin original. These details illustrate the present difficulty of assigning a date to Herondas.

There is, however, a passage in the fourth mime which reduces these uncertainties almost to a vanishing point. A party of ladies are examining the works of art which ornamented the temple of Asklepios at Cos. Among other things they stop to admire a fresco by Apelles. The points they select, and the expressions they use, while praising the vividness and beauty of this picture, indicate that the painter had only recently died. The author of the dialogue seems to be meeting adverse criticism, and in one phrase he hints that people yet alive might have known Apelles in the flesh. This would place Herondas not later than 250 B.C. Many minor details of style, diction, and allusion confirm a date approximating to that period.

Unlike his master Hipponax, Herondas, so far as we are acquainted with him, did not indulge in personal satire. His sketches bring little

¹ There is, on the whole, I think, better reason to keep the name Herodas. But as the recent editions of Bücheler and Crusius adopt Herondas, this may be provisionally used.

scenes of Greek life vividly before us. They are tinged with a certain satiric humour, like that which gives pungency to the fifteenth Idyll of Theocritus. But their object is to be amusing, and in this they undoubtedly succeed. Again, though personages of a vulgar or repulsive type are introduced, and though indecent topics are discussed, the language is never intolerably coarse. I propose, then, to venture upon a translation of the six least mutilated compositions of this newly discovered Greek poet. This is perhaps the best way of making him known to English readers. It must be added, however, that the text is still so doubtful as to preclude authoritative and exact interpretation. Many important readings rest upon conjectures. Whole passages are corrupt, and owe such coherence as they now possess to a series of brilliant and mutually contradictory guesses. The poet, in places where his manuscript offers no textual difficulty, often employs words which are not found in any lexicon. His allusions and his slang lend themselves to several methods of elucidation. What makes these critical perplexities more trying is, that we have no certain indication of the changes in the dialogue. It stands to reason that, in the explanation of an obscure phrase, everything turns upon finding out which of the interlocutors made use of it. Yet, up to date, we are not able to establish this with confidence. I am, therefore, well aware that no translation of Herondas at the present time can aspire to literary quality, and that the best will be found full of blunders, when the microscopical analysis of several generations shall have wrought agreement upon all the numerous disputed passages.

THE GO-BETWEEN

SCENE—A PRIVATE HOUSE, where METRICHA, a young wife, in the absence of her husband, MANDRIS, on the sea, is seated alone within reach of a female slave, THRESSA. GYLLIS comes to pay a visit.

M. Thressa, some one is knocking at the house door. Won't you run to see whether a visitor has arrived from the country?

T. Who knocks?

G. It's me.

T. Who are you? Are you afraid to come near?

G. Well then, see, I have come up.

T. Who are you, say?

G. Gyllis, the mother of Philænon. Tell Metricha inside there that I'm here.

M. Invite her in. Who is she?

T. Gyllis.

M. Grandam Gyllis! (*To the slave.*) Turn your back a minute, girl. (*To Gyllis.*) Which of the Fates has coaxed you into coming, Gyllis, to our house? What brings you here like a deity to mortals? I verily believe it must be five months or near it since you, Gyllis, even in a dream, so help me, Fate, were seen by any one approaching this door.

G. I live a long way off, child, and in the lanes the mud is up to one's knees; besides, I have no more strength than a fly. Old age is dragging us down, and the shadow stands anear and waits.

M. Tut, tut ! Don't calumniate time in that way ! You're strong enough yet, Gyllis, to throttle your neighbours.

G. Jeer on ! That's the way with you young women.

M. Pray don't take fire at what I said.

G. Well, then, my girl, how long do you mean to go on like a widow, in loneliness, wearing out your solitary bed ? From the day when Mandris set sail for Egypt, ten moons have come and gone, and he does not send you so much as a letter. Truly, he has forgotten, and has drunken at fresh fountains. There, ah, there is the palace of the goddess ! For everything, I tell you, that is found upon this earth, or can be found, grows in abundance there in Egypt : riches, gymnasia, power and might, fair sunny skies, glory, splendid shows, philosophers, gold, blooming youths, the temple gardens of twin gods, a king of the best, a museum, wine, all the good things one's heart can wish for, women in bebies—I swear by Hades, the heavens above boast not so many stars,—lovely too as were the goddesses what time they came to Paris for the prize of beauty : (may they not hear me saying this !) But you, poor thing, what is your sort of spirit that you sit and warm that chair ? Will you let old age overtake you unawares, and ashes consume your youth ? Take another course ; for two or three days change your mind : in jocund mirth set up with some new friend ! The ship that rides at one anchor is not safely moored. No mortal knows the future. Life is uncertain ever.

M. What are you talking about ?

G. Is there any one near who can overhear us ?

M. None that I know of.

G. Listen, then, to what I have come to tell you after all this time : Gryllus, the son of Matakiniē, Patæcius' wife, the fellow who has conquered in five contests—as a boy at the Pythian games, twice at Corinth with youths in bloom, twice at Olympia with full-grown pugilists—he owns a pretty fortune too, without having to stir a finger, and as regards the Queen of Love, he is a seal unbroken. The man I'm talking of saw you at the Descent of Misa ; fell desperately in love ; his bowels burned for you ; and now he will not leave my dwelling night or day, my girl, but makes lament to me, and wheedles, and is ready to die of his love-longing. Nay, come, child, Metricha, grant me this one peccadillo. Adjust yourself to the goddess ; else will old age, who looks towards you, take you unawares. By doing this you'll get paid twice. See, then, obey my counsels. I love you, by the Fates.

M. Gyllis, whiteness of hair blunts the edge of understanding. As I hope for the return of Mandris and for Demeter to befriend me, I could not have taken words like these from any other woman, but should have taught the lame to sing lame, and turned her out of doors. I beg you never to come to me again with messages of this kind. Tales that are fit for wantons, go tell to silly girls. Leave Metricha, Pytho's daughter, to warm her chair. Nobody laughs at Mandris with impunity. But, as they say, that's not what Gyllis needs to hear. (*Calling to the slave-girl.*) Thressa, rub up the black bowl of whelk ; pour in three pints of pure wine, mix with water, and give it us to drink in a big cup. Here, Gyllis, drink !

The rest of the dialogue is too corrupt to be translated. But it appears that Gyllis begins to make excuses for her ill-considered embassy, drinks freely, praises the excellence of Metricha's cellar, takes her leave with compliments, and goes off commending herself to more facile damsels.

The next mime consists of a speech addressed to a Greek jury by the plaintiff in an action brought against a wealthy sea-captain for assault and battery. The plaintiff is himself a low fellow well known to the whole town for his bad life and infamous vocation ; yet he

assumes the tone of a practised counsel, breaks out into telling sallies against the character of the defendant, causes the statutes to be read aloud by the clerk of the court, produces a witness, and concludes with a patriotic peroration. The whole piece reads extraordinarily like the parody or burlesque of some Attic oration: Æschines against Timarchus, or Lysias against Simon, for example. I must add that the opening lines of this speech are too corrupt to admit of translation.

THE RUFFIAN

SCENE—A COURT OF JUSTICE in the town of Cos. BATTALOS addresses the JURY.

If that fellow, just because he sails the sea or wears a mantle worth three minæ, while I abide on land and drag about a threadbare cloak and rotten slippers, is to carry away by force one of my own girls without my consent, and that by night, mark you—I say the security of the city, gentlemen, will be gone, and what you take such pride in, your independence, will be abolished by Thales. His duty it was, knowing who he is and moulded out of what clay, to live as I do, trembling with fear before the very lowest of the burghers. But now those men among you who are shields of the city, and who have far more right to brag about their birth than he—they respect the laws, and not one of the burghers ever cudgelled me, foreigner as I am, nor came to break into my house at night, nor set fire to it with torches, nor carried away with force one of my young women. But that Phrygian who is now called Thales, but was formerly Artimnes, gentlemen of the jury, has done all these things, and has had no regard for law or prefect or archon. (*Turns to the clerk.*) Well, I suppose, clerk, you had better take and read the statute on assault with violence; and do you stop the bung-hole of the water-clock, my friend, till he has finished, so that I may not, as the proverb runs, be throwing good money after bad.

[*Battalos makes the clerk read out a passage of the law, while he bids the slave of the court stop the clepsydra, which times the length of his oration.*

And if a free man assault a slave-woman, or carry her away by force, he shall pay double damages.

[*The clerk stops reading. Battalos goes on with his speech.*

Those words, gentlemen of the jury, were written by Chæronidas and not by Battalos, the plaintiff in this suit against Thales. If one shall break a door, let him pay a mina, says the lawgiver; if he strike with the fist, another mina; if he burn the house or force entrance, a thousand drachmas; and if he inflict personal injury, the penalty shall be double. For he dwelt in a city, Thales; but you have no knowledge of any city, nor indeed of how a city is administered. To-day finds you in Bricindera, yesterday in Abdera; to-morrow, if some one gives you passage-money, you will sail maybe to Phaselis. To cut the matter short, gentlemen of the jury, and not to weary you with digressions, I suffered at the hands of Thales what the mouse did when the pitch caught him. I was pummelled, the door of my house was broken in (for which I pay a third as rent) and the lintel overhead was burned. (*Calls to the girl who had been carried off by Thales.*) Come hither, Myrtale, you also, and show yourself to all the folk; don't be ashamed; imagine to yourself that all the jurymen you're looking at are fathers, brothers. Just see, gentlemen, how she's been torn from top to bottom, how that unholy rascal tore her to tatters when he dragged her off by force! Old age, to thee he sacrifices made! Without you, he must have bled for it! (*Turns round to Thales, or to some one in the court who is jeering.*) You laugh?

Well, I am a ruffian, and I don't deny it, and Battalos is my name, and my grand-sire was Sisymbrias, and my father, Sisymbriscus, and each and all of us whore-masters—there! but as for pluck, I'd strangle a lion, if the brute were Thales. (*Addresses the defendant, Thales.*) Perhaps you are in love with Myrtale? Nothing wonderful. I love my loaf. Give this, and you shall get that. Or else, by Jupiter, if you are in heat or so, stuff her price into the palm of Battalos; go take and batter what belongs to you to your own heart's content. (*Addresses the jury.*) There is still one point, gentlemen of the jury,—this is the charge I make against yonder fellow—it remains with you, I say, in the absence of witnesses, to pronounce sentence by the rules of equity—should he, however, want to put slaves to the test of torture, I am ready to offer myself also. Here, Thales, take and put me to the rack; only see that the damages are paid into court first. Minos could not make more fair division and distinction by his weighing scales. For the rest, gentlemen of the jury, forget that you are voting for or against Battalos, the brothel-keeper. Think that you are acting for all the foreigners established in your town. Now is the time for Cos and Merops to show what they are good for, Thessalus and Herakles the worth of their renown, Asklepios why he removed from Tricca, and for what cause Phœbe gave birth to Leto here. Considering all these matters, hold the helm of justice with right judgment, so that the Phrygian, having felt your lash, may become the better for his punishment, if it so be that the proverb transmitted to us from antiquity doth not speak untruth.

The third mime, which follows, gives us sufficient insight into the behaviour of a thoroughly ill-conducted vagabond of a schoolboy. His main vice was gambling in low company. That is the point in the incident of his mistaking Maron for Simon. Pollux informs us that Simon was one of the names for a cast of dice.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

SCENE—A SCHOOL for BOYS, in which there are statues of the MUSES. LAMPRISCUS, the master, is seated there. Enter METROTIMA dragging her unwilling son KOTTALOS.

M. May the dear Muses send you something to enjoy, and may you have pleasure in life; so you will promise to drub this boy of mine, till the soul of him, drat it, is left nowhere in his body but the lips. He has ruined me by playing pitch and toss. Yes, Lampriscus, it seems that knuckle-bones are not enough for him; but he must needs be running after worse mischief. Where the door of the grammar-master stands, or when the cursed tax-day comes round—let me scream like Nannakos—he cannot tell. But the gambling-place, where street-porters and runaways take up their quarters, is so well known to him that he will point it out to strangers. The unhappy tablets, which I take the pains to spread with wax each month, lie abandoned by his bed-post next the wall, unless perchance he casts a glance on them as though they were the devil; and then, instead of writing something nice, he rubs them bare. His dice—that litter about among the bellows and the nets—are shinier than our oil-flask which we use for everything. But as for spelling out a word, he does not even know his alpha, unless one shouts it five times in his ears. The day before yesterday, when his father was teaching him Maron, what did the pretty fellow do but go and turn Maron into Simon? so that I am driven to call myself a fool for not making him a donkey-boy, instead of putting him to study in the hope of having a support for my declining years. Then if we make him repeat some child's speech—I, or his father, an old man with bad eyes and deaf,—the words run out of his head like water from a bottle with a hole in it. “Apollo, the hunter!” I cry out;

“even your granny will recite what one asks, and yet she has no schooling—or the first Phrygian you meet upon the road.” But it’s no use scolding, for if we go on, he runs away from home, stays out three days and nights, sponging upon his grandmother, a poor old blind woman and destitute; or else he squats up there upon the roof, with his legs stretched out, like a tame ape, peering down. Just fancy what his wretched mother suffers in her entrails when she sees him there. I don’t care so much about him indeed. But he smashes all the roofing into broken biscuits; and when winter comes, I have to pay two shillings for each tile, with tears of anger in my eyes. All the neighbours sing the same old song: “Yonder’s the work of master Kottalos, that boy of Metrotima’s.” And true it is; and I daren’t wag a tooth in answer. Look at his back too, how he’s scratched it all over in the wood, till he’s no better than a Delian fisher with the creel who doits his life away at sea. Yet he casts feast-days and holidays better than a professional star-gazer: not even sleep will catch him forgetting when you’re off your guard. So I beseech you, Lampriscus, and may these blessed ladies give you prosperous life, and may you light on lucky days, do not . . .

L. Nay, Metrotima, you need not swear at him; it will not make him get the less. (*Calls to his pupils.*) Euthies, where are you? Ho, Kokkalos! ho, Phillos! Hurry up, and hoist the urchin on your shoulders; show his rump to the full moon, I say! (*Addresses Kottalos.*) I commend your ways of going on, Kottalos—fine ways, forsooth! It’s not enough for you to cast dice, like the other boys here; but you must needs be running to the gambling-house and tossing coppers with the common porters! I’ll make you more modest than a girl. You shan’t stir a straw even, if that’s what you want. Where is my cutting switch, the bull’s tail, with which I lamm into jail-birds and good-for-nothings. Give it me, quick, before I hawk my bile up.

K. Nay, prithee, Lampriscus, I pray you by the Muses, by your beard, by the soul of Kottis, do not flog me with that cutting, but the other switch.

L. But, Kottalos, you are so gone in wickedness that there’s not a slave-dealer who’d speak well of you—no, not even in some savage country where the mice gnaw iron.

K. How many stripes, Lampriscus; tell me, I beg, how many are you going to lay on?

L. Don’t ask me—ask her.

K. Oh! oh! how many are you going to give me, if I can last out alive?

M. As many as the cruel hide can bear, I tell you.

[*Lampriscus begins to flog the boy.*]

K. Stop, stop, I’ve had enough, Lampriscus.

L. Do you then stop your naughtiness!

K. Never, never again will I be naughty. I swear, Lampriscus, by the dear Muses.

M. What a tongue you’ve got in your head, you! I’ll shut your mouth up with a gag if you go on bawling.

K. Nay, then, I am silent. Please don’t murder me!

L. Let him go, Kokkalos.

M. Don’t stop, Lampriscus, flog him till the sun goes down—

L. But he’s more mottled than a water-snake—

M. And he ought to get at least twenty more—

L. In addition to his book?—

M. Even though he learned to read better than Clio herself.

K. Yah! yah!

[*The boy has been let loose, and is showing signs of indecent joy.*]

M. Stop your jaw till you’ve rinsed it with honey. I shall make a careful report of this to my old man, Lampriscus, when I get home; and shall come back quickly with fetters; we’ll clamp his feet together; then let him jump about for the Muses he hated to look down on.

The fourth mime might have furnished Matthew Arnold with another discourse on the nature of popular Greek religion. It has many points of similarity to the *Adoniazusæ* of Theocritus. But its main interest consists in the allusions to plastic works of art—statues in the temple, wall-paintings in the sanctuary. The smug and unctuous person of the sacristan has also a particular value.

THE WOMEN SACRIFICING AND PAYING VOWS TO ASKLEPIOS

SCENE—The TEMPLE of ASKLEPIOS at COS. Enter COAN women—KOKKALE, KUNNO, and their servants—to whom follows the GUARDIAN of the SHRINE.

Ko. Hail to thee, Monarch Paiôn, who rulest over Tricca, and hast thy habitation in delightful Cos and Epidaurus; greetings to thee and to Coronis who gave thee birth, and to Apollo; as also to her whom with right hand thou touchest, Hygieia; you too, whose are these honoured altars, Panacea, Epione, Iaso, hail; and ye who laid the dwellings and the walls of Laomedon waste, Podaleirios and Machaon, healers of savage diseases, hail to you, together with all gods and goddesses that sojourn at thy hearth, Sire Paiôn; propitiously accept, I pray, this cock, whilom the chanticleer of house and home, whom here I sacrifice; and take thereof the dainty bits. It is not much or serviceable that we draw from; else had we gladly brought an ox or fatted sow, and not a barn-door cock, in recompense for kind medicaments of fleshly ills, which thou didst wipe away, O King, laying thereon thy gentle hands.

[She turns to her companion and begins to arrange the offerings.]

Ku. Place the tablet, Kokkale, on the right hand of Hygieia.

[Then they look round the temple, and observe its works of art.]

Ko. Oh, my dear Kunno, what a sight of lovely statues! Tell me who was the sculptor who wrought this marble, and who was the man who set it up here?

Ku. The sons of Praxiteles. Don't you see that inscription on the pedestal? And Euthies, the son of Praxon, gave them to the temple.

Ko. I invoke the blessings of Paiôn upon those craftsmen, and also on Euthies for such goodly workmanship. Look, dear, at that little girl there, lifting her eyes to the apple! Wouldn't one say that if she did not get the apple she would faint? And then, Kunno, that old man! Good gracious, how the boy is strangling the fox-goose!

Ku. Before our very noses, and unless we knew that it is stone, you would say that he were going to speak. Certes, the time is coming when men will be able to put life into senseless stones.

Ko. Yes; for, Kunno, see that statue of Battalë, Myttis' daughter, how it stands! If some one had never seen Battalë, and were to look at this portrait of her, he need not ask for flesh and blood.

Ku. Follow me, dear, and I will show you something, the like of which for beauty you never saw in your whole life. *(Turning to the servant.)* Kudilla, go and call the sacristan. What, ain't I talking to you, while you gaze around there? On my soul, but she won't attend to what I say! She stands and stares at me wider than a crab. Go, I say, and call the sacristan. You glutton, there's neither holy man nor layman who will call you worth your salt. It's all the same where you are. I take this god to witness, Kudilla, how you set me on fire with fury, though I do not want to rage. I take him to witness, I repeat, the day will come, when I shall make the razor shave your poll.

Ko. Don't make her stuff her head, Kunno, with all that at once! She is a slave, and dulness weighs like lead on slavish ears.

Ku. But day is breaking, and the crowd is pressing on all round. *(To the*

servant, who is setting off to look for the sacristan.) Ho, you, stop ! The gates have been thrown back, and the shrine is open.

[The women go in, and examine the pictures on the walls.]

Ko. My dear Kunno, only look, what lovely things ! Wouldn't one say that another Athenē had come down to carve these beauties ! (But may the Queen herself be blessed !) That naked boy there ; if I were to pinch him, wouldn't he be wounded, Kunno ? For the flesh is laid upon him, hot, hot, quivering on the panel. And the silver tongs—I swear if Mueleos, or Pataikiskos, the son of Lamprion, could see them ; their eyes would jump out of the sockets, thinking them to be real silver. That ox too, and the man who is leading him, and the woman walking with them, and the hook-nosed, and the snub-faced fellow, don't they all look just the living day ? If I did not think it would be doing more than woman ought, I should have shrieked out for fear the beast would hurt me ! He is glaring so with one eye, Kunno.

Ku. Yes, dear, for the hands of the Ephesian Apelles put the soul of truth into everything he painted ; nor can one say, " That man could see one thing, and was denied another " ; but whoever, even of the gods, it came into his mind to attempt, on he sped right forwards. If a man has seen him or his works without the due astonishment they merit, he ought to be hung up by the foot in a fuller's shop.

The Sacristan. (*Who enters, after having attended to the sacrifice of the cock.*) Ladies, your offerings have turned out fair, in all points perfect, and augur for the best. No one has afforded more gratification to Paiôn than you have done. Io, io, Paiôn ! Be gracious for their fair sacrifices to these ladies, and if they are wedded, to their husbands, and their next of kindred. Io, io, Paiôn ! May these things be !

Ko. Yea, let it be so, Mightiest ! And send us to come again in health, and bring a costlier offering, in company with husbands and children.

Ku. Kottale, cut it up nicely, and remember to give the bird's leg to the sacristan ; and place with pious words the honey mess into the serpent's hole ; and sprinkle the sacrificial cakes ; the rest we will take home and feast upon at table. Don't forget to carry them yourself, and give me part of the health-offering.

The motive of the fifth mime introduces us to one of the least pleasant aspects of slave-life in Hellas. Unfortunate Gastron, the chattel of his mistress, was not only the instrument of her pleasures, but also, when he roused her jealousy, the victim of her ruthless cruelty. The bark of Bitinna, however, turns out to be worse than her bite. She winds up very much upon the keynote of a Boer " Tante " in a South African colony. Indeed, from her sudden yielding to Cydilla's supplications, and from Cydilla's own ratings at the stupid Pyrrhias, we may conclude that Bitinna only wanted to give Gastron a good frightening.

THE JEALOUS WOMAN

SCENE—Courtyard of the house of a well-to-do widow called BITINNA. *Dramatis Personæ* : BITINNA, her male slaves GASTRON and PYRRHIAS, and the female slave CYDILLA.

B. Tell me, Gastron, you, sir ! are you grown so dainty that I cannot content you, but you must needs be running after Menon's Amphytæa ?

G. I after Amphytæa ! Did I ever see the woman you are talking of ?

B. You're always putting off with excuses.

G. Bitinna, I am a slave ; so do what you like with me. But don't go on sucking my blood night and day.

B. What a tongue you've got in your head, you ! Cydilla, where is Pythias ? Call him up to me.

P. What's the matter ?

B. Take this man and bind him. Do you still stand gaping? Quick, with the rope from the well-bucket there! (*To Gastron.*) If I do not have you half-slaved and exposed as an example to the whole quarter, by heavens, you may say I am no woman. If not, what then, you boor? I am the cause of all this, Gastron! I am! who took you up and made you a man and not a chattel! But if I was a fool then, you will not find Bitinna so besotted as you fancy any longer. (*To Pyrrhias.*) Bring it! Strip his tunic off, and bind him!

G. Don't, don't, Bitinna, by thy knees I pray thee.

B. Strip him, I say. (*To Gastron.*) You must be made to know that you are a slave, and that I paid down three minæ for you. Ill-luck to the day when I brought you into this house! (*To Pyrrhias.*) Pyrrhias, are you going to cry? I see you doing everything but bind him. Tie his elbows tight behind, and bind it till it cuts.

G. Bitinna, pardon me this one offence; I am a man; I have erred. But if you catch me again doing what displeases you, then brand me.

B. Keep your whinings for Amphytea, I'll have none of them!

P. I've bound him like a trivet for you.

B. See that he does not wriggle himself loose. Take him to the whipping-place, to Hermon, and order the man to give him a thousand lashes on the back, a thousand on the belly.

G. Will you murder me, Bitinna, without even inquiring into the matter, whether it is true or false?

B. But what you just said with your own tongue—"Bitinna, pardon me this one offence?"

G. Well, I wanted to cool down your choler.

B. (*To Pyrrhias.*) Do you stand there like a stock and stare at me? Take him away whither I told you. Cydilla, punch the scoundrel on the snout. And you, Draco, go after where he leads. Slave-girl, give the wretch a rag to cover him. We can't have him seen going naked through the public streets. A second time I tell you, Pyrrhias, and repeat my orders; you shall make Hermon lay on a thousand here, a thousand there. Have you heard? Because, if you disobey the least of my commands, it is you will have to pay both capital and interest. Go, get on your way, and don't take him round by Miccale's, but follow the straight road.—But now I have remembered something. (*To Cydilla.*) Girl, call them back! Call, run your best, before they've got too far!

C. Pyrrhias, wretched fellow, stone-deaf, she is calling you! By heavens, one would think you were not hauling off your fellow-slave, but some tomb-robber! Just as you're hauling him away to torment, Pyrrhias, I swear, Cydilla, with these two eyes of hers, shall see you within five days wearing out the shackles which you offered up but yesterday, with your own ankles at Antidorus.

B. Hallo, you! Come back again with that fellow, bound tight just as you took him! Now call Kosis the brander to come; bid him come with his needles and ink. (*To Gastron.*) I'll turn you parti-coloured by one operation.

C. Nay, tati,¹ nay, but—so may Batyllis thrive, and you see her going to a husband's home, and hold her children in your arms—this time let the youth go. I beg you overlook this one offence.

B. Cydilla, do not vex me, or I shall run away from house and home. I, to let that sevenfold slave go loose! And who, prithee, meeting me on the streets, would not be justified in spitting at my face? No, by the Queen of Heaven! Since man though he be, he does not know himself, instantly shall he be made to know by bearing on his forehead the inscription I intend.

C. But it is the twentieth day, and the feasts of Neptune are upon the fifth.

B. For the present I'll let you go. (*To Gastron.*) Keep your thanks for her there whom I love no less than my Batyllis, since I brought her up with these hands of mine. But when we have poured libations to the dead, you shall keep feast at leisure, don't fear!

¹ Tati seems to be a term of coaxing or endearment.

The sixth mime furnishes a vivid little picture of two women talking secrets and diverging into scandal. It raises one point of interest which calls for comment. Three cobblers, all named Cerdo, are mentioned. Cerdo, afterwards, in Rome, became the common term for a shoemaker. But here Cerdo is a surname or something like it. We are clearly upon the track of traditional designations applied to personages of comedy—like the fixed masks of the Italian *Commedia dell' Arte*. The circumstances of Greek and Roman slavery favoured transitions from theatrical types to real life. A slave who had no other name was called Cerdo if he cobbled; Davus or Geta if he performed other functions in the household. In like manner, the names used by comic playwrights for their female characters adhered to persons following the same profession. The nurse, the prostitute, the go-between, acquired certain designations which would have been inappropriate to the matron. It is, therefore, not difficult in the literature we are dealing with—Herondas, Lucian, Alciphron, the Latin comic poets—to assign their proper quality and calling to the *dramatis personæ*, by paying attention to the names they answer to. The case is parallel to that of Arlecchino, Brighella, Truffaldino, Rosaura, Colombina, in Italian farce.¹

THE GOSSIPING FRIENDS

SCENE—The PRIVATE APARTMENT of a LADY, who is seated with her maid-servant, when a friend arrives upon a visit. *Dramatis Personæ* : KORITTO, METRO.

K. Pray be seated, Metro. (*Turns to servant.*) Get up, and place a chair for the lady. I am obliged to order everything myself; you, poor creature, would do nothing on your own account. By heaven, you're more like a stone than a living slave, lumbering about the house. But when I measure out your flour, you count the grains, and if the smallest atom dribbles from the sieve, you grumble and rumble the whole day until the very walls can't bear you. Now you dust the chair out and rub it bright, because you are obliged to, thief! Sacrifice to her there, for if she had not been present, I'd have given you a taste of my hands.

M. Dear Koritto, we have each the same yoke to bear. I go about the whole day snapping like a dog and barking at those unutterable girls. But the reason why I came—

K. (*To the slave-girl.*) Out of our sight; away with you, you popinjay! All ears and tongue, the rest mere laziness.

M. I pray you, tell the truth, dear Koritto, who was it who sewed your scarlet baubo?

K. Where did you see it, Metro?

M. Nossis, Erinna's daughter, had it two days ago.

K. Nossis, where did she get it?

M. You'll blab it abroad if I tell you.

K. By these precious eyes of mine, dear Metro, no one shall hear from Koritto what you please to tell me.

M. Well, Eubule, Bitas' daughter, gave it her, and said that nobody was to know.

K. Oh, the women! That woman sooner or later is sure to make an end of me. She prayed and begged until I yielded and gave it to her, before I had even used it once myself. What does she do then but snatch it like a treasure-trove and go

¹ See my *Carlo Gozzi*, introduction, part i.

and make a present of it, and, what is worse, to quite improper people. A long farewell, say I, to such a friend; let her look out for some other gossip to replace me. But for Nossis to use it, when I would not give her—and if I say more than a woman should, pray shut your ears, Adrasteia—no, not if I had a thousand, would I give her one that was rotten!

M. Nay, Koritto, don't let your gall rise to the nostrils on the instant, when you hear something disagreeable. A proper woman ought to be able to bear everything. It's my fault for chattering so; I ought to have my tongue cut out. But now, coming to the chief point I mentioned, who was it who made it? As you love me, say. Why do you look at me and laugh so? Is it the first time you have seen Metro, or why are you so delicate? I conjure you, Koritto, tell me no fibs, but say who sewed it?

K. Law, why d'you conjure me? Cerdo sewed it.

M. Well, but what Cerdo? There are two: one is a blue-eyed fellow, the neighbour of Mystalinē, that girl of Cylæthis, but he's not fit to sew a bow to a fiddle; the other, who lives near the mansions which belong to Hermodorus, as you go out of the square, once upon a time *was* somebody, but now he's grown old. Pymæthis, blessed be his soul, used to be his chum.

K. It is neither of the men you mention, Metro; but the fellow, whether he comes from Chios or Erythræ, is bald and short—well, you would swear he was the very self of Praxinos, as like as one fig to another, except he talked, and then you'd know that he was Cerdo and not Praxinos. He works at his own house and sells on the sly, for every door quakes at the sight of the toll-gatherer now; but the things he makes, they're like Athene's handiwork; you'd think them hers, not Cerdo's, if you saw them. A cobbler more kindly disposed toward the female sex you could not find if you went a-hunting for one.

M. Why did you let the other slip then?

K. My dear Metro! What did I not do to get it! How I wheedled, kissing him, stroking his bald head, pouring out sweet wine for him to drink, coaxing and fondling, doing everything but give him myself.

M. Well, but if he'd asked even that, you ought to have given it.

K. I ought, but it is not right to be unseasonable; for while we were together so, in came the slave of Bitas. The woman has made our mill mere dust and cinders, grinding it day and night, to save wearing out her own for fourpence.

M. How did the cobbler find the way to you, dear Koritto; don't conceal this from me?

K. Artemis, the daughter of tanner Candas, sent him, pointing out my house.

M. To be sure, Artemis is always finding something new and cute.

The seventh mime describes a visit of some ladies to the shoemaker Cerdo's shop. Unfortunately the text is too corrupt to admit of translation. The eighth is even more damaged by time and injury; it is called "The Dream," but nothing serviceable for literary purpose can be made out of its dilapidated fabric. There are, in addition, a few scattered fragments, one of which shows that Herondas held the same opinion as Mimnermus about the proper climax to mortal life.

"When you have reached your sixtieth year, O Gryllus, Gryllus, die and turn to dust, for the bend of life beyond that age is dark and comfortless, the light of man's vitality has then been blunted."

It will be seen from these translations that Herondas, in his delineation of character, kept very close to nature, and that human nature in ancient Hellas did not materially differ from what we know of it at the present time. The wheedling old woman, with her message of

seduction, the voluble and shameless blackguard, the idle ragamuffin, the gossips sightseeing, the ladies with their servants and their scandals, the jealous termagant, the fawning sacristan, the blustering dominie, the scolding mother, are all brought vividly before us. Like every sort of good classical work, the method of presentation is broad and simple, the language pregnant. Few words are wasted on description or on argument. The outline is sharply drawn and deeply indented, so that a permanent impression remains upon the memory. For details regarding the daily life of Greek families—the relations between slaves and masters, the religious customs and feelings of the people—these recently discovered Mimiambi are a mine of information.

CHAPTER XXI

THE IDYLLISTS

Theocritus—His Life—The Canon of his Poems—The Meaning of the word Idyll—Bucolic Poetry in Greece, Rome, Modern Europe—The Scenery of Theocritus—Relation of Southern Nature to Greek Mythology and Greek Art—Rustic Life and Superstitions—Feeling for Pure Nature in Theocritus—How distinguished from the same feeling in Modern Poets—Galatea—Pharmaceutriæ—Hylas—Greek Chivalry—The Dioscuri—Thalysia—Bion—The Lament for Adonis—Moschus—Europa—Megara—Lament for Bion—The Debts of Modern Poets to the Idyllists.

OF the lives of Theocritus, Bion, and Moschus there is very little known, and that little has been often repeated. Theocritus was a Syracusan, the son of Praxagoras and Philinna. Some confusion as to his parentage arose from the fact that in the seventh Idyll Theocritus introduced himself under the artificial name of Simichidas, which led early critics to suppose he had a father called Simichus. It is, however, quite clear that the concurrent testimony of Suidas and of an epigram in the Anthology which distinctly asserts his descent from Praxagoras and Philinna, is to be accepted in preference to all conjectures founded on a *nom de plume*. Theocritus flourished between 283 and 263 B.C., but the dates and circumstances of his birth and death are alike unknown. We may gather inferentially or directly from his poems that he sought the patronage of Ptolemy Philadelphus at Alexandria, and lived for some time among the men of letters at his court. Indeed Theocritus was the most brilliant ornament of that somewhat artificial period of literature; he above all the Alexandrian poets carried the old genius of Greece into new channels, instead of imitating, annotating, and rehandling ancient masterpieces. The sixth and seventh Idylls prove that Aratus, the astronomer, was a familiar friend of the Syracusan bard; probably the frequent allusions to meteorology and the science of the stars which we trace in the poems of Theocritus, may be referred to this intimacy. From the Idylls again we learn that the poet left Alexandria wearied with court life, and, like Spenser, unwilling

“To lose good nights that might be better spent,
To waste long days in pensive discontent,
To speed to-day, to be put back to-morrow,
To feed on hope, and pine with fear and sorrow.”

He seems, however, to have once more made trial of princely favour at the Syracusan court of Hiero, and to have been as much offended with the want of appreciation and good taste as with the illiberality that he found there. Among his friends were numbered Nicias, the physician of Miletus, and his wife Theugenis, to whom he addressed the beautiful little poem called Ἡλακάτῃ, or the Distaff—a charming specimen of what the Greek muse could produce by way of *vers de société*. The end of his life is buried in obscurity. We can easily believe that he spent it quietly among the hills and fields of Sicily, in close communion with the nature that he loved so well. His ill-success as a court poet does not astonish us; the panegyrics of Hiero and Ptolemy are among his worst poems—mere pinchbeck when compared with the pure gold of the Idylls proper. It was in scenes of natural beauty that he felt at home, and when he died he left a volume of immortal verse, each line of which proclaims of him—“*Et ego in Arcadiâ.*” We cannot give him a more fitting epitaph than that of his own Daphnis:—

ἔβα ῥόον· ἔκλυσε δῖνα
τὸν Μῶσαις φίλον ἄνδρα, τὸν οὐ Νύμφαισιν ἀπεχθῆ.¹

If we know little of Theocritus, less is known of Bion. Suidas says that he was born at Smyrna, and the elegy written on his death leads us to suppose that he lived in Sicily, and died of poison wilfully administered by enemies. Theocritus, though his senior in age and his predecessor in Bucolic poetry, seems to have survived him. Bion's elegist, from whom the few facts which we have related with regard to the poet of Smyrna's life and untimely death are gathered, has generally been identified with Moschus. Ahrens, however, with characteristic German scepticism, places the Ἐπιτάφιος Βίωνος (elegy for Bion) upon a list of uncertain Idylls. Nor can it be denied that the author of this poem leads us to believe that he was a native of Magna Græcia, whereas Moschus is known to have been a Syracusan. The third and last of the Sicilian Idyllists, he stands at a great distance from Theocritus in all essential qualities of pastoral composition. He has more of the grammarian or man of erudition about him; and we can readily conceive him to have been, according to the account of Suidas, a friend of Aristarchus. Of the dates of his life nothing can be recorded with any certainty. He seems to have lived about the end of the third century B.C.

During the short period in which Bucolic poetry flourished under Theocritus, Bion, and Moschus, Syracuse remained beneath the sceptre

¹ “Down the dark stream he went; the eddies drowned
The Muses' friend, the youth the Nymphs held dear.”

of Hiero. While the bloody strife was being waged between Rome and Carthage for the empire of the Mediterranean, Syracuse, intermediate between the two great combatants, was able not only to maintain a splendid independence under the sway of her powerful tyrant, but also to afford the Romans signal aid upon the battlefields of Sicily. In Sicily, the sun of Greece still shone with some of its old radiance on the spots where, before Athens had assumed the intellectual supremacy of Hellas, poetry, philosophy, and all the arts of life had first displayed their splendid springtime. The island in which the April of the Greek spirit had disclosed its earliest flowers now bore the last but not least lovely wreath of autumn. The winter was soon coming. Rome and her Verres were already looking upon Trinacria as their prey; and the Idyllic garland was destined to crown with exotic blossoms the brows of Virgil.

About the genuineness of many of the Idylls grave questions have been raised. It is hard to believe that all the thirty which bear the name of Theocritus were really written by him. The twenty-third and twenty-fifth, for instance, are not in his style; while the nineteenth reminds us more of the Anacreontic elegance of Bion or Moschus than of his peculiarly vigorous workmanship. The twenty-ninth again, though admitted as genuine by Ahrens, might well pass for the work of an earlier Æolic writer. But without some shock to my feelings I cannot entertain the spuriousness of the twenty-first Idyll, which Ahrens places among the productions of some doubtful author. The whole series after the eighteenth have been questioned. These, however, include the Epical compositions of Theocritus, who might well have assumed a different manner when treating of Hercules or the Dioscuri from that in which he sang the loves of Lycidas and Daphnis. That they are inferior to his pastorals is not to be wondered at; for he who blows his own flute with skill may not be therefore strong enough to sound the trumpet of Homer. Ahrens, as observed above, extends his criticism to the lament for Bion, which, I confess, appears to me more full of fire and inventive genius than any other of the poems attributed to Moschus.

Yet in these matters of minute evidence too much depends upon mere conjecture and comparison of styles for us to remove old landmarks with certainty. Suppose all records of Raphael's works had been lost, and a few fragments of the Cartoons together with the Transfiguration and the little picture of the Sleeping Knight alone remained of all his paintings, would not some Ahrens be inclined to attribute the Sleeping Knight to a weaker if not less graceful artist of the Umbrian School? The *Allegro* and *Penseroso* might by a similar process of disjunctive criticism be severed from the *Paradise Lost*. On the other hand, nothing can be more doubtful than assertions in favour of authenticity. It is almost impossible for a foreigner to perceive minute differences of style in the works of two contemporary poets, and infinitely more difficult for a modern to exercise the same

exact discrimination in deciding on the monuments of classic art. Schlegel, in his *History of Dramatic Literature*, asserts that he discovers no internal difference between Massinger and Fletcher. Yet an English student is struck by the most marked divergences of feeling, language, natural gifts, and acquired habits of thought in these two dramatists. Thus the difficulty of such criticism is twofold. If a Syracusan of 200 B.C. could discuss our lucubrations on the text of the Bucolic poets, he would probably in one case express astonishment at our having ascribed two dissimilar Idylls to Theocritus, and in another case explain away our scepticism by enumerating the three or four successive manners of the poet. Theocritus, Bion, and Moschus are the Eponyms of Idyllic poetry. To each belongs a peculiar style. It is quite possible that some Idylls of successful imitators whose names have been lost may have been fathered upon the three most eminent founders of the school.

The name of the Idyll sufficiently explains its nature. It is a little picture. Rustic or town life, legends of the gods, and passages of personal experience supply the idyllist with subjects. He does not treat them lyrically, following rather the rules of epic and dramatic composition. Generally there is a narrator, and in so far the Idyll is epic; its verse too is the hexameter. But occasionally the form of dramatic monologue, as in the *Pharmaceutria*, or that of dramatic dialogue, as in the *Adoniazusæ*, takes the place of narrative. Bion's lament for Adonis again is a kind of sacred hymn; while the dirge on Bion's death is elegiac. Two Idylls of Theocritus are encomiastic; several celebrate the deeds of ancestral Doric heroes—Heracles and the Dioscuri. One is an epistle. Many of Bion's so-called Idylls differ little, except in metre, from the Anacreontics, while one at least of the most highly finished pieces of Theocritus must be ranked with erotic poetry of the purely lyrical order. It will be seen from these instances that the idyllic genus admitted many species, and that the Idyllists were far from being simply pastoral poets. This form of composition was in fact the growth of a late age of Greek art, when the great provinces had been explored and occupied, and when the inventor of a new style could legitimately adopt the tone and manner of his various predecessors. Perhaps the plastic arts determined the direction of Idyllic poetry, suggesting the name and supplying the poet with models of compact and picturesque treatment. In reading the Idylls it should never be forgotten that they are pictures, so studied and designed by their authors. They ought to affect us in the same way as the bas-reliefs and vases of Greek art, in which dramatic action is presented at one moment of its evolution, and beautiful forms are grouped together with such simplicity as to need but little story to enhance their value. If we approach the Idylls from this point of view, and regard them as very highly finished works of decorative art, we shall probably be able to enjoy their loveliness without complaining that the shepherds and shepherdesses are too refined, or that the landscapes have not been drawn from nature.

Without discussing the whole hackneyed question of Bucolic poetry, a word must be said about its origin, and about the essential difference between Theocritus and modern pastorals. It is natural to suppose that country folk, from the remotest period of Greek history, refreshed themselves with dance and song, and that music formed a part of their religious ceremonials. The trials of strength which supply the *motive* of so many Theocritean Idylls were quite consistent with the manners of the Greeks, who brought all rival claims of superiority to the touchstone of such contests. Their antiquity in the matter of music may be gathered from the legends of Pan and Apollo, and of Apollo and Marsyas. Phœbus, in the character of shepherd to Admetus, gave divine sanction to Bucolic minstrelsy. In respect of bodily strength, the gymnastic rivalry of Olympia and other great Hellenic centres was so important as to determine the chronology of Greece,—while even claims to personal beauty were decided by the same trial: the three goddesses submitted to the arbitration of Paris; and in many states contests for superiority in physical charms were held at certain festivals, not to mention the boys' prize for kisses at Nisæan Megara. Bucolic poetry may therefore be referred to the pastoral custom of shepherds singing together and against each other at festivals or on the green.

It was the genius of Theocritus in all probability which determined the Doric and Sicilian character of the Idylls we possess. He, a Syracusan and a Dorian, perfected the *genre* , and was followed by his imitators. Nothing can be more simple and lifelike than the conversations of his rustics, or more nicely discriminated than the pedestrian style of their dialogue and the more polished manner of their studied songs. The poet has no doubt invested these rural encounters with the imaginative beauty which belongs to art. He has attributed to Corydon and Thyrsis much of his own imagination and delicate taste and exquisite sense of natural loveliness. Had he refrained from doing so, his Idylls would not have challenged the attention and won the admiration of posterity. As it is, we find enough of rustic grossness on his pages, and may even complain that his cowherds and goatherds savour too strongly of their stables. Of his appreciation of scenery it is difficult to speak in terms of excessive praise. As I purpose to discuss this subject more minutely further on, it may here be enough to remark that he alone of pastoral poets drew straight from nature, and fully felt the charm which underlies the facts of rustic life.

In comparison with Theocritus, Bion and Moschus are affected and insipid. Their pastorals smack of the study more than of the fields. Virgil not only lacks his vigour and enthusiasm for the open-air life of the country, but, with Roman bad taste, he commits the capital crime of allegorising. Virgil's pernicious example infected Spenser, Milton, and a host of inferior imitators, flooding literature with dreary pastorals in which shepherds discussed politics, religion, and court-gossip, so that at last Bucolic poetry became a synonym

for everything affected and insipid. Poetry flourishes in cities, where rustic song must always be an exotic plant. To analyse Poliziano, Sannazzaro, Guarini, Tasso, Spenser, Fletcher, Jonson, Barnfield, Browne, Pope, etc., and to show what strains of natural elegance adorn their imitations of the ancients, would be a very interesting but lengthy task. As society became more artificial, especially at Florence, Paris, and Versailles, the taste for pseudo-pastorals increased. Court-ladies tucked up their petticoats and carried crooks with ribbons at their tops, while court-poets furnished aristocratic Corydons with smooth verses about pipes and pine-trees, and lambs and wattled cotes. The whole was a dream and a delusion; but this mirage of rusticity appropriated the *name* of pastoral, and reflected discredit even on the great and natural Theocritus. At length this *genre* of composition, in which neither invention nor observation nor truth nor excellence of any kind except inglorious modulation of old themes was needed, died a natural death; and the true Bucolic genius found fresh channels. Crabbe revived an interest in village life; Burns sang immortal lyrics at the plough; Goethe achieved a masterpiece of Idyllic delineation; Wordsworth reasserted the claims of natural simplicity; Keats expressed the sensuous charms of rustic loveliness; Tennyson and Barnes have written rural idylls in the dialects of Lincolnshire and Dorsetshire; while other writers are pursuing similar lines of composition. Theocritus, it is true, differs widely from these poets both in his style and matter. But he deserves to rank among the most realistic artists of the nineteenth century on account of his simplicity and perfect truth to nature. In reading him we must divest ourselves of any prejudices which we have acquired from the perusal of his tasteless imitators. We must take his volume with us to the scenes in which he lived, and give him a fair trial on his own merits.

It is on the shores of the Mediterranean—at Sorrento, at Amalfi, or near Palermo, or among the valleys of Mentone,—that we ought to study Theocritus, and learn the secret of his charm.¹ Few of us pass middle life without visiting one or other of these sacred spots, which seem to be the garden of perpetual spring. Like the lines of the Sicilian idyllist, they inspire an inevitable and indescribable *πρόθος* (yearning desire, *Sehnsucht*), touching our sense of beauty with a subtle power, and soothing our spirits with the majesty of classical repose. Straight from the sea-beach rise mountains of distinguished form, not capped with snow or clothed with pines, but carved of naked rock. We must accept their beauty as it is, nude, well defined, and unadorned, nor look in vain for the mystery or sublimity or picturesqueness of the Alps. Light and colour are the glory of these mountains. Valleys divide their flanks, seaming with shadow-belts and bands of green the broad hillside, while lower down the olives spread a hoary greenness and soft robe of silver mist, the skirts of which are kissed by tideless waves.

¹ I may refer my readers to the chapter on the Cornice in my *Sketches in Italy and Greece* for a fuller treatment of this landscape.

The harmony between the beauty of the olive boughs and the blue sea can be better felt than described. Guido Reni, whose subtlety of sentiment was very rare, has expressed it in one or two of his earliest and best pictures by graduated tones of silver, azure, and cool gray. The definite form and sunny brightness of the olive-tree suits our conception of the Greek character. It may well have been the favourite plant of the wise and calm Athené. Oaks with their umbrageous foliage, pine-trees dark and mournful upon Alpine slopes, branching limes, and elms in which the wind sways shadowy masses of thick leaves, belong, with their huge girth and gnarled boles and sombre roofage, to the forests of the North, where nature is rather an awful mother than a kind foster-nurse and friend of man. In northern landscapes the eye travels through vistas of leafy boughs to still secluded crofts and pastures, where slow-moving oxen graze. The mystery of dreams and the repose of meditation haunt our massive bowers. But in the South, the lattice-work of olive boughs and foliage scarcely veils the laughing sea and bright blue sky, while the hues of the landscape find their climax in the dazzling radiance of the sun upon the waves, and the pure light of the horizon. There is no concealment and no melancholy here. Nature seems to hold a never-ending festival and dance, in which the waves and sunbeams and shadows join. Again, in northern scenery, the rounded forms of full-foliaged trees suit the undulating country, with its gentle hills and brooding clouds; but in the South the spiky leaves and sharp branches of the olive carry out the defined outlines which are everywhere observable through the broader beauties of mountain and valley and sea-shore. Serenity and intelligence characterise this southern landscape, in which a race of splendid men and women lived beneath the pure light of Phœbus, their ancestral god. Pallas protected them, and golden Aphrodité favoured them with beauty. Nations as great and noble have arisen among the oak and beech woods of the North; strong-sinewed warriors, heroic women, counsellors with mighty brains, and poets on whose tongue the melody of music lingers like a charm. But the Greeks alone owned the gift of innate beauty and unerring taste. The human form upon those bare and sunny hills, beneath those twinkling olive boughs, beside that sea of everlasting laughter, reached its freedom; and the spirit of human loveliness was there breathed fully into all the forms of art. Poetry, sculpture, architecture, music, dancing, all became the language of that moderate and lucid harmony which we discover in the landscape of the Greeks.

Olives are not, however, by any means the only trees which play a part in idyllic scenery. The tall stone-pine is even more important; for underneath its shade the shepherds loved to sing, hearing the murmur in its spreading roof, and waiting for the cones with their sweet fruit to fall. Near Massa, by Sorrento, there are two gigantic pines so placed that, lying on the grass beneath them, one looks on Capri rising from the sea, Baiæ, and all the bay of Naples sweeping

round to the base of Vesuvius. Tangled growths of olives, oranges, and rose-trees fill the garden-ground along the shore, while far away in the distance pale Inarimē sleeps, with her exquisite Greek name, a virgin island on the deep. In such a place we realise Theocritean melodies, and find a new and indestructible loveliness in the opening line of his first idyll :—

ἀδύ τι τὸ ψιθύρισμα καὶ ἂ πίτυς, αἰπόμε, τήνα.

“Sweet is the whisper above in the boughs, and sweet is the pine-tree.”

These pines are few and far between. Growing alone or in pairs, they stand like monuments upon the hills, their black forms sculptured on the cloudlike olive groves, from which at intervals spring spires and columns of slender cypress-trees.

Here and there in this bright garden of the age of gold white villages are seen, and solitary cottage roofs high up among the hills,—dwellings perhaps of Amaryllis, whom the shepherds used to serenade. Huge fig-trees lean their weight of leaves and purple fruit upon the cottage walls, while cherry-trees and apricots snow the grass in spring with a white wealth of April blossoms. The stone walls and little wells in the cottage gardens are green with immemorial moss and ferns, and fragrant with gadding violets that ripple down their sides, and chequer them with blue. On the wilder hills you find patches of ilex and arbutus glowing with crimson berries and white waxen bells, sweet myrtle rods and shafts of bay, frail tamarisk and tall tree-heaths that wave their frosted boughs above your head. Nearer the shore, the lentisk grows, a savoury shrub, with cytistus and aromatic rosemary. Clematis and polished garlands of tough sarsaparilla wed the shrubs with clinging climbing arms; and here and there in sheltered nooks the vine shoots forth luxuriant tendrils bowed with grapes stretching from branch to branch of mulberry or elm, flinging festoons on which young loves might sit and swing, or weaving a lattice-work of leaves across the open shed. Nor must the sounds of this landscape be forgotten,—sounds of bleating flocks, and murmuring bees, and nightingales, and doves that moan, and running streams, and shrill cicadas, and hoarse frogs, and whispering pines. There is not a single detail which a patient student may not verify from Theocritus.

Then too it is a landscape in which sea and country are never sundered. This must not be forgotten of Idyllic scenery; for it was the warm sea-board of Sicily, beneath protecting heights of Ætna, that gave birth to the Bucolic muse. The intermingling of pastoral and sea life is exquisitely allegorised in the legend of Galatea; and on the cup which Theocritus describes in his first Idyll, the fisherman plays an equal part with the shepherd youths and the boy who watches by the vineyard wall. The higher we climb upon the mountain-side the more marvellous is the beauty of the sea, which seems to rise as we ascend, and stretch into the sky. Sometimes a little flake of blue

is framed by olive boughs, sometimes a turning in the road reveals the whole broad azure calm below. Or after toiling up a steep ascent we fall upon the undergrowth of juniper, and lo a double sea, this way and that, divided by the sharp spine of the jutting hill, jewelled with villages along its shore, and smiling with fair islands and silver sails. Upon the beach the waves come tumbling in, swaying the corallines and green and purple sea-weeds in the pools. Ceaseless beating of the spray has worn the rocks into jagged honeycombs on which lazy fishermen sit perched, dangling their rods like figures in Pompeian frescoes.

In landscapes such as these we are readily able to understand the legends of rustic gods ; the metamorphoses of Syrinx, Narcissus, Echo, Hyacinthus, and Adonis ; the tales of slumbering Pan, and horned satyrs, and peeping fauns, with which the Idyllists have adorned their simple shepherd songs. Here, too, the oread dwellers of the hills, and dryads, and sylvans, and water-nymphs, seem possible. They lose their unreality and mythic haziness ; for men themselves are more a part of nature here than in the North, more fit for companionship with deities of stream and hill. Their labours are lighter and their food more plentiful. Summer leaves them not, and the soil yields fair and graceful crops. There is surely some difference between hoeing turnips and trimming olive boughs ; between tending turkeys on a Norfolk common and leading goats to browse on cytissus beside the shore ; between the fat pasturage and bleak winters of our midland counties and the spare herbage of the South dried by perpetual sunlight. It cannot be denied that men assimilate something from their daily labour, and that the poetry of rustic life is more evident upon Mediterranean shores than in England.

Nor must the men and women of classical landscape be forgotten. When we read the Idylls of Theocritus, and wish to see before us Thestylis, and Daphnis, and Lycidas, we have but to recall the perfect forms of Greek sculpture. We may for instance summon to our mind the Endymion of the Capitol, nodding in eternal slumber, with his sheep-dog slumbering by : or Artemis stepping from her car ; her dragons coil themselves between the shafts and fold their plumeless wings : or else Hippolytus and Meleager booted for the boar-chase : or Bacchus finding Ariadne by the sea-shore ; mænads and satyrs are arrested in their dance ; flower-garlands fall upon the path : or a goat-legged satyr teaches a young faun to play ; the pipe and flute are there, and from the boy's head fall long curls upon his neck. Or Europa drops anemone and crocus from her hand, trembling upon the bull as he swims onward through the sea : or tritons blow wreathed shells, and dolphins splash the water : or the eagle's claws clasp Ganymede, and bear him up to Zeus : or Adonis lies wounded, and wild Aphrodité spreads hungry arms, and wails with rent robes tossed above her head. From the cabinet of gems we draw a Love, blind, bound, and stung by bees ; or a girl holding an apple in her hand ; or a young

man tying on his sandal. Then there is the Praxitelean genius of the Vatican, who might be Hylas, or Uranian Erôs, or Hymenæus, or curled Hyacinthus—the Faun who lies at Munich overcome with wine, his throat bare, and his deep chest heaving with the breath of sleep—Hercules strangling the twin snakes in his cradle, or ponderous with knotty sinews and huge girth of neck—Demeter, holding fruits of all sorts in one hand and corn stalks in the other, sweeping her full raiment on the granary floor. Or else we bring again the pugilists from Caracalla's bath,—bruised faces and ears livid with unheeded blows,—their strained arms bound with thongs, and clamps of iron on their fists. Processions move in endless line, of godlike youths on prancing steeds, of women bearing baskets full of cakes and flowers, of oxen lowing to the sacrifice. The Trojan heroes fall with smiles upon their lips; the athlete draws the strigil down his arm; the sons of Niobe lie stricken, beautiful in death. Cups too and vases help us, chased with figures of all kinds,—dance, festival, love-making, rustic sacrifice, the legendary tales of hate and woe, the daily idylls of domestic life.

Such are some of the works of Greek art which we may use in our attempt to realise Theocritus. Nor need we neglect the monuments of modern painting—Giorgione's pastoral pictures of piping men and maidens crowned with jasmine flowers, Raphael's Triumph of Galatea, and Tintoretto's Marriage of Ariadne, or the Arcadians of Poussin reading the doom of death upon the gravestone, and its epitaph—"Et ego."

To reconstruct the mode of life of the Theocritean *dramatis personæ* is not a matter of much difficulty. Pastoral habits are singularly unchangeable, and nothing strikes us more than the recurrence of familiar rustic proverbs, superstitions, and ways of thinking which we find in the Idyllic poets. The mixture of simplicity and shrewdness, of prosaic interest in worldly affairs and of an unconscious admiration for the poetry of nature, which George Sand has recently assigned with delicate analysis to the Bucolic character in her Idylls of Nohant, meets us in every line of the Sicilian pastorals. On the Mediterranean shores too the same occupations have been carried on for centuries with little interruption. The same fields are being ploughed, the same vineyards tilled, the same olive-gardens planted, as those in which Theocritus played as a child. The rocks on which he saw old Olpis watching for the tunnies, with fishing-reed and rush basket, are still haunted through sunny hours by patient fishermen. Perhaps they cut their reeds and rushes in the same river-beds; certainly they use the same *arundo donax*. The goats have not forgotten to crop cytissus and myrtle, nor have the goatherds changed their shaggy trousers and long crooks. You may still pick out a shepherd lad among a hundred by his skin and cloak. It is even said that the country ditties of the Neapolitans are Greek; and how ancient is the origin of local superstitions, who shall say? The country folk still prefer, like Comatas in the fifth Idyll, garden-grown roses to the wild

eglantine and anemones of the hedgerow, scorning what has not required some cost or trouble for its cultivation. Gretchen's test of love by blowing on thistle-down does not differ much from that of the shepherd in the third Idyll. Live blood in the eye is still a sign of mysterious importance (*Idyll* iii. 36). To spit is still a remedy against the evil eye (vii. 39). Eunica, the town girl, still turns up her nose at the awkward cowherd; city and country are not yet wholly harmonised by improved means of locomotion. Then the people of the South are perfectly unchanged—the fisher boys of Castellammare; the tall straight girls of Capri singing as they walk with pitchers on their heads and distaffs in their hands; the wild Apulian shepherds; the men and maidens laughing in the olive-fields or vineyards; the black-browed beauties of the Cornice trooping to church on Sundays with gold earrings, and with pink tulip-buds in their dark hair. One thing, however, is greatly altered. Go where we will, we find no statues of Priapus and the Nymphs. No lambs are sacrificed to Pan. No honey or milk is poured upon the altars of the rustic Muse. The temples are in ruins. Aloes and cactuses have invaded the colonnades of Girgenti, and through the halls of Pæstum winds whistle, and sunbeams stream unheeded. But though the gods are gone, men remain unaltered. A little less careless, a little more superstitious they may be; but their joys and sorrows, their vices and virtues, their loves and hates, are still the same.

Such reflections sound trite and commonplace. Yet who can resist the force of their truth and pathos?

οὐχ ἄμῖν τὸν Ἐρωτα μόνοις ἔτεχ', ὡς ἔδοκεῦμες,
 Νικία, ᾗτινι τοῦτο θεῶν ποκα τέκνον ἔγεντο·
 οὐχ ἄμῖν τὰ καλὰ πρᾶτος καλὰ φαίνεται ἡμεν,
 οἱ θνατοὶ πελόμεσθα, τὸ δ' αὔριον οὐκ ἔσορῶμες¹—

so sang Theocritus, looking back into the far past, and remembering that the gifts of love and beauty have belonged to men and gods from everlasting. With what redoubled force may we, after the lapse of twenty centuries, echo these words, when we tread the ground he knew, and read the songs he sang! His hills stir our vague and yearning admiration; his sea laughs its old laugh of waywardness and glee; his flowers bloom yearly, and fade in the spring; his pine and olive branches overshadow us; we listen to the bleating of his goats, and taste the sweetness of the springs from which he drank; the milk and honey are as fresh upon our lips, the wine in winter by the wood-fire, when the winds are loud, is just as fragrant; youth is still youth, nor have the dark-eyed maidens lost their charm. Truly "not for us did fair things first reveal their fairness." In this consists the power of Theocritean poetry. It strikes a note which echoes through our hearts by reason of its genuine simplicity and pathos.

¹ "Not for us alone, as we once thought, friend Nicias, did Love's parent, whosoever among gods that was, beget Lord Erōs. Not for us did fair things first reveal their fairness; we who are mortal men, and have no vision of the morrow."

The thoughts which natural beauty stirs in our minds, find their embodiment in his sweet strong verse; and though since his time the world has grown old, though the gods of Greece have rent their veils and fled with shrieks from their sanctuaries, though in spite of ourselves we turn our faces skyward from the earth, though emaciated saints and martyrs have supplanted Adonis and the Graces, though the cold damp shades of Calvinism have chilled our marrow and our blood; yet there remain deep down within our souls some primal sympathies with nature, some instincts of the Faun, or Satyr, or Sylvan, which education has not quite eradicated. "The hand which hath long time held a violet doth not soon forego her perfume, nor the cup from which sweet wine hath flowed his fragrance."

I have dwelt long upon the peculiar properties of classical landscape as described by the Greek Idyllists, and as they still exist for travellers upon the more sheltered shores of the Mediterranean, because it is necessary to understand them before we can appreciate the *truth* of Theocritus. Of late years much has been written about the difference between classical and modern ways of regarding landscape. Mr. Ruskin has tried to persuade us that the ancients only cared for the more cultivated parts of nature, for gardens or orchards, from which food or profit or luxurious pleasure might be derived. And in this view there is no doubt some truth. The Greeks and Romans paid less attention to inanimate nature than we do, and were beyond all question repelled by the savage grandeur of marine and mountain scenery, preferring landscapes of smiling and cultivated beauty to rugged sublimity or the picturesqueness of decay. In this they resembled all southern nations. An Italian of the present day avoids ruinous places and solitudes however splendid. Among the mountains he complains of the *brutto paese* (ugly place) in which he has to live, and is always longing for town gaieties and the amenities of civilised society.¹ The ancients again despised all interests that pretended to rival the paramount interest of civic or military life. Seneca's figurative expression *circum flosculos occupari* (to be occupied with flowerets, prettinesses of rhetoric) might be translated literally as applied to a trifler, to denote the scorn which thinkers, statesmen, patriots, and generals of Greece and Rome felt for mere rural prettiness; while Quintilian's verdict on Theocritus (whom, however, he allows to be "admirable in his own line"), *musa illa rustica et pastoralis non forum modo verum ipsam etiam urbem reformidat* (that rural and pastoral Muse has a horror not only of the forum, but also of the very city itself), characterises the insensibility of urban intellects to a branch of art which we consider of high importance. But it is very easy to overstrain this view, and students, perhaps, have laid an undue stress on

¹ One bright morning in the first week of June I went out into the fields at Borca below Macugnaga, which were then full of brilliant and sweet flowers. There I met an old woman, with whom I talked about her life in what seemed to me a terrestrial Paradise. She threw her arms and eyes to heaven, and looking round her, cried, "*Che brutto paese!*" "Ah, what an ugly country to live in!" Compare Browning's *Up at a Villa, Down in the City*.

Homer in their criticism of the classics ; whereas it is among the later Greek and Roman poets that the analogy of modern literature would lead us to expect indications of a genuine taste for unadorned nature. These signs the Idyllic poets amply supply ; but in seeking for them we must be prepared to recognise a different mode of expression from that which we are trained to by the florid poets of the modern age. Conciseness, simplicity, and an almost prosaic accuracy are the never-failing attributes of classical descriptive art. Moreover, humanity was always more present to their minds than to ours. Nothing evoked sympathy from a Greek unless it appeared before him in a human shape, or in connection with some human sentiment. The ancient poets do not describe inanimate nature as such, or attribute a vague spirituality to fields and clouds. That feeling for the beauty of the world which is embodied in such poems as Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind* gave birth in their imagination to definite legends, involving some dramatic interest and conflict of passions. We who are apt to look for rhapsodies and brilliant outpourings of eloquent fancy, can scarcely bring ourselves to recollect what a delicate sense of nature and what profound emotions are implied in the conceptions of Pan and Hyacinthus and Galatea. The misuse which has been made of mythology by modern writers has effaced half its vigour and charm. It is only by returning to the nature which inspired these myths that we can reconstruct their exquisite vitality. Different ages and nations express themselves by different forms of art. Music appears to be dominant in the present period ; sculpture ruled among the Greeks, and struck the keynote for all other arts. Even those sentiments which in our mind are most vague, the admiration of sunset skies, or flowers or copsewoods in spring, were expressed by them in the language of definite human form. They sought to externalise and realise as far as possible, not to communicate the inmost feelings and spiritual suggestions arising out of natural objects. Never advancing beyond corporeal conditions, they confined themselves to form, and sacrificed the charm of mystery, which is incompatible with very definite conception. It was on this account that sculpture, the most exactly imitative of the arts, became literally architectonic among the Greeks. And for a precisely similar reason music, which is the most abstract and subjective of the arts, the most evanescent in its material, and the vaguest, assumes the chief rank among modern arts. Sculpture is the poetry of the body, music the language of the soul.

Having once admitted their peculiar *mode* of feeling Nature, no one can deny that landscape occupies an important place in Greek literature. Every line of Theocritus is vital with a strong passion for natural beauty, incarnated in myths. But even in descriptive poetry he is not deficient. His list of trees and flowers is long, and the epithets with which they are characterised are very exquisite,—not indeed brilliant with the inbreathed fancy of the North, but so perfectly appropriate as to define the special beauty of the flower or tree selected. In

the same way, a whole scene is conveyed in a few words by mere conciseness of delineation, or by the artful introduction of some incident suggesting human emotion. Take for example this picture of the stillness of the night :—

ἤνιδε σιγῆ μὲν πόντος, σιγῶντι δ' ἀῆται·
 ἃ δ' ἐμὰ οὐ σιγῆ στέρνων ἐντοσθεν ἀνία,
 ἀλλ' ἐπὶ τήνῃ πᾶσα καταίθομαι, ὅς με τάλαιναν
 ἀντὶ γυναικὸς ἔθηκε κακὰν καὶ ἀπάρθενον ἤμεν.¹

Or this :—

ἀλλὰ τὸ μὲν χαίροισα ποτ' ὠκεανὸν τρέπε πῶλους,
 πότνι', ἐγὼ δ' οἰσῶ τὸν ἐμὸν πόνον, ὥσπερ ὑπέσταν.
 χαίρε, Σελαναία λιπαρόχροε· χαίρετε δ', ἄλλοι
 ἀστέρεις, εὐκήλοιο κατ' ἀντυγα Νυκτὸς ὀπαδοί.²
Idyll ii. 38-41.

Or this of a falling star :—

κατήριπε δ' ἐς μέλαν ὕδωρ
 ἀθρόος, ὡς ὅκα πυρσὸς ἀπ' οὐρανῷ ἤριπεν ἀστήρ
 ἀθρόος ἐν πόντῳ, ναύταις δέ τις εἶπεν ἑταίροις·
 κουφότερ', ὦ παῖδες, ποιεῖσθ' ὄπλα· πλευστικὸς οὖρος.³
Idyll xiii. 49-52.

Or the seaweeds on a rocky shore (vii. 58), or the summer bee (iii. 15), or the country party at harvest time (vii. 129 to the end). In all of these a peculiar simplicity will be noticed, a self-restraint and scrupulousness of definite delineation. To Theocritus the shadow and iridescent fancies of modern poetry would have been unintelligible. The creations of a Keats or Shelley would have appeared as monstrous births, like the Centaurs of Ixion, begotten by lawless imaginations upon cloud and mist. When the Greek poet wished to express the charm of summer waves he spoke of Galatea, more fickle and light than thistle-down, a maiden careless of her lover and as cruel as the sea. The same waves suggested to Shakespeare these lines, from *Midsummer Night's Dream* :—

“Thou rememberest
 Since once I sat upon a promontory,
 And heard a mermaid on a dolphin's back
 Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath
 That the rude sea grew civil at her song,
 And certain stars shot madly from their spheres,
 To hear the sea-maid's music ;”

¹ “Hushed is the deep broad sea, and hushed are the winds of the heavens ;
 But never hushed in my heart is love's ache e'en for an instant :
 Nay, I am all on fire for him, for the lover who left me,
 Ah, poor me ! not a wife, but an outcast, reft of my maidenhood.
 Wheel of the magic spells, draw thou that man to my dwelling.”

² “Nay, turn thou thy steeds in the joy of thy soul to the ocean,
 Lady revered ! my pain I will bear, as I vowed to endure it.
 Farewell, Queen of the heavens, in the sheen of thy splendour, and farewell
 All ye lesser stars that follow the wheels of the still Night.”

³ “Into the black wave
 Fell headlong as a fiery star from heaven
 Falls headlong to the deep, and sailors cry
 One to another, Lighten sail ; behold.
 The breeze behind us freshens !”

and to Weber the ethereal "mermaid's song" in *Oberon*. No one acquainted with Shakespeare and Weber can deny that both have expressed with marvellous subtlety the magic of the sea in its enchanting calm, whereas the Greek poet works only by indirect suggestion, and presents us with a human portrait more than a phantom of the glamour of the deep. What we have lost in definite projection we have gained in truth, variety, and freedom. The language of our art appeals immediately to the emotions, disclosing the spiritual reality of things, and caring less for their form than for the feelings they excite in us. Greek art remains upon the surface, and translates into marble the humanised aspects of the external world. The one is for ever seeking to set free, the other to imprison thought. The Greek tells with exquisite precision what he has observed, investing it perhaps with his own emotion. He says, for instance :—

αἴθε γενοίμαν

ἃ βομβεῦσα μέλισσα, καὶ ἐς τεὸν ἄντρον ἰκοίμαν,
τὸν κισσὸν διαδὸς καὶ τὰν πτέρην, ἧ τὸ πικασῶρη.¹

The modern poet, to use Shelley's words,

" Will watch from dawn to gloom
The lake-reflected sun illumine
The yellow bees in the ivy bloom ;
Nor heed nor see what shapes they be,
But from these create he can
Forms more real than living man,
Nurslings of immortality,"

endeavouring to look through and beyond the objects of the outer world, to use them as the starting-points for his creative fancy, and to embroider their materials with the dazzling *floriture* of his invention. Metamorphosis existed for the Greek poet as a simple fact. If the blood of Adonis turned to anemones, yet the actual drops of blood and the flowers remained distinct in the poet's mind ; and even though he may have been sceptical about the miracle, he restrained his fancy to the reproduction of the one old fable. The modern poet believes in no metamorphosis but that which is produced by the alchemy of his own brain. He loves to confound the most dissimilar existences, and to form startling combinations of thoughts which have never before been brought into connection with each other. Uncontrolled by tradition or canons of propriety, he roams through the world, touching its various objects with the wand of his imagination. To the West Wind he cries :—

" Thou on whose stream, 'mid the steep sky's commotion,
Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,
Shook from the tangled boughs of heaven and ocean,
Angels of rain and lightning ; there are spread

¹ " Would I were

The murmuring bee, that through the ivy screen
And through the fern that hides thee, I might come
Into thy cavern ! "

On the blue surface of thine airy surge,
 Like the bright hair uplifted from the head
 Of some fierce Mænad, ev'n from the dim verge
 Of the horizon to the zenith's height,
 The locks of the approaching storm. . . ."

Imagine how astonished even Æschylus would have been at these violent transitions and audacious transformations! The Greeks had few conceits: ¹ they did not call the waves "nodding hearse-plumes" like Calderon, or the birds "winged lyres" like Marini, or daisies "pearled Arcturi of the earth" like Shelley, or laburnums "dropping wells of fire" like Tennyson. If they ventured on such licenses in their more impassioned lyrics, they maintained the metaphor with strict propriety. One good instance of the difference in this respect between the two ages is afforded by Ben Jonson, who translates Sappho's

ἦρος ἱμερόφωνος ἀγγελος ἀηδῶν,

by "the dear good angel of the spring, the nightingale." Between *ἄγγελος* and *angel* there is the distance of nearly twenty centuries; for though Ben Jonson may have meant merely to anglicise the Greek word, he could not but have been glad of the more modern meaning.

So much of this chapter has already been devoted to the consideration of Theocritean poetry in general, that I cannot here afford to enter into the details of his several Idylls. A few, however, may be noticed, of peculiar beauty and significance. None are more true to local scenery than those which relate to the story of Galatea. In this brief tale, the life of the mountains and the rivers and the sea is symbolised,—the uncouth and gigantic hills, rude in their rusticity—the clear and lovable stream—the merry sea, inconstant and treacherous, with shifting waves. The mountain stands for ever unremoved; love as he will, he can but gaze upon the dancing sea, and woo it with gifts of hanging trees, and cool shadowy caverns, and still sleeping-places in sheltered bays. But the stream leaps down from crag to crag, and gathers strength and falls into the arms of the expectant nymph—a fresh lover, fair and free, and full of smiles. Supposing this marriage of the sea and river to have been the earliest idea of the mythus, in course of time the persons of Acis and Galatea, and the rejected lover Polyphemus, became more and more humanised, until the old symbolism was lost in a pastoral romance. Polyphemus loves, but never wins: he may offer his tall bay-trees and slender cypresses, and black ivy, and sweet-fruited vines, and cold water flowing straight—a drink divine—from

¹ Perhaps this is overstated. In the later Greek literature of the Sophists we find many very exquisite *conceits*. Philostratus, for example, from whom Jonson translated "Drink to me only with thine eyes," calls the feet of the beloved one *ἐρηρισμένα φιλήματα*, or "kisses pressed upon the ground." Even Empedocles (see p. 134) and Pindar (see p. 232) are not free from the vice of artificial metaphor. Compare, too, the laboured metaphors and compound epithets quoted from Chærëmon (page 392, above), and the specimens quoted in chapter xxii. from Meleager.

the white snows of wooded Ætna : he may sit whole days above the sea, and gaze upon its smiling waves, and tell the nymph of all his flocks and herds, or lure her with promises of flowers and fawns and bear's whelps to leave the sea to beat upon its shore, and come and live with him and feed his sheep. It is of no use. Galatea heeds him not, and Polyphemus has to shepherd his love as best he can. Poetry in this idyll is blended with the simplest country humour. The pathos of Polyphemus is really touching, and his allusions to the sweetness of a shepherd's life among the hills abound in unconscious poetry ; side by side with which are placed the most ludicrous expressions of uncouth disappointment, together with trenchant observations on the value of property and other prosaic details. If I mistake not, this is true of the rustic character, in which, though stirred by sorrow into sympathy with nature, habitual caution and shrewdness survive. The meditations of the shepherd in the third Idyll exhibit the same mixture of sentiments.

As a specimen of the Idylls which illustrate town life I select the second, the humour of its rival, the fifteenth, being of that perfect sort which must be read and laughed over, but which cannot well be analysed. The subject of the *Pharmaceutria* is an incantation performed in the stillness of the night by a proud Syracusan lady who has been deserted by her lover.¹ In delineating the fierceness of her passion and the indomitable resolution of her will Theocritus has produced a truly tragic picture. Simætha, maddened by vehement despair, resorts to magic arts. Love, she says, has sucked her life-blood like a leech, and parched her with the fever of desire. She cannot live without the lover for whose possession she has sacrificed her happiness and honour. If she cannot charm him back again, she will kill him. There are poisons ready to work her will in the last resort. Meanwhile we see her standing at the magic wheel, turning it round before the fire, and charging it to draw false Delphis to her home. A hearth with coals upon it is at hand, on which her maid keeps sprinkling the meal that typifies the bones of Delphis, the wax by which his heart is to be consumed, and the laurel bough that stands for his body. At the least sign of laziness Simætha scolds her with hard and haughty words. She stands like a Medea, seeking no sympathy, sparing no reproaches,

¹ " Twelve long days have passed, and he hath not come to my homestead,
 Doth not know if I died, or am yet in the land of the living,
 Hath not knocked at the door ; oh, heartless ! Certainly elsewhere
 Love hath wafted his soul feather-winged, and the Queen Aphroditē.
 I on the morrow will go to the wrestling-ground where he haunteth,
 Meet with him face to face, and load him there with reproaches.
 But for the nonce mean I to bind him with runes : and, Selenē,
 Shine thou fair in the heavens ; for to thee will I chaunt through the silence,
 Calling on Hecatē too, hell's queen, who maketh to tremble
 Even the hounds as she goes through the tombs of the dead and the black blood.
 Hail, Hecatē, dread dame ! to the end be thou my assistant,
 Making my medicines work no less than the philtre of Circē,
 Or Medea's charms, or yellow-haired Perimodē's.
 Wheel of the magic spells, draw thou that man to my dwelling."

tiger-like in her ferocity of thwarted passion.¹ When the magic rites have been performed, and Thestylis has gone to smear an ointment on the doors of Delphis, Simætha leaves the wheel and addresses her soliloquy to the Moon, who has just risen, and who is journeying in calm and silver glory through the night. There is something sublime in the contrast between the moonlight on the sea of Syracuse and the fierce agony of the deserted lioness. To the Moon she confides the story of her love: "Take notice of my love, whence it arose, dread Queen." It is a vivid and tragic tale of southern passion: sudden and consuming, recklessly gratified, and followed by desertion on the one side and by vengeance on the other.² Simætha has no doubt many living parallels among Sicilian women. The classical reader will find in her narration a description of the working of love hardly to be surpassed by Sappho's Ode, or Plato's *Phædrus*.³ The wildness of the

¹ "Lo, the barley-grains pine first in the fire! With a full hand
Cast on, Thestyli! Where, fond maid, are thy wandering wits flown?
Even to thee, unto thee, am I turned to a scorn and a hissing?
Cast on, crying the while, 'tis the bones of Delphis I scatter!
Wheel of the magic spells, draw thou that man to my dwelling.

"Delphis hath hurt me; and I 'gainst Delphis am burning the laurel:
Yea, as the singed leaves shrink and crackle, caught by the fierce flame,
Burst in a sudden flame, die down, and we see not a cinder,
So likewise may the flesh of Delphis waste in the burning.
Wheel of the magic spells, draw thou that man to my dwelling.

"E'en as I melt this wax with the might of the god to assist me,
So let Myndian Delphis in love's flame speedily languish;
And as the brazen orb whirls, so by the Queen Aphroditë
Spell-bound may he revolve and whirl at the door of my dwelling.
Wheel of the magic spells, draw thou that man to my dwelling."

² How wonderfully beautiful is her description of Delphis and his comrade Eudamnippus:
"Their cheeks and chin were yellower than helichrysus; their breasts more radiant far than
thou, O Moon, as having lately left the fair toil of the wrestling-ground."

³ "Scarce had we reached the midpoint of the road by the dwelling of Lycon,
Delphis when I beheld with Eudamnippus advancing:
Blonder of cheek and chin were the youths than yellowing ivy,
Yea, and their breasts far brighter of sheen than thou, O Selenë,
Showing they just had come from the noble toil of the wrestlers.
Think on my love, and think whence it came, thou Lady Selenë.

"I, when I saw, how I raged, how the flame took hold of my bosom,
Burned my love-lost heart! My beauty waned, and no longer
Watched I the pomp as it passed; nor how I returned to my homestead
Knew I, for some fell bane, some parching disease had undone me:
Ten days, stretched on my bed, and ten nights dwelt I in anguish.
Think on my love, and think whence it came, thou Lady Selenë.

"Often the bloom of my flesh grew dry and yellow as dye-wood;
Yea, and the hairs of my head fell off, and of all that I once was
Nought but skin was left and bones; and to whom did I not turn,
Whose roof left I unsought where an old crone chanted a love-charm?
Still no solace I found, and time sped ever a-flying.
Think on my love, and think whence it came, thou Lady Selenë.

"So at the last to the maid I told the truth, and the whole truth:
'Thestylis, up, and bestir thee, seek out some cure of my heartache!
Soul and body am I in the hands of the Myndian: hie thee,

scene, the magic rites, the august presence of the Moon, and the murderous determination of Simætha heighten the dramatic effect, and render the tale excessively interesting.

As a picture of classical sorcery this Idyll is very curious. Nothing can be more erroneous than to imagine that witchcraft is a northern invention of the Middle Ages, or that the Brocken is its headquarters. With the exception of a few inconsiderable circumstances, all the terrible or loathsome rites of magic were known to the ancients, and merely copied by the moderns. Circe in Homer, Simætha in Theocritus, Canidia in Horace, the Libyan sorceress of Virgil, the Saga of Tibullus, Medea in Ovid, Erichtho in Lucan, and Megæra in Claudian (to mention no more), make up a list of formidable witches to whom none of the hideous details of the black art were unknown. They sought for poisonous herbs at night, lived in ruinous places, ransacked charnel-houses for dead bodies, killed little children to obtain their fat for unguents, compelled the spirits of the dead to rise, and after entering a fresh corpse to reveal the mysteries of fate, devoured snakes, drank blood, raised storms at sea, diverted the moon from her course, muttered spells of fearful import, and loved above all things to "raise jars, jealousies, strifes, like a thick scurf o'er life." Even in the minutest details of sorcery they anticipated the witches of the Middle Ages. Hypsipyle in Ovid mentions a waxen portrait stuck full of needles, and so fashioned as to waste the life of its original. The witch in the *Golden Ass* of Apuleius anoints herself, and flies about like a bird at night. Nor were were-wolves, those most ghastly creations of diseased imagination, unfamiliar to the Greeks and Romans, as may be proved from Herodotus, Virgil, Ovid, Petronius, and Apuleius. Those who care to pursue this subject will find large stores of learning collected on the point by Ben Jonson in his annotations to *The Masque of Queens*. One fact, however, must be always borne in mind: the ancients regarded witchcraft as either a hideous or a solemn exercise of supernatural power, not recognising any Satanic agency or compact with Hell. *Hecate trivialis ululata per urbes* (Hecate, adjured with wailings on the crossways through the cities), the "Queen of the Night and of the Tombs," assisted sorcerers: but this meant merely that they trafficked in the dark with the foul mysteries of death and corruption. The classical witches were either grave and awful women, like the Libyan priestess in the *Aeneid*, or else loathsome pariahs, terrible for their malignity, like Lucan's Erichtho. Mediævalism added a deeper horror to this superstitious and ghoulish conception by the thoughts of spiritual responsibility and of league with God's enemies. Damnation was the price of magic power; witchcraft being not merely abominable

Watch by the wrestling-ground of Timagetus, the athlete,
For it is there that he haunts, and there he delighteth to linger.'

Think on my love, and think whence it came, thou Lady Selenë.

"There, shouldst thou find him alone, draw near and silently beckon.
Say, "Simætha demands thee!" and lead him back to my dwelling."

in the eyes of men but also unpardonable at the bar of divine justice.

Several poems of Theocritus are written on the theme of Doric chivalry, and illustrate the heroic age of Greece. They may be compared to the *Idylls of the King*, for their excellence consists in the consummate art with which episodes from the legendary cycles of a bygone age are wrought into polished pictures by a cultivated poet. The thirteenth Idyll is especially remarkable for the exquisite finish of its style and also for the light it throws on the mutual relations of knight and squire in early Greek warfare. Theocritus chooses for the subject of this poem an episode in the life of Heracles, the Dorian hero, when he and other foremost men of Hellas, *θεῖος ἄστος ἠρώων* (the godlike flower of heroes), followed Jason in the Argo to the Colchian shores, and he took young Hylas with him; "for even," says Theocritus, "the brazen-hearted son of Amphitryon, who withstood the fierceness of the lion, loved a youth, the charming Hylas, and taught him like a father everything by which he might become a good and famous man; nor would he leave the lad at dawn, or noon, or evening, but sought continually to fashion him after his own heart, and to make him a right yoke-fellow with him in mighty deeds." How he lost Hylas on the Cianian shore, and in the wildness of his sorrow let Argo sail without him, and endured the reproach of desertion is well known. Theocritus has wrought the story with more than his accustomed elegance. But I wish to confine attention to the ideal of knighthood and knightly education presented in the passage quoted. Heracles was not merely the lover but the guardian also and tutor of Hylas. He regarded him not only as an object of tenderness, but also as a future friend and helper in the business of life. His constant aim was to form of him a brave and manly warrior, a Herculean hero. And in this respect Heracles was the Eponym and patron of an order which existed throughout Doric Hellas. This order, protected by religious tradition and public favour, regulated by strict rules, and kept within the limits of honour, produced the Cretan lovers, the Lacedæmonian "hearers" and "inspirers," the Theban immortals who lay with faces turned so stanchly to their foes that vice seemed incompatible with such transcendent valour. Achilles was another Eponym of this order. In the twenty-ninth Idyll, the phrase, *Ἀχιλλῆϊοι φίλοι* (friends of Achilles' stamp) is used to describe the most perfect pair of manly friends. The twelfth Idyll is written in a similar if a weaker and more wanton vein. The same longing retrospect is cast upon the old days "when men indeed were golden, when the love of comrades was mutual"; and constancy is rewarded with the same promise of glorious immortality as that which Plato holds out in the *Phædrus*. Bion, we may remark in passing, celebrates with equal praise the friendships of Theseus, Orestes, and Achilles. Without taking some notice of this peculiar institution, in its origin military and austere, it is impossible to understand the chivalrous age of Greece among the Dorian tribes. In the midst of

brute force and cunning and an almost absolute disregard of what we are accustomed to understand by chivalry—gentleness, chastity, truth, regard for women and weak persons—this one anomalous sentiment emerges.

Passing to another point in which Greek differed from mediæval chivalry, we notice the semi-divine nature of the heroes : *θεῖος ἄωτος* (godlike *élite*) is the name by which they are designated, and supernatural favour is always showered upon them. This indicates a primitive society, a national consciousness ignorant of any remote past. The heroes whom Theocritus celebrates are purely Dorian—Heracles, a Jack the Giant-Killer in his cradle, brawny, fearless, of huge appetite, a mighty trainer, with a scowl to frighten athletes from the field ; Polydeuces, a notable bruiser ; Castor, a skilled horseman and a man of blood. In one point the twin sons of Leda resembled mediæval knights. They combined the arts of song with martial prowess. Theocritus styles them *ἵππηες κιθαρισταί, ἀθλητῆρες αἰδοί*—“harp-playing riders of horses, athlete poets.” Their achievements narrated in the twenty-second Idyll may be compared with those of Tristram and Lancelot. The gigantic warrior whom they find by the well in the land of the Bebrycians, gorgeously armed, insolent, and as knotty as a brazen statue, who refuses access to the water and challenges them to combat, exactly resembles one of the lawless giants of the *Morte Arthur*. The courtesy of the Greek hero contrasts well with the barbarian’s violence ; and when they come to blows, it is good to observe how address, agility, training, nerve, enable Polydeuces to overcome with ease the vast fury and brute strength of the Bebrycian bully. As the fight proceeds, the son of Leda improves in flesh and colour, while Amycus loses breath, and sweats his thews away. Polydeuces pounds the giant’s neck and face, reducing him to a hideous mass of bruises, and receiving the blows of Amycus upon his chest and loins. At the end of the fight he spares his prostrate foe, on the condition of his respecting the rites of hospitality and dealing courteously with strangers. Throughout it will be noticed how carefully Theocritus maintains the conception of the Hellenic as distinguished from the barbarian combatant. Christian and Pagan are not more distinct in a legend of the San Graal. But Greek chivalry has no magic, no monstrous exaggeration. All is simple, natural, and human. Bellerophon, it is true, was sent after the Chimæra, and Perseus freed Andromeda like St. George from a dragon’s mouth. But these fancies of Greek infancy formed no integral part of artistic mythology ; instead of being multiplied, they were gradually winnowed out, and the poets laid but little stress upon them.

The achievement of Castor is not so favourable to the character of Hellenic chivalry. Having in concert with Polydeuces borne off by guile the daughters of Leucippus from their affianced husbands, Castor kills one of the injured lovers who pursues him and demands restitution. He slays him, though he is his own first cousin, ruthlessly ; and while

the other son of Aphareus is rushing forward to avenge his brother's death, Zeus hurls lightning and destroys him. Theocritus remarks that it is no light matter to engage in battle with the Tyndarids; but he makes no reflection on what we should call "the honour" of the whole transaction.

Of all the purely pastoral Idylls by which Theocritus is most widely famous perhaps the finest is the seventh, or *Thalysia*. It glows with the fresh and radiant splendour of southern beauty. In this poem the Idyllist describes the journey of three young men in summer from the city to the farm of their friend Phrasidamus, who has asked them to take part in the feast with which he proposes to honour Demeter at harvest time. On their way they meet with a goatherd, Lycidas, who invites them, "with a smiling eye," to recline beneath the trees and while away the hours of noontide heat with song. "The very lizard," he says, "is sleeping by the wall; but on the hard stones of the footpath your heavy boots keep up a ceaseless ringing." Thus chided by the goatherd they resolve upon a singing match between Simichidas, the teller of the tale, and Lycidas, who offers his crook as the prize of victory. Lycidas begins the contest with that exquisite song to Ageanax, which has proved the despair of all succeeding Idyllists, and which furnished Virgil with one of the most sonorous lines in his *Georgics*. No translation can do justice to the smooth and liquid charm of its melodious verse, in which the tenderest feeling mingles gracefully with delicate humour and with homely descriptions of a shepherd's life. The following lines, forming a panegyric on Comatas, some famed singer of the rustic muse, may be quoted for their pure Greek feeling. Was ever an unlucky mortal envied more melodiously, and yet more quaintly, for his singular fortune?

ἀσει δ', ὡς ποκ' ἔδεκτο τὸν αἰπόλον εὐρέα λάρναξ
ζῶν ἐόντα κακῆσιν ἀτασθαλίησιν ἀνακτος·
ὡς τέ νιν αἰ σιμαὶ λειμωνόθε φέρβον ἰοῖσαι
κέθρον ἐς ἀδείαν μαλακοῖς ἀνθεσσι μέλισσαι·
οὐνεκά οἱ γλυκὴ Μοῖσα κατὰ στόματος χέει νέκταρ,
ὦ μακαριστὲ Κομάτα, τὸ θῆν τάδε τερπνὰ πεπόνθης,
καὶ τὸ κατεκλάσθης ἐς λάρνακα, καὶ τὴν, μελισσῶν
κηρία φερβόμενος, ἔτος ὄριον ἐξετέλεσσας.¹

The song with which Simichidas contends against his rival is not of equal beauty; but the goatherd hands him the crook "as a gift of friendship from the Muses." Then he leaves the three friends, who resume their journey till they reach the house of Phrasidamus. There

¹ "He shall sing how of old the great chest closed on the goatherd
Living, and held him thrall by the king's infatuate order;
Yea, and the blunt-faced bees, as they hied from the flowery meadow,
Flew to the fragrant cedar and fed him with honey of blossoms,
Seeing the Muse had filled his mouth with heavenly nectar:
O most happy Comata! to thee these miracles happened;
Thou wast shut in the chest, and feeding on honeycomb only,
Through a revolving year didst dree the doom of thy bondage."

elms and poplar-trees and vines embower them with the pleasant verdure of rustling leaves and the perfumes of summer flowers and autumn fruits. The jar of wine, as sweet as that which made the Cyclops dance among his sheepfold, spreads its fragrance through the air; while the statue of Demeter, with her handfuls of corn and poppy-heads, stands smiling by.

This seventh Idyll, of which no adequate idea can be conveyed by mere description, may serve as the type of those purely rustic poems which since the days of Theocritus have from age to age been imitated by versifiers emulous of his gracefulness. If space allowed, it would not be uninteresting to analyse the Idyll of the two old fishermen, who gossip together so wisely and contentedly in their hut by the seashore, mending their nets the while, and discoursing gravely of their dreams. In this Idyll, which is, however, possibly the work of one of Theocritus' imitators, and in the second, which consists of a singing match between two harvest-men, the native homeliness of the Idyllic muse appears to best advantage.

With this brief and insufficient notice, I must leave Theocritus in order to say a few words about his successors. Bion's poetry, when compared with that of Theocritus, declines considerably from the Bucolic type. His Idylls are for the most part fragments of delicately finished love-songs, remarkable for elegance and sweetness more than for masculine vigour or terse expression. In Bion the artificial style of pastoral begins. Theocritus had made cows and pipes and shepherds fashionable. His imitators followed him, without the humour and natural taste which rendered his pictures so attractive. We already trace the frigid affectation of Bucolic interest in the elegy on Bion: "He sang no song of wars or tears, but piped of Pan and cowherds, and fed flocks, singing as he went; pipes he fashioned, and milked the sweet-breathed heifer, and taught kisses, and cherished in his bosom love, and stole the heart of Aphrodite." As it happens, the most original and powerful of Bion's remaining poems is a "Song of Tears," of passionate lamentation, of pathetic grief, composed, not as a pastoral ditty, but on the occasion of one of those splendid festivals in which the Syrian rites of slain Adonis were celebrated by Greek women. The *ἐπιτάφιος Ἀδώνιδος* (Threnody for Adonis) is written with a fiery passion and a warmth of colouring peculiar to Bion. The verse bounds with tiger leaps, its full-breathed dactyls panting with the energy of rapid flight. The tender and reflective beauty of Theocritus, the concentrated passion of his Simætha, and the flowing numbers of his song to Adonis are quite lost and swallowed up in the Asiatic fury of Bion's lament. The poem begins with the cry *Αἶαζ' ὦ τὸν Ἀδωνιν*, which is variously repeated in Idyllic fashion as a refrain throughout the lamentation.¹ After this prelude, having as it were struck the keynote to the music, the singer cries:—

¹ The exclamation occurs in a fragment of Sappho (Bergk, No. 63), whose lyric on the legend of Adonis may have suggested Bion's Idyll.

μηκέτι πορφυρέεις ἐνὶ φάρεσι Κύπρι κάθειυδε ·
 ἔγρεο δειλαία κνανόστολε καὶ πλατάγησον
 στάθρα, καὶ λέγε πᾶσιν · ἀπώλετο καλὸς Ἄδωνις.¹
 αἶαξ' ὦ τὸν Ἄδωνιν · ἐπειάζουσιν Ἐρωτες.

Notice how the long words follow one another with quick pulses and flashes of sound. The same peculiar rhythm recurs when, after describing the beautiful dead body of Adonis, the poet returns to Aphrodite :—

ἃ δ' Ἀφροδίτα
 λυσαμένα πλοκαμίδας ἀνὰ δρυμῶς ἀλάληται
 πενθαλέα, νήπλεκτος, ἀσάνδαλος· αἱ δὲ βᾶτοι νιν
 ἔρχομέναν κείροντι καὶ ἱερὸν αἶμα δρέπονται.
 ὄξ' ἢ δὲ κωκυῖσα δι' ἄγκεα μακρὰ φορεῖται,
 Ἄσσύριον βοῶσα πῶσιν, καὶ πολλὰ καλεῖσα.²

There are few passages of poetical imagery more striking than this picture of the queen of beauty tearing through the forest, heedless of her tender limbs and useless charms, and calling on her Syrian lover. What follows is even more passionate ; after some lines of mere description, the ecstasy again descends upon the poet, and he bursts into the wildest of most beautiful laments :—

ὡς ἴδεν, ὡς ἐνόησεν Ἄδώνιδος ἄσχετον ἔλκος,
 ὡς ἴδε φοῖνιον αἶμα μαραινομένῳ περὶ μηρῷ,
 πάχεας ἀμπετάσασα κινύρετο· μείνον Ἄδωνι,
 δύσποτμε μείνον Ἄδωνι, κ.τ.λ.³

The last few lines of her soliloquy are exquisitely touching, especially those in which Aphrodite deplures her immortality, and acknowledges the supremacy of the queen of the grave over Love and Beauty. What follows is pitched at a lower key. There is too much of merely Anacreontic prettiness about the description of the bridal bed and the

¹ "Nay, no longer in robes of purple recline, Aphroditë :
 Wake from thy sleep, sad queen, black-stoled, rain blows on thy bosom ;
 Cry to the listening world, *He is lost to us, lovely Adonis!*
 Wail, wail, Ah for Adonis! The Loves respond with lamenting."

² "But she, the Queen Aphroditë,
 Loosing her locks to the air, roams far and wide through the forest,
 Drowned in grief, dishevelled, unsandalled, and as she flies onward,
 Briars stab at her feet and cull the blood of the goddess.
 She with shrill lamentation thro' glen and thro' glade is carried,
 Calling her Syrian lord, demanding him back and demanding."

³ "She when she saw, when she knew the unstanchnable wound of Adonis,
 When she beheld the red blood on his pale thigh's withering blossom,
 Spreading her arms full wide, she moaned out : 'Stay, my Adonis!
 Stay, ill-fated Adonis! that I once more may approach thee!
 Clasp thee close to my breast, and these lips mingle with thy lips!
 Rouse for a moment, Adonis, and kiss me again for the last time ;
 Kiss me as long as the kiss can last on the lips of a lover ;
 Till from thy inmost soul to my mouth and down to my marrow
 Thy life-breath shall run, and I quaff the wine of thy philtre,
 Draining the draught of thy love : that kiss will I treasure, Adonis,
 E'en as it were thyself ; since thou, ill-starred, art departing,
 Fleeing me far, O Adonis, to Acheron faring, the sad realm
 Ruled by a stern savage king : while I, the unhappy, the luckless,
 I live ; goddess am I, and I may not follow or find thee.'"

lamenting Loves. Aphrodite's passion reminds us of a Neapolitan *Stabat Mater*, in which the frenzy of love and love-like piety are strangely blended. But the concluding picture suggests nothing nobler than a painting of Albano, in which *amoretti* are plentiful, and there is much elegance of composition. This remark applies to the rest of Bion's poetry. If Theocritus deserves to be illustrated by the finest of Greek bas-reliefs, Bion cannot claim more than an exquisitely chiselled gem. Certainly the second and third fragments are very charming; and the lines to Hesper (fragment 16) have so much beauty that I attempt a version of them:—

“Hesper, thou golden light of happy love,
 Hesper, thou holy pride of purple eve,
 Moon among stars, but star beside the moon,
 Hail, friend! and since the young moon sets to-night
 Too soon below the mountains, lend thy lamp
 And guide me to the shepherd whom I love.
 No theft I purpose; no wayfaring man
 Belated would I watch and make my prey;
 Love is my goal, and Love how fair it is,
 When friend meets friend sole in the silent night,
 Thou knowest, Hesper!”

In Moschus we find less originality and power than belong to Bion. His *Europa* is an imitation of the style in which Theocritus wrote *Hylas*; but the copy is frigid and affected by the side of its model. Five-and-twenty lines, for instance, are devoted to an elaborate description of a basket, which leaves no very definite impression on the mind;¹ whereas every leaf and tendril on the cup which Theocritus introduces into the first Idyll stands out vividly before us. Nothing, moreover, could be more unnatural and tedious than the long speech which *Europa* makes when she is being carried out to sea upon the bull's back. Yet we must allow that there is spirit and beauty in the triumph of sea monsters who attend Poseidon and do honour to the chosen bride of Zeus; Nereids riding on dolphins, and Tritons, “the deep-voiced minstrels of the sea, sounding a marriage song on their long-winding conchs.”² The whole of this piece is worthy of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Moschus is remarkable for occasional felicities of language. In this line for example,

ἔδτε καὶ ἀτρεκέων ποιμαίνετ' αἰθρος ὀνείρων,

“Then when of sooth-saying dreams the flocks are leisurely straying,”

an old thought receives new and subtle beauty by its expression. If *Megara* (*Idyll* iv.) be really the work of Moschus, which is doubtful,

¹ This basket for holding flowers, the work of Hephestus, had the tale of Io carved upon it. So Catullus, in the counterpane of Thetis, has wrought in needlework the story of Ariadne, and Statius in the mantle given by Adrastus to Admetus has woven that of Hero and Leander. Both of these Roman poets beat Moschus in picturesque effect.

² Italian art of the Renaissance, in the designs of Mantegna and Raphael and Giulio Romano, did full justice to these marine triumphs.

it reflects more honour on him. The dialogue between the wife and mother of the maddened Heracles, after he has murdered his children and gone forth to execute fresh labours, is worthy of their tragic situation. "Ἐρως δραπέτης (Runaway Love) again is an exquisite little poem in the Anacreontic style of Bion, fully equal to any of its models. The fame of Moschus will, however, depend upon the Elegy on Bion. I have already hinted that its authorship is questioned. In my opinion it far surpasses any of his compositions in respect of definite thought and original imagination. Though the Bucolic commonplaces are used with obvious artificiality, and much is borrowed from Theocritus' Lament for Daphnis, yet so true and delicate a spirit is imbreathed into the old forms as to render them quite fresh.¹ The passage which begins αἰ αἰ ταὶ μαλάχαι (Ah, ah, the mallows) every dabbler in Greek literature knows by heart. And what can be more ingeniously pathetic than the *nuances* of feeling expressed in these lines :—

φάρμακον ἦλθε, Βίων, ποτὶ σὸν στόμα· φάρμακον εἶδες.
πῶς τευ τοῖς χεῖλεσσι ποτέδραμε κοῦκ ἐγλυκάνθη;
τίς δὲ βροτὸς τοσσούτον ἀνάμερος ἢ κεράσαι τοι
ἢ δοῦναι λαλέοντι τὸ φάρμακον;²

And :—

τίς ποτε σὺ σύριγγι μελίξεται, ὦ τριπόθητε;
τίς δ' ἐπὶ σοῖς καλάμοις θήσει στόμα; τίς θρασὺς οὔτως;
εἰσέτι γὰρ πνέει τὰ σὰ χεῖλεα καὶ τὸ σὸν ἄσθμα·
ἀχῶ δ' ἐν δονάκεσσι τεῶς ἐπιβόσκει' αἰοιδᾶς.³

Or again :—

ἀχῶ δ' ἐν πέτρησιν ὀδύρεται ὅττι σιωπῇ,
κούκετι μιμνῆται τὰ σὰ χεῖλεα.⁴

There is also something very touching in the third line of this strophe :—

κείνος ὁ ταῖς ἀγέλαισιν ἐράσμιος οὐκέτι μέλπει,
οὐκέτ' ἐρημαίησιν ὑπὸ δρυσὶν ἤμενος ᾄδει,
ἀλλὰ παρὰ Πλουτῆι μέλος Ληθαίων αἰδεῖ,⁵

¹ Here is a fragment from the threnody on Daphnis :—

ἔβα ρόνον ἔκλυσε δίνα
τὸν Μοῖσαισι φίλον ἄνδρα, τὸν οὐ Νύμφαισιν ἀπεχθῆ.

"Down death's tide he went: the whirlpool eddying swallowed
Him by the Nymphs beloved, the man right dear to the Muses."

² "Poison, O Bion, came to thy lips: thou tasted of poison.
How could it touch those lips, and not be turned into honey?
Who was the wight so harsh as to mix the potion, and give thee
Poison to drink, having heard thee speak?"

³ "Who shall play on thy pipe, O thrice beloved and desired one?
Who to thy reeds shall place his mouth? who dares to approach them?
Seeing it breathes e'en now of thy lips and the breath of thy bosom;
Echo among the reeds still feeds on the songs of thy singing."

⁴ "Echo haunting the rocks laments in the stillness around thee
That no more she may mimic thy voice."

⁵ "Now no more to the herds doth he pipe, the desirable herdsman,
No more sits and sings 'neath boughs of desolate oak-trees,
But by Pluto's throne chants Lethe songs of oblivion."

and in the allusion made to the Sicilian girlhood of grim Persephone (126-129). This vein of tender and melodious sentiment, which verges on the *concerti* of modern art, seems different from the style of *Europa*.

To English readers, the three elegies, on Daphnis, on Adonis, and on Bion, severally attributed to Theocritus, Bion, and Moschus, will always be associated with the names of Milton and Shelley. There is no comparison whatever between *Lycidas* and *Daphnis*. In spite of the misplaced apparition of St. Peter, and of the frigidity which belongs to pastoral allegory, *Lycidas* is a richer and more splendid monument of elegiac verse. The simplicity of the Theocritean dirge contrasts strangely with the varied wealth of Milton's imagery, the few ornaments of Greek art with the intricate embroideries of modern fancy. To quote passages from these well-known poems would be superfluous; but let a student of literature compare the passages, $\pi\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\epsilon\varsigma\ \alpha\rho'\ \eta\sigma\theta'$ and $\omega\ \Pi\acute{\alpha}\nu\ \Pi\acute{\alpha}\nu$ with Milton's paraphrase "Where were ye, nymphs,"—or the concise paragraphs about the flowers and valleys that mourned for Daphnis with the luxuriance of Milton's invocation "Return, Alpheus."

When Shelley wrote *Adonais* his mind was full of the elegies on Bion and Adonis. Of direct translation in his Lament there is very little; but he has absorbed both of the Greek poems, and transmuted them into the substance of his own mind. Urania takes the place of Aphrodite—the heavenly queen, "most musical of mourners," bewails the loss of her poetical consort. Instead of loves, the couch of Adonais is surrounded by the thoughts and fancies of which he was the parent; and, instead of gods and goddesses, the power of nature is invoked to weep for him and take him to herself. Whatever Bion and Moschus recorded as a fact becomes, consistently with the spiritualising tendency of modern genius, symbolical in Shelley's poem. His art has alchemised the whole structure, idealising what was material, and disembodiment the sentiments which were incarnated in simple images. *Adonais* is a sublime rhapsody; its multitudinous ideas are whirled like drops of golden rain, on which the sun of the poet's fancy gleams with ever-changing rainbow hues. In drifts and eddies they rush past, delighting us with their rapidity and brilliancy; but the impression left upon our mind is vague and incomplete when compared with the few and distinct ideas presented by the Doric Elegies. At the end of *Alastor* there occurs a touching reminiscence of Moschus, but the outline is less faint than in *Adonais*, the transmutation even more complete.

Tennyson, among the poets of the nineteenth century, owes much to the Greek idyllists. His genius appears to be in many respects akin to theirs, and the age in which he lived was not unlike the Ptolemaic period. Unfitted, perhaps, by temperament for the most impassioned lyrics, he delights in minutely finished pictures, in felicities of expression and in subtle harmonies of verse. Like Theocritus, he finds in nature and in the legends of past ages subjects congenial to his muse. *Ænone* and *Tithonus* are steeped in the golden beauty of Syracusan art.

“Come down, O maid,”—that loveliest shepherd’s song from *The Princess*—transfers, with perfect taste, the Greek idyllic feeling to Swiss scenery ; the new wine of modern landscape and romantic emotion has been poured successfully into old bottles ; nothing can be fresher, and not even the Thalyssia is sweeter. It would be easy enough to collect minor instances which prove that the last Laureate’s mind was impregnated with the thoughts and feelings of the poems I have been discussing. For instance, both the figure, “softer than sleep,” and the comparison of a strong man’s muscles to the smooth rush of running water over sunken stones, which we find in *Enid*, occur in Theocritus.

At the end of this chapter I cannot refrain from once more recommending all lovers of pure verse and perfect scenery to study the Greek idyllists upon the shores of the Mediterranean. Nor would it be possible to carry a better guide-book to the statue-galleries of Rome and Naples. For in the verses of Theocritus, Bion, and Moschus, the æsthetic principles of the Greeks, in the age to which our relics of their statuary for the most part belong, are feelingly and pithily expressed ; while the cold marble, that seems to require so many commentaries, receives from their idyllic colouring new life.

CHAPTER XXII

THE ANTHOLOGY

The History of its Compilation—Collections of Meleager, Philippus, Agathias, Cephalas, Planudes—The Palatine MS.—The Sections of the Anthology—Dedicatory Epigrams—Simonides—Epitaphs: Real and Literary—Callimachus—Epigrams on Poets—Antipater of Sidon—Hortatory Epigrams—Palladas—Satiric Epigrams—Lucillius—Amatory Epigrams—Meleager, Straton, Philodemus, Antipater, Rufinus, Paulus Silentarius, Agathias, Plato—Descriptive Epigrams.

THE Anthology may from some points of view be regarded as the most valuable relic of antique literature which we possess. Composed of several thousand short poems, written for the most part in the elegiac metre, at different times and by a multitude of authors, it is coextensive with the whole current of Greek history, from the splendid period of the Persian War to the decadence of Christianised Byzantium. Many subjects of interest in Greek life, which would otherwise have had to be laboriously illustrated from the historians or the comic poets, are here fully and melodiously set forth. If we might compare the study of Greek Literature to a journey in some splendid mountain region, then we might say with propriety that from the sparkling summits where Æschylus and Sophocles and Pindar sit enthroned, we turn in our less strenuous moods to gather the meadow-flowers of Meleager, Palladas, Callimachus. Placing them between the leaves of the book of our memory, we possess an everlasting treasure of sweet thoughts, which will serve in after days to remind us of those scenes of Olympian majesty through which we travelled. The slight effusions of these minor poets are even nearer to our hearts than the masterpieces of the noblest Greek literature. They treat with a touching limpidity and sweetness of the joys and fears and hopes and sorrows that are common to all humanity. They introduce us to the actual life of a bygone civilisation, stripped of its political or religious accidents, and tell us that the Greeks of Athens or of Sidon thought and felt exactly as we feel. Even the *Graffiti* of Pompeii have scarcely more power to reconstruct the past and summon as in dreams the voices and the forms of long-since buried

men. There is yet another way in which the Anthology brings us closer to the Greeks than any other portion of their literature. The Lyrists express an intense and exalted mood of the race in its divine adolescence. The Tragedians exhibit the genius of Athens in its maturity. The Idyllists utter a rich nightingale note from the woods and fields of Sicily. But the Anthology carries us through all the phases of Hellenic civilisation upon its uninterrupted undercurrent of elegiac melody. The clear fresh light of dawn, the splendour of noonday, the mellow tints of sunset, and the sad gray hues of evening are all there. It is a tree which bears the leaves and buds and blossoms and fruitage of the Greek spirit on its boughs at once. Many intervals in the life of the nation which are represented by no other portion of its literature—the ending, for example, of the first century before Christ—here receive a brilliant illustration. Again there is no more signal proof of the cosmopolitan nature of the later Greek culture than is afforded by the Anthology. From Rome, Alexandria, Palestine, Byzantium, no less than from the isles and continent of Greece, are recruited the poets whose works are enshrined in this precious Golden Treasury of fugitive pieces.

The history of the Anthology is not without interest. By a gradual process of compilation and accretion it grew into its present form from very slight beginnings. The first impulse to collect epigrams seems to have originated in connection with archæology. From the very earliest the Greeks were in the habit of engraving sentences, for the most part in verse, upon their temples, statues, trophies, tombs, and public monuments of all kinds. Many of these inscriptions were used by Herodotus and Thucydides as authorities for facts and dates. But about 200 B.C. one Polemon made a general collection of the authentic epigrams to be found upon the public buildings of the Greek cities. After him Alcetas copied the dedicatory verses at Delphi. Similar collections are ascribed to Mnestor and Apellas Ponticus. Aristodemus is mentioned as the compiler of the epigrams of Thebes. Philochorus performed the same service for Athens. Neoptolemus of Paros and the philosopher Euhemerus are also credited with similar antiquarian labours. So far, the collectors of epigrams had devoted themselves to historical monuments; and of their work, in any separate form at least, no trace exists. But Meleager of Gadara (60 B.C.) conceived the notion of arranging in alphabetical order a selection of lyric and erotic poetry, which he dedicated to his friend Diocles. He called this compilation by the name of *στέφανος*, or wreath, each of the forty-six poets whom he admitted into his book being represented by a flower. Philip of Thessalonica in the time of Trajan, following his example, incorporated into the garland of Meleager those epigrams which had acquired celebrity in the interval. About the same time or a little later, Straton of Sardis made a special anthology of poems on one class of subjects, which is known as the *μοῦσα παιδική* (poems on boy-love), and into which, besides ninety-eight of his own epigrams, he admitted many of the

compositions of Meleager, Philip, and other predecessors. These collections belong to the classical period of Greek literature. But the Anthology, as we possess it, had not yet come into existence. It remained for Agathias, a Byzantine Greek of the age of Justinian, to undertake a comprehensive compilation from all the previous collections. After adding numerous poems of a date posterior to Straton, especially those of Paulus Silentiarius, Macedonius, Rufinus, and himself, he edited his *κύκλος ἐπιγραμμάτων* (cycle of epigrams), divided into seven books. The first book contained dedicatory epigrams, the second descriptive poems, the third epitaphs, the fourth reflections on the various events of life, the fifth satires, the sixth erotic verses, the seventh exhortations to enjoyment. Upon the general outline of the Anthology as arranged by Agathias two subsequent collections were founded. Constantinus Cephalas, in the tenth century, at Byzantium, and in the reign of Constantinus Porphyrogenitus, undertook a complete revision and recombination of all pre-existing anthologies. With the patience of a literary bookworm, to whom the splendid libraries of the metropolis were accessible, he set about his work, and gave to the Greek Anthology that form which it now bears. But the vicissitudes of the Anthology did not terminate with the labours of Cephalas. Early in the fourteenth century a monk, Planudes, set to work upon a new edition. It appears that he contented himself with compiling and abridging from the collection of Cephalas. His principal object was to expurgate it from impurities and to supersede it by what he considered a more edifying text. Accordingly he emended, castrated, omitted, interpolated, altered, and remodelled at his own sweet will: "Non magis disposuit quam mutilavit et ut ita dicam castravit hunc librum, detractis lascivioribus epigrammatis, ut ipse gloriatur," says Lascaris in the preface to his edition of the Planudean Anthology.¹ He succeeded, however, to the height of his desire; for copies ceased to be made of the Anthology of Cephalas; and when Europe in the fifteenth century awoke to the study of Greek literature, no other collection but that of Planudes was known. Fortunately for this most precious relic of antiquity, there did exist one exemplar of the Anthology of Cephalas. Having escaped the search of Poggio, Aurispa, Filelfo, Poliziano, and of all the emissaries whom the Medici employed in ransacking the treasure-houses of Europe, this unique manuscript was at last discovered in 1606 by Claude de Saumaise, better known as Milton's antagonist Salmasius, in the Palatine Library at Heidelberg. A glance at this treasure assured the young scholar—for Saumaise was then aged only twenty-two—that he had made one of the most important discoveries which remained within the reach of modern students. He spent years in preparing a critical edition of its text; but all his work was thrown away: for the Leyden publishers to whom he applied refused to publish the

¹ "He mutilated, and, so to speak, castrated this book quite as much as he arranged its contents, by withdrawing the more lascivious epigrams, according to his own boast."

Greek without a Latin version, and death overtook him before he had completed the requisite labour. Meanwhile the famous Palatine MS. had been transferred, after the sack of Heidelberg in 1623, to the Vatican, as a present to Pope Gregory XV. Isaac Voss, the rival of Saumaise, induced one Lucas Langermann to undertake a journey to Rome, in order that he might make a faithful transcript of the MS. and publish it, to the annoyance of the great French scholar. But Saumaise dying in 1653, the work, undertaken from motives of jealousy, was suspended. The MS. reposed still upon the shelves of the Vatican Library; and in 1776 the Abbé Giuseppe Spalletti completed a trustworthy copy of its pages, which was bought by Ernest Duke of Gotha and Altenburg for his library. In the year 1797 the MS. itself was transferred to Paris after the treaty of Tolentino; and in 1815 it was restored to Heidelberg, where it now reposes. Meanwhile Brunck had published, from copies of this MS., the greater portion of the Anthology in his *Analecta Veterum Poetarum Græcorum*; and Jacobs between 1794 and 1814 had edited the whole collection with minutest accuracy upon the faith of the Abbé Spalletti's exemplar. The edition of Didot, to which I shall refer in my examination of the Anthology,¹ is based not only on the labours of Brunck and Jacobs, but also upon the MSS. of the unfortunate Chardon de la Rochette, who, after spending many years of his life in the illustration of the Anthology of Cephalas, was forced in old age to sell his collections for a small sum. They passed in 1836 into the possession of the (then) Imperial Library.

The Palatine MS., which is our sole authority for the Anthology as arranged by Cephalas, is a 4to parchment of 710 pages. It has been written by different hands, at different times, and on different plans of arrangement. The index does not always agree with the contents, but seems to be that of an older collection, of which the one we possess is an imperfect copy. Yet Cephalas is often mentioned, and always with affectionate reverence, by the transcribers of the MS. In one place he is called *ὁ μακάριος καὶ ἀείμνηστος καὶ τριπόθητος ἄνθρωπος*, "the blessed man, who is ever to be held in thrice affectionate and longing recollection," the sentiment of which words we in the middle of this nineteenth century may most cordially echo.

The first section of the Anthology is devoted to Christian epigrams upon the chief religious monuments and statues of Byzantium. However these may interest the ecclesiastical student, they have no value for a critic of Greek poetry. The second section consists of a poem in hexameters upon the statues which adorned the gymnasium of Zeuxippus. Some conception may be formed, after the perusal of this very pedestrian composition, of the art-treasures which Byzantium contained in the fifth century. Authentic portraits of the great poets and philosophers

¹ Paris, 1864-1872. The translations quoted by me are taken principally from the collections of Wellesley (*Anthologia Polyglotta*) and Burgess (Bohn's Series), and from the Miscellanies of the late J. A. Symonds, M.D. The versions contributed by myself have no signature.

of Greece, as well as works of imagination illustrative of the *Iliad* and the Attic tragedies, might then be studied in one place of public resort. Byzantium had become a vast museum for the ancient world. The third section is devoted to mural inscriptions from the temple of Apollonis in Cyzicus. The fourth contains the prefaces of Meleager, Philip, and Agathias, to their several collections. The fifth, which includes 309 epigrams, is consecrated to erotic poetry. The sixth, which numbers 358, consists of a collection of inscriptions from temples and public monuments recording the illustrious actions of the Greeks or votive offerings of private persons. In the seventh we read 748 epitaphs of various sorts. The eighth carries us again into the dismal region of post-pagan literature: it contains nothing but 254 poems from the pen of Saint Gregory the Theologian. The 827 epigrams of the ninth section are called by their collector *ἐπιδεικτικά*; that is to say, they are composed in illustration of a variety of subjects, anecdotal, rhetorical, and of general interest. Perhaps this part of the whole Anthology has been the favourite of modern imitators and translators. Passing to the tenth section we find 126 semi-philosophical poems, most of which record the vanity of human life and advise mortals to make the best of their brief existence by enjoyment. The eleventh is devoted to satire. It is here that the reflex influence of Latin on Greek literature is most perceptible. The twelfth section bears the name of Straton, and exhibits in its 258 epigrams the morality of ancient Hellas under the aspect which has least attraction for modern readers. The thirteenth embraces a few epigrams in irregular metres. The fourteenth is made up of riddles and oracles. The fifteenth again has half a century of poems which could not well be catalogued elsewhere. The sixteenth contains that part of the Planudean collection which does not occur in our copy of the Anthology of Cephalas. It may be mentioned in conclusion that, with one or two very inconsiderable exceptions, none of the poems of the early Greek lyrists and Gnostic writers are received into the so-called Anthology.

To the student of Greek history and Greek customs, no section of the Anthology is more interesting than that which includes the *ἐπιγράμματα ἀναθηματικά*, the record of the public and the private votive-offerings in Hellas. Here, as in a scroll spread out before us, in the silver language of the great Simonides,¹ may be read the history of the achievements of the Greeks against Xerxes and his hosts. The heroes of Marathon, the heroes of Thermopylæ, Megistias the soothsayer, Leonidas the king, Pausanias the general, the seamen of Salamis, the Athenian cavalry, the Spartans of Plataea, all receive their special tribute of august celebration at the hands of the poet who best knew how to suit simple words to splendid actions. Again the *στήλη* (votive pillar) which commemorated in Athens the patriotic tyrannicide of

¹ I have spoken of these compositions of Simonides as though they all belonged to the Dedicatory Epigrams. A large number of them are, however, incorporated among the Epitaphs proper.

Aristogeiton, the statue of Pan which Miltiades after Marathon consecrated in honour of his victory, the trophies erected by Pausanias at Delphi to Phœbus, the altar to Zeus Eleutherios dedicated in common by all the Greeks, the tripod sent to Delphi by Gelon and the other tyrants of Sicily after their victory over the Carthaginians, for each and all of these Simonides was called on to compose imperishable verse. Our heart trembles even now when we read such lines as these :¹—

ὦ ξεν' ἀγγέλλειν Λακεδαιμονίοις ὅτι τῆδε
κειμεθα τοῖς κείνων ῥήμασι πειθόμενοι.

And who does not feel that the grandeur of the occasion exalts above all suspicion of prosiness the frigid simplicity of the following ?²—

τόνδε ποθ' Ἕλληνας ῥώμη χερός, ἔργω Ἄρηος,
εὐτόλμω ψυχῆς λήματι πειθόμενοι,
Πέρσας ἐξελάσαντες, ἐλεύθερον Ἑλλάδι κόσμον
ἰδρύσαντο Διὸς βωμὸν Ἐλευθερίου.

But it is not merely within the sphere of world-famous history that the Dedicatory Epigrams are interesting. Multitudes of them introduce us to the minutest facts of private life in Greece. We see the statues of gods hung round with flowers and scrolls, the shrines filled with waxen tablets, wayside chapels erected to Priapus or to Pan, the gods of the shore honoured with dripping clothes of mariners, the Paphian home of Aphrodite rich with jewels and with mirrors and with silks suspended by devout adorers of both sexes. A fashionable church in modern Italy—the Annunziata at Florence, for example, or St. Anthony at Padua—is not more crowded with pictures of people saved from accidents, with silver hearts and waxen limbs, with ribands and artificial flowers, with rosaries and precious stones, and with innumerable objects that only tell their tale of bygone vows to the votary who hung them there, than were the temples of our Lady of Love in Cneidos or in Corinth. In the epigrams before us we read how hunters hung their nets to Pan, and fishermen their gear to Poseidon ; gardeners their figs and pomegranates to Priapus ; blacksmiths their hammers and tongs to Hephæstus. Stags are dedicated to Artemis and Phœbus, and corn-sheaves to Demeter, who also receives the plough, the sickle, and the oxen of farmers. A poor man offers the produce of his field to Pan ; the first-fruits of the vine are set aside for Bacchus and his crew of satyrs ; Pallas obtains the shuttle of a

¹ “ To those of Lacedæmon, stranger, tell,
That, as their laws commanded, here we fell.”

JOHN STERLING.

There is no very good translation of this couplet. The difficulty lies in the word ῥήμασι. Is this equivalent to ῥήτρασι, as Cicero who renders it by *legibus* seems to think ? Or is it the same as *orders* ?

² “ What time the Greeks with might and warlike deed,
Sustained by courage in their hour of need,
Drove forth the Persians, they to Zeus that frees
This altar built, the free fair pride of Greece.”

widow who resolves to quit her life of care and turn to Aphrodite ; the eunuch Alexis offers his cymbals, drums, flutes, knife, and golden curls to Cybele. Phœbus is presented with a golden cicada, Zeus with an old ash-spear that has seen service, Ares with a shield and cuirass. A poet dedicates roses to the maids of Helicon and laurel wreaths to Apollo. Scribes offer their pens and ink and pumice-stone to Hermes ; cooks hang up their pots and pans and spits to the Mercury of the kitchen. Withered crowns and revel-cups are laid upon the shrine of Lais : Anchises suspends his white hair to Aphrodite, Endymion his bed and coverlid to Artemis, Daphnis his club to Pan. Agathias inscribes his *Daphniaca* to the Paphian queen. Prexidiké has an embroidered dress to dedicate. Alkibié offers her hair to Heré, Lais her mirror to Aphrodite, Krobylus his boy's curls to Apollo, Charixeinós his long tresses to the nymphs. Meleager yields the lamp of his love-hours to Venus ; Lucillius vows his hair after shipwreck to the sea-gods ; Evanthé gives her thyrsus and stag's hide to Bacchus. Women erect altars to Eleithuia and Asclepius after childbirth. Sophocles dedicates a thanksgiving shrine for poetic victories. Simonides and Bacchylides record their triumphs upon votive tablets. Gallus, saved from a lion, consecrates his hair and vestments to the queen of Dindymus. Prostitutes abandon their ornaments to Kupris on their marriage. The effeminate Statullion bequeaths his false curls and flutes and silken wardrobe to Priapus. Sailors offer a huge cuttlefish to the sea-deities. An Isthmian victor suspends his bit, bridle, spurs, and whip to Poseidon. A boy emerging into manhood leaves his petasos and strigil and chlamys to Hermes, the god of games. Phryné dedicates a winged Erôs as the first-fruits of her earnings. Hadrian celebrates the trophies erected by Trajan to Zeus. Theocritus writes inscriptions for Uranian Aphrodite in the house of his friend Amphicles, for the Bacchic tripod of Damomenes, and for the marble muse of Xenocles. Erinna dedicates the picture of Agatharkis. Melinna, Sabæthis, and Mikythus are distinguished by poems placed beneath their portraits. There is even a poem on the picture of a hernia dedicated apparently in some Asklepian shrine ; and a traveller erects the brazen image of a frog in thanksgiving for a draught of wayside water. Cleonymus consecrates the statues of the nymphs :—

αἱ τὰδε βένθη
ἀμβρόσιαι ῥοδέουσι στέλβετε ποσσίν ἀέλ.

“ Ambrosial nymphs, who alway tread these watery deeps with roseate feet.”

It will be seen by this rapid enumeration that a good many of the Dedicatory Epigrams are really epideiktic or rhetorical ; that is to say, they are written on imaginary subjects. But the large majority undoubtedly record such votive offerings as were common enough in Greece with or without epigrams to grace them.

What I have just said about the distinction between real and literary epigrams composed for dedications, applies still more to the

epitaphs. These divide themselves into two well-marked classes—(i.) actual sepulchral inscriptions or poems written immediately upon the death of persons contemporary with the author; and (ii.) literary exercises in the composition of verses appropriate to the tombs of celebrated historical or mythical characters. To the first class belong the beautiful epitaphs of Meleager upon Clearista (i. 307), upon Heliodora (i. 365), upon Charixinos, a boy eighteen years old (i. 363), upon Antipater of Sidon (i. 355), and the three which he designed for his own grave (i. 352). Callimachus has left some perfect models in this species of composition. The epitaph on Heracleitus, a poet of Halicarnassus, which has been exquisitely translated by the author of *Ionica*, has a grace of movement and a tenderness of pathos that are unsurpassed: ¹—

εἰπέ τις, Ἡράκλειτε, τὸν μύρον, ἐς δέ με δάκρυ
ἤγαγεν, ἐμνήσθην δ' ὄσσάκις ἀμφοτέροι
ἦλιον ἐν λέσχῃ κατεδύσαμεν· ἀλλὰ σὺ μὲν πον,
ξεν' Ἀλικαρνησεῦ, τετράπαλαι σποδιή·
αἱ δὲ τεαὶ ζῶουσιν ἀηδόνες, ἦσιν ὁ πάντων
ἀρπακτῆς Ἀΐδης οὐκ ἐπὶ χεῖρα βαλεῖ.

His epitaph on the sea-wrecked Sopolis (i. 325), though less touching, opens with a splendid note of sorrow: ²—

ὦφελε μῆδ' ἐγένοντο θοαὶ νέες· οὐ γὰρ ἂν ἡμεῖς
παῖδα Διοκλείδου Σώπολις ἐστένομεν·
νῦν δ' ὁ μὲν εἰν ἀλί πον φέρεται νέκυσ· ἀντὶ δ' ἐκείνου
ὄνομα καὶ κενεδν σῆμα παρερχόμεθα.

The following couplet upon Saon (i. 360) is marked by its perfection of brevity: ³—

τᾷδε Σάων ὁ Δίκωνος Ἀκάνθιος ἱερὸν ὕπνον
κοιμᾶται· θνάσκειν μὴ λέγε τοὺς ἀγαθοὺς.

Among the genuine epitaphs by the greatest of Greek authors, none is more splendid than Plato's upon Aster (i. 402): ⁴—

Ἄστηρ πρὶν μὲν ἔλαμπες ἐνὶ ζωοῖσιν Ἐῶσος·
νῦν δὲ θανῶν λάμπεις Ἔσπερος ἐν φθιμένοις.

¹ "They told me, Heracleitus, they told me you were dead;
They brought me bitter news to hear and bitter tears to shed.
I wept, as I remembered, how often you and I
Had tired the sun with talking and sent him down the sky.

"And now that thou art lying, my dear old Carian guest,
A handful of gray ashes, long, long ago at rest,
Still are thy pleasant voices, thy nightingales, awake,
For Death, he taketh all away, but them he cannot take."

W. CORY.

² "Would that swift ships had never been; for so
We ne'er had wept for Sopolis: but he
Dead on the waves now drifts; while we must go
Past a void tomb, a mere name's mockery."

³ "Here lapped in hallowed slumber Saon lies,
Asleep, not dead; a good man never dies."
J. A. SYMONDS, M.D.

⁴ "Thou wert the morning star among the living,
Ere thy fair light had fled;
Now, having died, thou art as Hesperus giving
New splendour to the dead."

SHELLEY.

To Plato also is ascribed a fine monumental epigram upon the Eretrian soldiers who died at Ecbatana (i. 322) :¹—

οἶδε ποτ' Αἰγαίοιο βαρύβρομον οἶδμα λιπόντες
 'Εκβατάνων πεδίῳ κείμεθ' ἐνὶ μεσάτῳ.
 χαίρε κλυτή ποτε πατρίς 'Ερέτρια· χαίρετ' 'Αθήναι
 γείτονες Εὐβοίης· χαίρε θάλασσα φίλη.

Erinna's epitaph on Baucis (i. 409) deserves quotation, because it is one of the few pieces accepted by the later Greeks, but probably without due cause, as belonging to a girl whose elegiacs were rated by the ancients above Sappho's :²—

στᾶλαι καὶ Σειρῆνες ἔμαλ καὶ πένθυμε κρωσσὲ
 ὅστις ἔχεις 'Αἶδα τᾶν ὀλίγων σποδιάν,
 τοῖς ἐμὸν ἐρχομένοισι παρ' ἥριον εἶπατε χαίρειν,
 αἰτ' ἄστοι τελέθωντ' αἰθ' ἑτέρας πόλιος·
 χῶτι με νύμφαν εἶσαν ἔχει τάφος εἶπατε καὶ τό·
 χῶτι πατήρ μ' ἐκάλει Βαυκίδα χῶτι γένος
 Τηνια, ὡς εἰδῶντι· καὶ ὅτι μοι ἄ συνεταιρίσ
 'Ηρινν' ἐν τύμβῳ γράμμ' ἐχάραξε τόδε.

Sappho herself has left the following lament for the maiden Timas (i. 367) :³—

Τιμάδος ἄδε κόνις, τὰν δὴ πρὸ γάμοιο θανοῦσαν
 δέξατο Φερσεφόνας κῆνεος θάλαμος,
 ἄς καὶ ἀποφθιμένας πᾶσαι νεοθᾶγι σιδάρῳ
 ἄλικες ἡμερτὰν κρατὸς ἔθεντο κόμαν.

In each of these epitaphs, the untimely fading of a flower-like maiden in her prime has roused the deepest feeling of the poetess. This indeed is the chord which rings most truly in the sepulchral lyre of the Greeks. Their most genuine sorrow is for youth cut off before the joys of life were tasted. This sentiment receives, perhaps, its most pathetic though least artistic expression in the following anonymous epitaph on a young man. The mother's love and anguish are

¹ "We who once left the Ægean's deep-voiced shore.
 Lie 'neath Ecbatana's champaign, where we fell.
 Farewell, Eretria, thou famed land of yore,
 And neighbour Athens, and loved sea, farewell."

² "Pillars of death, carved Sirens, tearful urns,
 In whose sad keeping my poor dust is laid,
 To him, who near my tomb his footsteps turns,
 Stranger or Greek, bid hail ; and say a maid
 Rests in her bloom below ; her sire the name
 Of Baucis gave ; her birth and lineage high ;
 And say her bosom friend Erinna came
 And on this tomb engraved her elegy."

ΕΙΤΟΝ.

³ "This is the dust of Timas, whom unwed
 Persephone locked in her darksome bed :
 For her, the maids who were her fellows shore
 Their curls and to her tomb this tribute bore."

set forth with a vividness which we should scarcely have expected from a Greek (i. 336) :¹—

νηλεὲς ὦ δαῖμον, τί δέ μοι καὶ φέγγος ἔδειξας
 εἰς ὀλίγων ἐτέων μέτρα μιννυθάδια ;
 ἢ ἵνα λυπήσῃς δι' ἐμὴν βίῳτοιο τελευτήν
 μητέρα δειλαίην δάκρυσιν καὶ στοναχαῖς,
 ἢ μ' ἔτεχ' ἢ μ' ἀτίτηλε καὶ ἡ πολὺ μείζονα πατρὸς
 φροντίδα παιδείης ἤνυσεν ἡμετέρης ;
 ὅς μὲν γὰρ τυτθὸν τε καὶ ὄρφανὸν ἐν μεγάροισιν
 κάλλιπεν· ἢ δ' ἐπ' ἐμοὶ πάντας ἔτλη καμάτων.
 ἢ μὲν ἐμοὶ φίλον ἦεν ἐφ' ἀγνῶν ἡγεμονίῳ
 ἐμπρεπέμεν μύθοις ἀμφὶ δικασπολίας·
 ἀλλὰ μοι οὐ γενῶν ἐπεδέξατο κούριμον ἀνθος
 ἡλικίης ἐρατῆς, οὐ γάμον, οὐ δαΐδας·
 οὐχ ὑμέναιον ἀεῖσε περικλυτόν, οὐ τέκος εἶδε,
 δόσποτος, ἐκ γενεῆς λείψανον ἡμετέρης,
 τῆς πολυθρηνήτου· λυπεῖ δέ με καὶ τεθνεῶτα
 μητρὸς Πωλίττης πένθος ἀεζόμενον,
 Φρόντωνος γοεραῖς ἐπὶ φροντίσιν, ἢ τέκε παῖδα
 ὠκύμορον, κενεὸν χάρμα φίλης πατρίδος.

The common topic of consolation in these cases of untimely death is the one which Shakespeare has expressed in the Dirge for Fidele, and D'Urfey in his Dirge for Chrysostom by these four lines :—

“ Sleep, poor youth, sleep in peace,
 Relieved from love and mortal care ;
 Whilst we that pine in life's disease,
 Uncertain-blessed, less happy are.”

Lucian, speaking of a little boy who died at five years of age (i. 332), makes him cry :²—

ἀλλὰ με μὴ κλαίσις· καὶ γὰρ βίῳτοιο μετέσχοι
 παύρου καὶ παύρων τῶν βίῳτοιο κακῶν.

¹ “ Merciless heaven ! why didst thou show me light
 For so few years and speedy in their flight ?
 Was it to vex by my untimely death
 With tears and wailings her who gave me breath ?
 Who bore me, and who reared me, and who wrought
 More for my youth, with many a careful thought,
 Than my dead sire : he left me in his hall
 An orphan babe : 'twas she alone did all.
 My joy it was beneath grave men of laws,
 Just pleas to urge and win approved applause ;
 But from my cheek she never plucked the flower
 Of charming youth, nor dressed my bridal bower,
 Nor sang my marriage hymn, nor saw, ah me !
 My offspring shoot upon our ancient tree,
 That now is withered. Even in the tomb
 I wail Politta's woe, the gloom on gloom
 That swells her grief for Phronton ; since a boy
 In vain she bore, his country's empty joy.”

² “ Nay, friend, bewail me not : 'tis true I had
 Little of life, yet little of life's bad.”

A little girl in another epitaph (i. 366) says to her father : ¹—

ἴσχεο λύπας,
Θειόδοτε· θνατοὶ πολλάκι δυστυχέες.

A young man, dying in the prime of life, is even envied by Agathias (i. 384) : ²—

ἐμπης ἄλβιος οὗτος, δς ἐν νεότητι μαρανθεῖς
ἐκφυγε τὴν βίτου θάσσον ἀλιτροσύνην.

But it is not often that we hear in the Greek Anthology a strain of such pure and Christian music as this apocryphal epitaph on Proté : ³—

οὐκ ἔθaves, Πρώτη, μετέβης δ' ἐς ἀμείνονα χῶρον,
καὶ ναίεις μακάρων νήσους θαλήη ἐνι πολλῇ,
ἐνθα κατ' Ἑλλισίων πεδίων σκιρτώσα γέγηθας
ἀνθεσιν ἐν μαλακοῖσι, κακῶν ἔκτοσθεν ἀπάντων·
οὐ χειμῶν λυπεῖ σ', οὐ καῦμ', οὐ νοῦσος ἐνοχλεῖ,
οὐ πεινῆς, οὐ δίψος ἔχει σ'· ἀλλ' οὐδὲ ποθεινὸς
ἀνθρώπων ἐτι σοι βίωτος· ζῶεις γὰρ ἀμέμπτως
ἀγαθῆς ἐν καθαραῖσιν Ὀλύμπου πλήσιον ἔντος.

Death at sea touched the Greek imagination with peculiar vividness. That a human body should toss, unburied, unhonoured, on the waves, seemed to them the last indignity. Therefore the epitaphs on Satyrus (i. 348), who exclaims : ⁴—

κείνῳ δινῆεντι καὶ ἀτρυγέτῳ ἐτι κείμει
ῥδατι μαινομένῳ μεμφόμενος Βορέη,

and on Lysidiké (i. 328), of whom Zenocritus writes : ⁵—

χαῖται σου στάζουσιν ἔθ' ἄλμυρὰ δύσμορε κούρη
ναυηγὲ φθιμένης εἰν ἄλλ' Λυσιδίκη.

¹ "Thy tears restrain,
Theodotus : life oft brings naught but pain."

² "Yet was he blessed, who, withering in his prime,
Sooner escaped the smirch of life and time."

³ "Thou art not dead, my Proté ! thou art flown
To a far country better than our own ;
Thy home is now an Island of the Blest ;
There 'mid Elysian meadows take thy rest :
Or lightly trip along the flowery glade,
Rich with the asphodels that never fade !
Nor pain, nor cold, nor toil, shall vex thee more,
Nor thirst, nor hunger on that happy shore ;
Nor longings vain (now that blest life is won)
For such poor days as mortals here drag on ;
To thee for aye a blameless life is given
In the pure light of ever-present Heaven."

J. A. SYMONDS, M.D.

⁴ "Now lapped in billowy wastes of weltering seas,
I curse the madness of the wild north breeze."

⁵ "Thy hair still drops with brine of the salt sea ;
Unhappy girl, shipwrecked Lysidiké !"

and on the three athletes who perished by shipwreck (i. 342), have a mournful wail of their own. Not very different, too, is the pathos of Therimachus struck by lightning (i. 306) :¹—

αὐτόμαται δεδιη ποτὶ ταῦλιον αἱ βόες ἦλθον
 ἐξ ὄρεος πολλῇ νιφόμεναι χιόνι·
 αἰαί, Θηρίμαχος δὲ παρὰ δρυὶ τὸν μακρὸν εὐδαι
 ἕπνον· ἐκοιμήθη δ' ἐκ πυρὸς οὐρανοῦ.

It is pleasant to turn from these to epitaphs which dwell more upon the qualities of the dead than the circumstances of their death. Here is the epitaph of a slave (i. 379) :²—

Ζωσίμη ἢ πρὶν εὐδῶσα μόνῳ τῷ σώματι δούλη
 καὶ τῷ σώματι νῦν εὐρεν ἐλευθερίην.

Here is a buffoon (i. 380) :³—

Νηλεΐης Ἀϊδῆς· ἐπὶ σοὶ δ' ἐγέλασσε θανόντι,
 Τίτυρε, καὶ νεκῶν θῆκέ σε μιμολόγον.

Perhaps the most beautiful of the sepulchral epigrams is one by an unknown writer, of which I here give a free paraphrase (*Anth. Pal.* vii. 346) :—

“ Of our great love, Parthenophil,
 This little stone abideth still
 Sole sign and token :
 I seek thee yet, and yet shall seek,
 Though faint mine eyes, my spirit weak
 With prayers unspoken.

“ Meanwhile, best friend of friends, do thou,
 If this the cruel fates allow,
 By death's dark river,
 Among those shadowy people, drink
 No drop for me on Lethe's brink :
 Forget me never ! ”

Of all the literary epitaphs by far the most interesting are those written for the poets, historians, and philosophers of Greece. Reserving these for separate consideration I pass now to mention a few which belong as much to the pure epigram as to the epitaph. When, for example, we read two very clever poems on the daughters of Lycambes (i. 339), two again on a comically drunken old woman (i. 340, 360), and five on a man who has been first murdered and then buried by his murderer (i. 340), we see that, though the form of the epitaph has been adopted, clever rhetoricians, anxious only to display their skill,

¹ “ Home to their stalls at eve the oxen came
 Down from the mountain through the snow-wreaths deep ;
 But ah, Therimachus sleeps the long sleep
 'Neath yonder oak, lulled by the levin-flame.”

² “ She who was once but in her flesh a slave
 Hath for her flesh found freedom in the grave.”

³ “ Hades is stern ; but when you died, he said,
 Smiling, ‘ Be jester still among the dead.’ ”

have been at work in rivalry. Sardanapalus, the eponym of Oriental luxury, furnishes a good subject for this style of composition. His epitaph runs thus in the Appendix Planudea (ii. 532) :¹—

εὖ εἰδὼς ὅτι θνητὸς ἔφυς, τὸν θυμὸν ἀεξε
 τερπόμενος θαλήσει· θανόντι σοι οὐτις ὀνησις·
 καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼ σποδὸς εἰμι, Νίνου μεγάλης βασιλεύσας.
 τόσσ' ἔχω ὄσσ' ἔφαγον καὶ ἐφύβρισα, καὶ μετ' ἔρωτος
 τέρπην' ἐδάην· τὰ δὲ πολλὰ καὶ ὀλβία κείνα λείπεται.
 ἦδε σοφὴ βιότοιον παραίνεσις ἀνθρώποισιν.

We find only the fourth and fifth lines among the sepulchral epigrams of the Anthology of Cephalas (i. 334), followed by a clever parody composed by the Theban Crates. Demetrius, the Spartan coward, is another instance of this rhetorical exercise. Among the two or three which treat of him I quote the following (i. 317) :²—

ἀνὶκ' ἀπὸ πτολέμου τρέσσαντὰ σε δέξατο μάτηρ,
 πάντα τὸν ὀπλιστᾶν κόσμον ὀλωλεκότα,
 αὐτὰ τοὶ φονίαν, Δαμάτριε, αὐτίκα λόγχαν
 εἴπε διὰ πλατῶν ὠσαμένα λαγόνων·
 κάτθανε, μῆδ' ἐχέτω Σπάρτα ψόγον· οὐ γὰρ ἐκείνα
 ἤμπλακεν, εἰ δειλοῦς τούμων ἔθρεψε γάλα.

Agathias writes a very characteristic elegy on *Lais* (i. 315) :³—

ἔρωτον εἰς Ἐφύρην τάφον ἔδρακον ἀμφὶ κελευθὸν
 Λαΐδος ἀρχαίης, ὡς τὸ χάραγμα λέγει·
 δάκρυ δ' ἐπισπέσας, χαίροις γύναι, ἐκ γὰρ ἀκουῆς
 οὐκτεῖρω σέ γ', ἔφην, ἦν πάρος οὐκ ἰδύμενη·
 ἃ πρόσον ἠϊθέων νόον ἤκαχες· ἀλλ' ἴδε Λήθην
 ναίεις, ἀγλατὴν ἐν χθονὶ κατθεμένην.

An epitaph on the inutility of epitaphs is an excellent novelty, especially when the witty poet (Paulus Silentiarius) has the humour to

¹ " Know well that thou art mortal : therefore raise
 Thy spirit high with long luxurious days.
 When thou art dead, thou hast no pleasure then.
 I too am earth, who was a king of men
 O'er Nineveh. My banquets and my lust
 And love-delights are mine e'en in the dust ;
 But all those great and glorious things are flown.
 True doctrine for man's life is this alone."

² " When homeward cowering from the fight you ran
 Without or sword or shield, a naked man,
 Your mother then, Demetrius, through your side
 Plunged her blood-drinking spear, nor wept, but cried :
 Die ; let not Sparta bear the blame ; for she
 Sinned not, if cowards drew their life from me ! "

³ " Travelling to Ephyré, by the road-side
 The tomb and name of *Lais* I espied :
 I wept and said : ' Hail, queen, the fame of thee,
 Though ne'er I saw thee, draws these tears from me ;
 How many hearts for thee were broken, how
 By *Lethe* lustreless thou liest now ! "

make the ghost eager to speak while the wayfarer is inattentive (i. 332) :¹—

*ὄνομά μοι. τί δὲ τοῦτο; πατρίς δέ μοι. ἐς τί δὲ τοῦτο;
κλειοῦ δ' εἰμὶ γένους. εἰ γὰρ ἀφαιροτάτου;
ζήσας δ' ἐνδόξως ἔλιπον βίον. εἰ γὰρ ἀδόξως;
κείμεναι δ' ἐνθάδε νῦν. τίς τίμιν ταῦτα λέγεις;*

The value of the epitaphs on poets and great men of Greece is this—that, besides being in many cases of almost perfect beauty, they contain the quintessence of ancient criticism. Every epithet is carefully so chosen as to express what the Greeks thought peculiar and appropriate to the spirit and the works of their heroes. Orpheus is the subject of the following exquisite elegy by Antipater of Sidon (i. 274) :²—

*οὐκέτι θελγομένης, Ὀρφεῦ, δρύας, οὐκέτι πέτρας
ἄξεις, οὐ θηρῶν αὐτονόμους ἀγέλας·
οὐκέτι κοιμάσεις ἀνέμων βρόμον, οὐχὶ χάλαζαν,
οὐ νιφετῶν συρμούς, οὐ παταγεύσαν ἄλα.
ὦλεο γάρ· σὲ δὲ πολλὰ κατωδύραντο θυγάτρες
Μναμοσύνας, μάτηρ δ' ἔξοχα Καλλιόπα·
τί φθιμένοις στοναχεῦμεν ἐφ' υἱάσιν, ἀνικ' ἀλακτεῖν
τῶν παιδῶν Ἀΐδην οὐδὲ θεοὺς δόναμις;*

Sophocles receives a gift of flowers and ivy, and quiet sleep from Simmias the Theban (i. 277) :³—

*ἡρέμ' ὑπὲρ τύμβοιο Σοφοκλέος, ἡρέμα, κισσέ,
ἐρπύξοις, χλοεροῦς ἐκπροχέων πλοκάμους,
καὶ πέταλον πάντη θάλλοι ῥόδου, ἥ τε φιλοῦρῶξ
ἄμπελος, ὑγρὰ περίξ κλήματα χευαμένη,
εἴνεκεν εὐεπίης πινυτόφρονος, ἣν ὁ μελιχρὸς
ἤσκησεν Μουσῶν ἀμμιγα καὶ Χαρίτων.*

¹ "My name, my country—what are they to thee?
What, whether base or proud my pedigree?
Perhaps I far surpassed all other men;
Perhaps I fell below them all; what then?
Suffice it, stranger! that thou see'st a tomb;
Thou know'st its use; it hides—no matter whom."

W. COWPER.

² "Orpheus! No more the rocks, the woods no more,
Thy strains shall lure; no more the savage herds,
Nor hail, nor driving clouds, nor tempest's roar,
Nor chafing billows list thy lulling words;
For thou art dead: and all the muses mourn,
But most Calliope, thy mother dear.
Shall we then, reft of sons, lament forlorn,
When e'en the Gods must for their offspring fear?"

J. A. SYMONDS, M.D.

³ "Wind, gentle evergreen, to form a shade
Around the tomb where Sophocles is laid;
Sweet ivy, wind thy boughs, and intertwine
With blushing roses and the clustering vine:
Thus will thy lasting leaves, with beauties hung,
Prove grateful emblems of the lays he sung;
Whose soul, exalted like a God of wit,
Among the Muses and the Graces writ."

Anon.

Among the nine epitaphs on Euripides none is more delicate than the following by Ion (i. 282) : 1—

χαῖρε μελαμπετάλοις, Εὐριπίδη, ἐν γνάλοισι
Πιερίας τὸν αἰὲ νυκτὸς ἔχων θάλαμον·
ἴσθι δ' ὑπὸ χθονὸς ὦν, ὅτι σοι κλέος ἀφθιτον ἔσται
ἴσον Ὀμηρείαις ἀνάοις χάρισιν.

Where could a poet be better lulled to rest than among the black-leaved hollows of Pieria? But the most touching tribute to Euripides is from the pen of a brother dramatist, the comic poet Philemon (ii. 94) : 2—

εἰ ταῖς ἀληθείαισιν οἱ τεθνηκότες
αἰσθησιν εἶχον, ἄνδρες ὡς φασὶν ἴνες,
ἀπηγξάμην ἂν ὥστ' ἰδεῖν Εὐριπίδην.

Aristophanes is praised by Antipater of Thessalonica (ii. 37) as the comic poet who laughed and hated rightly :—

κωμικὴ καὶ στόξας ἀξία καὶ γελάσας.

His plays are characterised as full of fearful graces (*φοβερῶν πληθόμενοι χαρίτων*). Over the grave of Anacreon, who receives more tributes of this kind than any other poet, roses are to bloom, and wine is to be poured, and the thoughts of Smerdis, Bathyllus, and Megistias are to linger. Antipater of Sidon in particular paid honour to his grave (i. 278) : 3—

θάλλοι τετρακόρυμβος, Ἀνάκρεον, ἀμφὶ σὲ κιστὸς
ἀβρά τε λειμώνων πορφυρέων πέταλα·
πηγαὶ δ' ἀργινέεντος ἀναθλίβοντο γάλακτος,
εὐώδες δ' ἀπὸ γῆς ἡδὺν χέοιτο μέθυ,
ὄφρα κέ τοι σποδιῇ τε καὶ ὀστέα τέρψην ἄρῃται,
εἰ δὴ τις φθιμένοις χρίμπτεται εὐφροσύνα,
ὦ τὸ φίλον στέρξας, φίλε, βάρβιτον, ὦ σὺν αἰοιδῶ
πάντα διαπλώσας καὶ σὺν ἔρωτι βίον.

-
- 1 "Hail, dear Euripides, for whom a bed
In black-leaved vales Pierian is spread :
Dead though thou art, yet know thy fame shall be
Like Homer's green through all eternity."
- 2 "If it be true that in the grave the dead
Have sense and knowledge, as some men assert,
I'd hang myself to see Euripides."
- 3 "Around the tomb, O bard divine !
Where soft thy hallowed brow reposes,
Long may the deathless ivy twine,
And summer pour his waste of roses !
"And many a fount shall there distil,
And many a rill refresh the flowers ;
But wine shall gush in every rill,
And every fount yield milky showers.
"Thus, shade of him whom nature taught
To tune his lyre and soul to pleasure,
Who gave to love his warmest thought,
Who gave to love his fondest measure ;
"Thus, after death, if spirits feel,
Thou may'st, from odours round thee streaming,
A pulse of past enjoyment steal,
And live again in blissful dreaming."—T. MOORE.

The same poet begins another epitaph thus : ¹—

*τύμβος Ἀνακρείοντος ὁ Τηϊὸς ἐνθάδε κύκνος
εὔδει χῆ παιδῶν ζῳροτάτη μαρίη.*

Less cheerful are the sepulchres of the satirists. We are bidden not to wake the sleeping wasp upon the grave of Hipponax (i. 350) : ²—

*ὦ ξέῳε, φεῦγε τὸν χαλασεπῆ τάφον
τὸν φρικτὸν Ἰππώνακτος, οὔτε χά τέφρα
ιαμβιάζει Βουπάλειον ἐς στύγος,
μή πως ἐγέλῃς σφήκα τὸν κοιμώμενον,
ὅς οὐδ' ἐν ἄδῃ νῦν κεκοίμικεν χόβλον,
σκάζουσι μέτροις ὀρθὰ τοξεύσας ἔπη.*

The same thought is repeated with even more of descriptive energy, in an epitaph on Archilochus (i. 287) : ³—

*σῆμα τὸδ' Ἀρχιλόχου παραπόντιον, ὅς ποτε πικρῆν
μοῦσαν ἐχιδναίῳ πρῶτος ἔβαψε χόβλῳ,
αἰμάξας Ἐλικῶνα τὸν ἡμερον' οἶδε Λυκάμβης
μυρόμενος τρισσῶν ἄμματα θυγατέρων·
ἡρέμα δὴ παράμειψον, ὀδοιπόρε, μή ποτε τοῦδε
κινήσης τύμβῳ σφήκας ἐφεζομένους.*

Diogenes offers similar opportunities for clever writing. The best of his epitaphs is this well-known but anonymous dialogue (i. 285) : ⁴—

*εἰπέ, κύον, τίνος ἀνδρὸς ἐφεστῶς σῆμα φυλάσσεις ;
τοῦ Κυνός· ἀλλὰ τίς ἦν οὗτος ἀνὴρ ὁ Κύνων ;
Διογένης. γένος εἰπέ. Σιωπεύς. ὅς πίθον ᾤκει ;
καὶ μάλα· νῦν δὲ θανῶν ἀστέρας οἶκον ἔχει.*

The epitaphs on Erinna, who died when she was only nineteen, are charged with the thought which so often recurs when we reflect

¹ "This is Anacreon's tomb : the Teian swan
Sleeps here ; life's fever and love's madness gone."

² "Stranger, beware ! This grave hurls words like hail :
Here dwells the dread Hipponax, dealing bale.
E'en 'mid his ashes, fretful, poisonous,
He shoots Iambics at slain Bupalus.
Wake not the sleeping wasp : for though he's dead,
Still straight and sure his crooked lines are sped."

³ "Here sleeps Archilochus by the salt sea ;
Who first with viper's gall the muse did stain,
And bathed mild Helicon with butchery.
Lycambes weeping for his daughters three
Learned this. Pass then in silence : be not fain
To stir the wasps that round his grave remain."

⁴ "Tell me, good dog, whose tomb you guard so well ?
The Cynic's. True : but who that Cynic, tell.
Diogenes, of fair Sinope's race.
What ! He that in a tub was wont to dwell ?
Yes : but the stars are now his dwelling-place."

on poets like Chatterton untimely slain ;—what would not they have done, if they had lived ? (i. 275) : 1—

ὁ γλυκὺς Ἑρίνης οὗτος πόνος, οὐχὶ πολλὸς μὲν
ὡς ἂν παρθενικᾶς ἐννεακαιδεκέτευς,
ἀλλ' ἑτέρων πολλῶν δυνατώτερος· εἰ δ' Ἀϊδᾶς οἱ
μὴ ταχὺς ἦλθε, τίς ἂν ταλκίον ἔσχε' ὄνομα ;

Sappho rouses a louder strain of celebration (i. 276) : 2—

Σαπφῷ τοι κεύθεις χθῶν Αἰολί τὰν μετὰ Μούσαις
ἀθανάταις θνατὰν Μοῦσαν ἀειδομένην,
ἂν Κύπρις καὶ Ἑρως σὺν ἅμ' ἔτραφον, ἄς μετὰ Πειθῷ
ἔπλεκ' ἀείζων Πιερίδων στέφανον,
Ἑλλάδι μὲν τέρψιν, σοὶ δὲ κλέος· ὦ τριέλκτον
Μοῖραι δινεῦσαι νῆμα κατ' ἠλακάτας,
πῶς οὐκ ἐκλώσασθε πανάφθιτον ἡμᾶρ ἀοιδῷ
ἀφθιτα μῆσαμένα δῶρ' Ἑλικωνιάδων ;

That is the composition of Antipater of Sidon, who excels in this special style. Without losing either the movement or the passion of poetry, he is always delicate and subtle in his judgments. His epigrams on Pindar are full of fire (i. 280) : 3—

Πιερικὰν σάλπιγγα, τὸν εὐαγέων βαρὺν ὕμνων
χαλκευτὰν, κατέχει Πίνδαρον ἄδε κόνις,
οὐ μέλος εἰσαῖων φθέγγαιό κεν, ὡς ποτε Μουσῶν
ἐν Κάδμου θαλάμοις σμήνος ἀνεπλάσατο.

The very quintessence of criticism is contained in the phrases *σάλπιγξ*, *χαλκευτὰς* (clarion, forger of bronze). The Appendix Planudea (ii. 590) contains another epitaph on Pindar by Antipater, which for its beautiful presentation of two legends connected with his life deserves to be quoted : 4—

νεβρῆων ὀπίσον σάλπιγξ ὑπερίαχεν αὐλῶν,
τόσσον ὑπὲρ πάσας ἔκραγε σείο χέλυσ·

¹ "These are Erinna's songs : how sweet, though slight !—
For she was but a girl of nineteen years :—
Yet stronger far than what most men can write :
Had Death delayed, whose fame had equalled hers ?"

² "Does Sappho then beneath thy bosom rest,
Æolian earth ? that mortal Muse confessed
Inferior only to the choir above,
That foster-child of Venus and of Love ;
Warm from whose lips divine Persuasion came,
Greece to delight, and raise the Lesbian name ?
O ye, who ever twine the three-fold thread,
Ye Fates, why number with the silent dead
That mighty songstress, whose unrivalled powers
Weave for the Muse a crown of deathless flowers ?"—FRANCIS HODGSON.

³ "Pieria's clarion, he whose weighty brain
Forged many a hallowed hymn and holy strain,
Pindar, here sleeps beneath the sacred earth :
Hearing his songs, a man might swear the brood
Of Muses made them in their hour of mirth,
What time round Cadmus' marriage-bed they stood."

⁴ "As the war-trumpet drowns the rustic flute,
So when your lyre is heard all strings are mute :

οὐδὲ μάτην ἀπαλοῖς περὶ χεῖλεσιν ἔσμος ἐκείνος
 ἔπλασε κηρόδετον, Πίνδαρε, σείο μέλι.
 μάρτυς ὁ Μαινάλιος κερβεῖς θεὸς ὕμνον ἀείσας
 τὸν σέο καὶ νομίῳ λησάμενος δονάκων.

It is impossible to do justice to all these utterances on the early poets.—Æschylus (i. 281) : ¹—

ὁ τραγικὸν φώνημα καὶ ὀφρυύεσσαν ἀοιδὴν
 πυργώσας στιβαρῇ πρώτος ἐν εὐπέλῃ.

Alcman (i. 277) : ²—

τὸν χαρίεντ' Ἀλκμᾶνα, τὸν ὑμνητῆρ' ὕμνεαίων
 κύκνον, τὸν Μουσῶν ἀξία μελιψάμενον.

Stesichorus (ii. 36) : ³—

Ὅμηρικὸν δὲ τ' ἀπὸ ρέυμα
 ἔσπασας οἰκελοῖς, Στησίχορ', ἐν καμάτοις.

Ibycus (ii. 36) : ⁴—

ἠδὺ τε Πειθοῦς,
 Ἴβυκε, καὶ παίδων ἄνθος ἀμυσάμενε.

Enough has been quoted to show the delicate and appreciative criticism of the later and lighter Greek poets for the earlier and grander. It is also consolatory to find that almost no unknown great ones are praised in these epigrams; whence we may conclude that the masterpieces of Greek literature are almost as numerous now as they were in the age of Nero. The philosophers receive their due meed of celebration. Plato can boast of two splendid anonymous epitaphs (i. 285) : ⁵—

γαῖα μὲν ἐν κόλποις κρύπτει τὸδε σῶμα Πλάτωνος,
 ψυχὴ δ' ἀθάνατον τάξιν ἔχει μακάρων.

and ⁶—

αἰετέ, τίπτε βέβηκας ὑπὲρ τάφον; ἢ τίνος, εἰπέ,
 ἀστερόεντα θεῶν οἶκον ἀποσκοπέεις;

Not vain the labour of those clustering bees
 Who on your infant lips spread honey-dew ;
 Witness great Pan who hymned your melodies,
 Pindar, forgetful of his pipes for you."

¹ "He who the tragic style, the lofty rhyme,
 Built high, first, firm, with eloquence sublime."

² "Delightful Alcman, swan-like singer, sweet,
 Of hymeneal hymns for Muses meet."

³ "And thou, Stesichorus, well-taught to lead
 Homer's broad river through thy lyric reed."

⁴ "Ibycus, thou who, through song's meadow mowing,
 Reapest persuasion and boys' bloom ablowing."

⁵ "Earth in her breast hides Plato's dust : his soul
 The blest immortals in their ranks enrol."

⁶ "Eagle ! why soarest thou above the tomb ?
 To what sublime and star-ypaven home
 Floatest thou ?

*ψυχῆς εἰμι Πλάτωνος ἀποπταμένης ἐς Ὀλυμπον
εἰκῶν· σῶμα δὲ γῆ γηγενές Ἀθθῆς ἔχει.*

It is curious to find both Thucydides (ii. 119) and Lycophron (ii. 38) characterised by their difficulty.

Closely allied in point of subject to many of the epitaphs are the so-called hortatory epigrams, *ἐπιγράμματα προτρεπτικά*. These consist partly of advice to young men and girls to take while they may the pleasures of the moment, partly of wise saws and maxims borrowed from the Stoics and the Cynics, from Euripides and the comic poets. Lucian and Palladas are the two most successful versifiers in this style. Palladas, whose life falls in the first half of the fifth century, a Pagan who regarded with disgust the establishment of Christianity, attained by a style of "elegant mediocrity" to the perfection of proverbial philosophy in verse. When we remember that the works of Euripides, Menander, Philemon, Theophrastus, and the Stoics were mines from which to quarry sentiments about the conduct of life, we understand the general average of excellence below which he rarely falls and above which he never rises. Yet in this section, as in the others of the Anthology, some of the anonymous epigrams are the best. Here is one (ii. 251):¹—

*εἰς αἶδην ἰθεῖα κατήλυσις, εἴτ' ἀπ' Ἀθηνῶν
στείχοις, εἴτε νέκυσ νῆσαι ἐκ Μερῶς·
μὴ σέ γ' ἀνιάτω πάτρης ἀποτῆλε θανόντα·
πάντοθεν εἰς ὃ φέρων εἰς αἶδην ἀνεμος.*

Here is another, which repeats the old proverb of the cup and the lip (ii. 257):—

πολλὰ μεταξὺ πέλει κύλικος καὶ χεῖλεος ἄκρου.

And another, on the difference between the leaders and the followers in the pomp of life (ii. 270):—

πολλοὶ τοι ναρθηκοφόροι παῦροι δὲ τε βάκχοι.

"One Bacchus, but a crowd of Thyrsé-bearers."

Equally without author's name is the following excellent prayer (ii. 271):²—

*Ζεῦ βασιλεῦ τὰ μὲν ἐσθλὰ καὶ εὐχομένοις καὶ ἀνεύκτοις
ἄμμι δίδου· τὰ δὲ λυγρὰ καὶ εὐχομένων ἀπερύκοις.*

I am the image of swift Plato's spirit,
Ascending heaven: Athens does inherit
His corpse below."—SHELLEY.

¹ "Straight is the way to Acheron,
Whether the spirit's race is run
From Athens or from Meroë:
Weep not, far off from home to die;
The wind doth blow in every sky,
That wafts us to that doleful sea."—J. A. SYMONDS, M.D.

² "God, grant us good, whether or not we pray;
But e'en from praying souls keep bad away."

Lucian gives the following good advice on the use of wealth (ii. 256) :¹—

ὡς τεθνηξόμενος τῶν σῶν ἀγαθῶν ἀπόλαυε,
ὡς δὲ βιωσόμενος φείδεο σῶν κτεάνων·
ἔστι δ' ἄνθρωπος σοφὸς οὗτος ὃς ἀμφω ταῦτα νοήσας
φειδοῖ καὶ δαπάνη μέτρον ἐφημιβύστατο.

Agathias asks why we need fear death (ii. 264) :²—

τὸν θάνατον τί φοβεῖσθε, τὸν ἡσυχίης γενετήρα,
τὸν παύοντα νόσους καὶ πενίης δόνας ;
μοῦνον ἅπαξ θνητοῖς παραγίνεται, οὐδὲ ποτ' αὐτὸν
εἶδέν τις θνητῶν δεύτερον ἐρχόμενον·
αἱ δὲ νόσοι πολλαὶ καὶ ποικίλαι, ἄλλοτ' ἐπ' ἄλλον
ἐρχόμεναι θνητῶν καὶ μεταβαλλόμεναι.

The remainder of my quotations from this section will all be taken from Palladas. Here is his version of the proverb attributed to Democritus that life's a stage (ii. 265) :³—

σκηνὴ πᾶς ὁ βίος καὶ παίγριον· ἢ μάθε παίζειν
τὴν σπουδὴν μεταθεῖς ἢ φέρε τὰς δόνας.

Here, again, is the old complaint that man is Fortune's plaything (ii. 266) :⁴—

παίγριόν ἐστι τύχης μερόπων βίος, οἰκτρὸς, ἀλήτης,
πλούτου καὶ πενίης μεσσόθι ρεμβόμενος.
καὶ τοὺς μὲν κατάγουσα πάλιν σφαιρηδὸν ἀείρει,
τοὺς δ' ἀπὸ τῶν νεφελῶν εἰς αἴθρη κατάγει.

Here again, but cadenced in Iambics, is the Flight of Time (ii. 266) :⁵—

ὦ τῆς βραχείας ἡδονῆς τῆς τοῦ βίου·
τὴν δεύτητα τοῦ χρόνου πενήθησατε·
ἡμεῖς καθεζόμεσθα καὶ κοιμώμεθα,
μοχθοῦντες ἢ τρυφῶντες· ὁ δὲ χρόνος τρέχει,
τρέχει καθ' ἡμῶν τῶν ταλαιπώρων βροτῶν,
φέρων ἐκάστου τῷ βίῳ καταστροφὴν.

¹ "Your goods enjoy, as if about to die ;
As if about to live, use sparingly.
That man is wise, who, bearing both in mind,
A mean, befitting waste and thrift, can find."—BURGESS.

² "Why shrink from Death, the parent of repose,
The cure of sickness and all human woes ?
As through the tribes of men he speeds his way,
Once, and but once, his visit he will pay ;
Whilst pale diseases, harbingers of pain,
Close on each other crowd—an endless train."—W. SHEPHERD.

³ "All life's a scene, a jest : then learn to play,
Dismissing cares, or bear your pains away."

⁴ "This wretched life of ours is Fortune's ball ;
'Twi't wealth and poverty she bandies all :
These, cast to earth, up to the skies rebound ;
These, tossed to heaven, come tumbling to the ground."

GOLDWIN SMITH.

⁵ "O for the joy of life that disappears !—
Weep then the swiftness of the flying years :
We sit upon the ground and sleep away,
Toiling or feasting ; but time runs for aye,
Runs a fell race against poor wretched man,
Bringing for each the day that ends his span."

The next epigram is literally bathed in tears (ii. 267) :¹—

δακρυχέων γενόμην καὶ δακρύσας ἀποθνήσκω·
 δάκρυσι δ' ἐν πολλοῖς τὸν βίον εὖρον ὄλον.
 ὦ γένος ἀνθρώπων πολυδάκρυτον, ἀσθενές, οἰκτρὸν,
 φαινόμενον κατὰ γῆς καὶ διαλυόμενον.

When he chooses to be cynical, Palladas can present the physical conditions of human life with a crude brutality which is worthy of a monk composing a chapter *De Contemptu humanæ miseræ* (on the scorn of human wretchedness). It is enough to allude to the epigrams upon the birth (ii. 259) and the breath (ii. 265) of man. To this had philosophy fallen in the death of Greece. One more quotation from Palladas has a touch of pathos. The old order has yielded to the new : Theodosius has closed the temples : the Greeks are in ashes : their very hopes remain among the dead (ii. 268) :²—

Ἕλληνές ἐσμεν ἄνδρες ἐσποδωμένοι,
 νεκρῶν ἔχοντες ἐλπίδας τεθαμμένας·
 ἀνεστράφη γὰρ πάντα νῦν τὰ πράγματα.

With this wail the thin lamentable voice of the dessicated rhetorician ceases.

Akin to these hortatory epigrams, in their tone of settled melancholy, are some of the satiric and convivial. It is necessary, when we think of the Greeks as the brightest and sunniest of all races, to remember what songs they sang at their banquets, and to comfort ourselves with the reflection that between their rose-wreaths and the bright Hellenic sky above them hung for them, no less than for ourselves, the cloud of death.

What more dismal drinking-song can be conceived than this ? (i. 337) :³—

οὐδὲν ἀμαρτήσας γενόμην παρὰ τῶν με τεκόντων·
 γεννηθεῖς δ' ὁ τάλας ἔρχομαι εἰς Ἀΐδην·
 ὦ μῖζις γονέων θανατηφόρος· ὦμοι ἀνάγκη
 ἢ με προσπελάσει τῷ στυγερῷ θανάτῳ·
 οὐδὲν ἐὼν γενόμενος· πάλιν ἔσσομαι ὡς πάρος οὐδέν·
 οὐδὲν καὶ μηδὲν τῶν μερόπων τὸ γένος·

¹ "Tears were my birth-right ; born in tears,
 In tears too must I die ;
 And mine has been, through life's long years,
 A tearful destiny.

"Such is the state of man ; from birth
 To death all comfortless :
 Then swept away beneath the earth
 In utter nothingness."—EDWARD STOKES.

² "We Hellenes, we are men reduced to dust ;
 Our hopes are hopes of dead folk underground ;
 For now have all things upside-down been turned."

³ "My sire begat me ; 'twas no fault of mine :
 But being born, in Hades I must pine :
 O birth-act that brought death ! O bitter fate
 That drives me to the grave disconsolate !
 To nought I turn, who nothing was ere birth ;
 For men are nought and less than nothing worth.

λοιπόν μοι τὸ κύπελλον ἀποστίλβωσον, ἑταῖρε,
καὶ λύπης ἀκονὴν τὸν Βρόμιον πάρεχε.

The good sense of Cephalas placed it among the epitaphs ; for in truth it is the quintessence of the despair of the grave. Yet its last couplet forces us to drag it from the place of tombs, and put it into the mouth of some late reveller of the decadence of Hellas. It has to my ear the ring of a drinking-song sung in a room with closed shutters, after the guests have departed, by some sad companion, who does not know that the dawn has gone forth, and the birds are aloft in the air. The shadow of night is upon him. Though Christ be risen and the sun of hope is in the sky, he is still as cheerless as Mimnermus. If space sufficed it would be both interesting and profitable to compare this mood of the epigrammatists with that expressed by Omar Khayyám, the Persian poet of Khorassán, in whose quatrains philosophy, melancholy, and the sense of beauty are so wonderfully mingled that to surpass their pathos is impossible in verse.¹ Here is another of the same tone (ii. 287) : ²—

ἦώς ἐξ ἠὼς παραπέμπεται, εἴτ' ἀμελούντων
ἡμῶν ἐξαίφνης ἤξει ὁ πορφύρεος,
καὶ τοὺς μὲν τήξας, τοὺς δ' ὀπτήσας, ἐνίους δὲ
φυσήσας, ἄξει πάντας ἐς ἓν βάραθρον.

And another with a more delicate ring of melancholy in the last couplet (ii. 289) : ³—

ὑπνώεις ὦ 'ταῖρε· τὸ δὲ σκύφος αὐτὸ βοᾷ σε·
ἔγρεο, μὴ τέρπου μοιριδίῃ μελέτῃ·
μὴ φείσῃ Διόδωρε· λάβρος δ' εἰς Βάκχον ὀλισθῶν
ἄχρισ ἐπὶ σφαλεροῦ ζωροπτότει γόνατος·
ἔσασθ' ἄτ' οὐ πύμεσθα, πολλὸς πολλός· ἀλλ' ἄγ' ἐπέιγου.
ἡ συνετὴ κροτάφων ἄπτεται ἡμετέρων.

And yet another (ii. 294),⁴ which sounds like the Florentine Carnival Song composed by Lorenzo de' Medici :—

“ Chi vuol esser lieto sia ;
Di doman non è contezza : ”

πῖνε καὶ εὐφραίνου· τί γὰρ αὔριον ἢ τί τὸ μέλλον
οὐδεὶς γινώσκει· μὴ τρέχε, μὴ κοπία·

Then let the goblet gleam for me, my friend ;
Pour forth care-soothing wine, ere pleasures end.”

¹ See Fitzgerald's faultless translation of the *Rubáiyát* of Omar Khayyam, published by Quaritch.

² “ Morn follows morn ; till while we careless play
Comes suddenly the darksome king, whose breath
Or wastes or burns or blows our life away,
But drives us all down to one pit of death.”

³ “ Thou sleepest, friend : but see, the beakers call !
Awake, nor dote on death that waits for all.
Spare not, my Diodorus, but drink free
Till Bacchus loose each weak and faltering knee.
Long will the years be when we can't carouse—
Long, long : up then ere age hath touched our brows.”

⁴ “ Drink and be merry. What the morrow brings
No mortal knoweth : wherefore toil or run ?

ὡς δύνασαι, χάρισαι, μετάδος, φάγε, θνητὰ λογιζοῦ.
 τὸ ζῆν τοῦ μὴ ζῆν οὐδὲν ἄλλως ἀπέχει.
 πᾶς ὁ βίος τοιάσδε βροπή μόνον· ἂν προλάβῃς σοῦ,
 ἂν δὲ θάνης ἑτέρου πάντα· σὺ δ' οὐδὲν ἔχεις.

But the majority of the ἐπιγράμματα σκωπτικὰ, or jesting epigrams, are not of this kind. They are written for the most part, in Roman style, on ugly old women, misers, stupid actors, doctors to dream of whom is death, bad painters, poets who kill you with their elegies, men so light that the wind carries them about like stubble, or so thin that a gossamer is strong enough to strangle them; vices, meannesses, deformities of all kinds. Lucilius, a Greek Martial of the age of Nero, is both best and most prolific in this kind of composition. But of all the sections of the Anthology this is certainly the least valuable. The true superiority of Greek to Latin literature in all its species is that it is far more a work of pure beauty, of unmixed poetry. In Lucilius the Hellenic muse has deigned for once to assume the Roman toga, and to show that if she chose, she could rival the hoarse-throated satirists of the empire on their own ground. But she has abandoned her lofty eminence, and descended to a lower level. The same may be said in brief about the versified problems and riddles (ii. pp. 467-490), which are not much better than elegant acrostics of this or the last century. It must, however, be remarked that the last-mentioned section contains a valuable collection of Greek oracles.

Of all the amatory poets of the Anthology, by far the noblest is Meleager. He was a native of Gadara in Palestine, as he tells us in an epitaph composed in his old age:—

πάτρα δέ με τεκνοῦ
 Ἄθλις ἐν Ἀσσυρίοις ναιομένα, Γάδαρα.¹

It is curious to think of this town, which from our childhood we have connected with the miracle of the demoniac and the swine, as a Syrian Athens, the birthplace of the most mellifluous of all erotic songsters. Meleager's date is half a century or thereabouts before the Christian era. He therefore was ignorant of the work and the words of one who made the insignificant place of his origin world-famous. Of his history we know really nothing more than his own epigrams convey; the two following couplets from one of his epitaphs record his sojourn during different periods of his life at Tyre and at Ceos:—

ὄν θεόπαις ἠνδρωσε Τύρος Γαδάρων θ' ἱερὰ χθών.
 Κῶς δ' ἐρατῇ Μερόπων πρέσβυν ἐγηροτρόφει.
 Ἄλλ' εἰ μὲν Σύρος ἐσσί, Σάλαμ' εἰ δ' οὖν σύγε Φοῖνιξ,
 Ναιδίος· εἰ δ' Ἑλλην, χαῖρε· τὸ δ' αὐτὸ φράσον.²

Spend while thou mayst, eat, fix on present things
 Thy hopes and wishes: life and death are one.
 One moment: grasp life's goods: to thee they fall:
 Dead, thou hast nothing, and another all."—GOLDWIN SMITH.

¹ "The country that gave birth to me is Gadara, an Attic city on Assyrian shores."

² "Who grew to man's estate in Tyre and Gadara, and found a fair old age in Cos. If then thou art a Syrian, Salaam! if a Phœnician, Naidios! if a Hellene, Hail!"

This triple salutation, coming from the son of Gadara and Tyre and Ceos, brings us close to the pure humanity which distinguished Meleager. Modern men, judging him by the standard of Christian morality, may feel justified in flinging a stone at the poet who celebrated his Muiscos and his Diocles, his Heliadora and his Zenophila, in too voluptuous verse. But those who are content to criticise a pagan by his own rule of right and wrong, will admit that Meleager had a spirit of the subtlest and the sweetest, a heart of the tenderest, and a genius of the purest that has been ever granted to an elegist of earthly love. While reading his verse, it is impossible to avoid laying down the book and pausing to exclaim: How modern is the phrase, how true the passion, how unique the style! Though Meleager's voice has been mute a score of centuries, it yet rings clear and vivid in our ears; because the man was a real poet, feeling intensely, expressing forcibly and beautifully, steeping his style in the fountain of tender sentiment which is eternal. We find in him none of the cynicism which defiles Straton, or of the voluptuary's despair which gives to Agathias the morbid splendour of decay, the colours of corruption. All is simple, lively, fresh with joyous experience in his verse.

The first great merit of Meleager as a poet is limpidity. A crystal is not more transparent than his style; but the crystal to which we compare it must be coloured with the softest flush of beryl or of amethyst. Here is a little poem in praise of Heliadora (i. 85):¹—

πλέξω λευκίον, πλέξω δ' ἀπαλὴν ἄμα μύρτοις
 νάρκισσον, πλέξω καὶ τὰ γελῶντα κρίνα,
 πλέξω καὶ κρίκον ἠδὺν· ἐπιπλέξω δ' ὑάκινθον
 πορφυρέην, πλέξω καὶ φιλέραστα ῥόδα,
 ὡς ἂν ἐπὶ κροτάφοις μυροβοστρύχου Ἡλιοδόρας
 εὐπλόκαμον χαίτην ἀνοβολῇ στέφανος.

Nothing can be more simple than the expression, more exquisite than the cadence of these lines. The same may be said about the elegy on Clearisté (i. 307):²—

οὐ γάμον ἀλλ' Ἄϊδαν ἐπινυμφίδιον Κλεαρίστα
 δέξατο, παρθενίας ἄμματα λυομένα·
 ἄρτι γὰρ ἑσπέριοι νύμφας ἐπὶ δικλίσιν ἄχρην
 λῶτοὶ καὶ θαλάμων ἐπλαταγεῖντο θύραι·

¹ "I'll twine white violets, and the myrtle green;
 Narcissus will I twine, and lilies sheen;
 I'll twine sweet crocus, and the hyacinth blue;
 And last I twine the rose, love's token true:
 That all may form a wreath of beauty, meet
 To deck my Heliadora's tresses sweet."

GOLDWIN SMITH.

² "Poor Clearisté loosed her virgin zone
 Not for her wedding, but for Acheron;
 'Twas but last eve the merry pipes were swelling,
 And dancing footsteps thrilled the festive dwelling;

ἠψοὶ δ' ὀλολυγμὸν ἀνέκραγον, ἐκ δ' Ἑμέναιος
 σιγαθεῖς γοερὸν φθέγμα μεθαρμύσατο·
 αἱ δ' αὐταὶ καὶ φέγγος ἐδαδούχουν παρὰ παστῶ
 πευκαί, καὶ φθιμένα νέρθεν ἔφαινον ὄδῳ.

The thought of this next epigram recalls the song to Ageanax in Theocritus' seventh Idyll (ii. 402) :¹—

ὄβριος ἐμπνεύσας ναύταις Νότος, ὦ δυσέρωτες,
 ἡμῶσι μὲν ψυχᾶς ἄρπασεν Ἄνδράγαθον·
 τρὶς μάκαρες νᾶες, τρὶς δ' ἔλβια κύματα πόντου,
 τετράκι δ' εὐδαίμων παιδοφορῶν ἀνεμος·
 εἴθ' εἴη δελφίς ἔν' ἐμοῖς βαστακτὸς ἐπ' ὤμοις
 πορφμευθεὶς ἐσίδη τὰν γλυκύπαιδα Ἴρδον.

These quotations are sufficient to set forth the purity of Meleager's style, though many more examples might have been borrowed from his epigrams on the cicada, on the mosquitoes who tormented Zenophila, on Antiochus, who would have been Erôs if Erôs had worn the boy's petasos and chlamys. The next point to notice about him is the suggestiveness of his language, his faculty of creating the right epithets and turning the perfect phrase that suits his meaning. The fragrance of the second line in this couplet is undefinable but potent :²—

ὦ δυσέρως ψυχὴ παύσαι ποτε καὶ δι' ὀνείρων
 εἰδώλοισι κάλλευσ κωφὰ χλιανομένη.

It is what all day-dreamers and castle-builders, not to speak of the dreamers of the night, must fain cry out in their despair. The common motive of a lover pledging his absent mistress is elevated to a region of novel beauty by the passionate repetition of words in this first line :³—

ἔγχει καὶ πάλιν εἰπέ πάλιν πάλιν Ἡλιωδώρας.

In the same way a very old thought receives new exquisiteness in the last couplet of the epitaph on Heliodora :⁴—

ἀλλά σε γουνοῦμαι Γῆ παντρόφε τὰν πανόδουρον
 ἡρέμα σοῖς κόλπῳσι μᾶτερ ἐναγκάλισαι.

Morn changed those notes for wailings loud and long,
 And dirges drowned the hymeneal song ;
 Alas ! the very torches meant to wave
 Around her bridal couch, now light her to the grave ! "

J. A. SYMONDS, M.D.

¹ " Fair blows the breeze : the seamen loose the sail :—
 O men that know not love, your favouring gale
 Steals half my soul, Andragathos from me !
 Thrice lucky ships, and billows of the sea
 Thrice blessed, and happiest breeze that bears the boy !
 O would I were a dolphin that my joy,
 Here on my shoulders ferried, might behold
 Rhodes, the fair island thronged with boys of gold ! "

² " O soul too loving, cease at length from even in dreams thus idly basking in the warmth of beauty's empty shapes."

³ " Pour forth ; and again cry, again, and yet again, ' To Heliodora ! ' "

⁴ " I pray thee, Earth, all-nourishing, in thy deep breast, O mother, to enfold her tenderly, for whom my tears must flow for aye."

The invocation to Night, which I will next quote, has its own beauty derived from the variety of images which are subtly and capriciously accumulated: 1—

ἐν τῷδε παμμήτειρα θεῶν λίτομαι σε φίλη Νύξ.
ναί λίτομαι κώμων σύμπλανε πότνια Νύξ.

But Meleager's epithets for Love are perhaps the triumphs of his verbal coinage: 2—

ἔστι δ' ὁ παῖς γλυκύδακρυς ἀείλαλος ὡκὺς ἀταρβῆς
σιμὰ γελῶν πτεροῦς νῶτα φαρετροφόρος.

Again he calls him *ἀβροπέδιλος ἔρως* (delicate-sandalled Love) and fashions words like *ψυχαπάτης*, *ύπναπάτης* (soul-cheating and sleep-cheating), to express the qualities of the treacherous god. In some of his metaphorical descriptions of passion he displays a really fervid imagination. To this class of creation belong the poem on the soul's thirst (ii. 414), on the memory of beauty that lives like a fiery image in the heart (ii. 413), and the following splendid picture of the tyranny of love. He is addressing his soul, who has once again incautiously been trapped by Erôs: 3—

τί μάτην ἐνὶ δεσμοῖς
σπαίρεις; αὐτὸς ἔρως τὰ πτερά σου δέδεκεν,
καί σ' ἐπὶ πῦρ ἔστησε, μύρους δ' ἔβρανε λιπόπνονν,
δῶκε δὲ διψώσῃ δάκρυα θερμὰ πιεῖν.

Surely a more successful marriage of romantic fancy to classic form was never effected even by a modern poet. This line again contains a bold and splendid metaphor: 4—

κωμάζω δ' οὐκ οἶνον ὑπὸ φρένα πῦρ δὲ γεμισθεῖς.

Meleager had a soul that inclined to all beautiful and tender things. Having described the return of spring in a prolonged chant of joy, he winds up with words worthy of a Troubadour or Minnesinger in the April of a new age: 5—

πῶς οὐ χρῆ καὶ αἰοδὸν ἐν εἰαρι καλὸν αἶσαι;

The cicada, *δροσεραῖς σταγόνεσσι μεθυσθεῖς* (drunken with honey-drops of dew), the *αὐτοφυῆς μίμημα λύρας* (nature's own mimic of the lyre)—a conceit by the way in the style of Marini or of Calderon—the bee whom he addresses as *ἀνθοδίαιτε μέλισσα* (flower-pasturing bee), and all the flowers for which he has found exquisite epithets, the *φίλομβρος νάρκισσος* (narcissus that loves the rain of heaven),

¹ "This one boon I ask of thee, great mother of all gods, beloved Night! Nay, I beseech thee, thou fellow-wanderer with revelry, O holy Night!"

² "The boy is honey-teared, tireless of speech, swift, without sense of fear, with laughter on his roguish lips, winged, bearing arrows in a quiver on his shoulders."

³ "Why vainly in thy bonds thus pant and fret? Love himself bound thy wings and set thee on a fire, and rubbed thee, when thy breath grew faint, with myrrh, and when thou thirstedst, gave thee burning tears to drink."

⁴ "A reveller I go freighted with fire not wine beneath the region of my heart."

⁵ "How could it be that poet also should not sing fair songs in spring?"

the *φιλέραστα ῥόδα* (roses to lovers dear), the *οὔρεσίφοιτα κρίνα* (lilies that roam the mountain sides), and again *τὰ γελῶντα κρίνα* (laughing lilies), testify to the passionate love and to the purity of heart with which he greeted and studied the simplest beauties of the world.¹ In dealing with flowers he is particularly felicitous. Most exquisite are the lines in which he describes his garland of the Greek poets and assigns to each some favourite of the garden or the field, and again those other couplets which compare the boys of Tyre to a bouquet culled by love for Aphrodite. *Βαῖα μὲν ἀλλὰ ῥόδα* (slight things perhaps, but roses): these are the words in which Meleager describes the too few but precious verses of Sappho, and for his own poetry they have a peculiar propriety. *Τεαὶ ζῶουσιν ἀηδόνες* (thy nightingales still live) we may say, quoting Callimachus, when we take leave of him. His poetry has the sweetness and the splendour of the rose, the rapture and full-throated melody of the nightingale.

Next in artistic excellence to Meleager among the amatory poets is Straton, a Greek of Sardis, who lived in the second century. But there are few readers who, even for the sake of his pure and perfect language, will be prepared to tolerate the immodesty of his subject-matter. Straton is not so delicate and subtle in style as Meleager; but he has a masculine vigour and *netteté* of phrase peculiar to himself. It is not possible to quote many of his epigrams. He suffers the neglect which necessarily obscures those men of genius who misuse their powers. Yet the story of the garland-weaver (ii. 396), and the address to school-masters (ii. 219), are too clever to be passed by without notice.

The former of these pieces I have paraphrased, as follows:—

“To-day, when dawn was dim, I went
 Before the garland-weaver’s stall,
 And saw a boy whose beauty sent,
 Like stars of autumn when they fall,
 An arrow of swift fire that left
 Glory upon the gloom it cleft.

“Roses he wove to make a wreath,
 And roses were his cheeks and lips,
 And faintly flushed the flowers beneath
 The roses of his finger-tips:
 He saw me stand in mute amaze,
 And rosy blushes met my gaze.

“‘O flower that weavest flowers,’ I said;
 ‘Fair crown, where myrtle-blossoms white
 Mingle with Cyprian petals red
 For love’s ineffable delight,
 Tell me what god or hero blest
 Shall bind thy garland to his breast:’

¹ Those who on the shores of the Mediterranean have traced out beds of red tulips or anemones or narcissus from terraces to terraces, over rocks, and under olive branches, know how delicately true to nature is the thought contained in the one epithet *οὔρεσίφοιτα*—roaming like nymphs along the hills—now single and now gathered into companies, as though their own sweet will had led them wandering.

“ Or can it be that even I
 Who am thy slave to save or slay,
 With price of prayers and tears may buy
 Thy roses ere they fade away ? ’
 He smiled, and deeper blushed, and laid
 One finger on his lips, and said :

“ Peace, lest my father hear ! ’ then drew
 A blossom from the crown, and pressed
 Its perfume to the pinks that blew
 Upon the snow-wreath of his breast,
 And kissed, and gave the flower to be
 Sweet symbol of assent to me.

“ Roses and wreaths with shy pretence,
 As for a bridal feast, I bought ;
 And veiling all love’s vehemence
 In languor, bade the flowers be brought
 To deck my chamber by the boy
 Who brings therewith a better joy.”

The following epigram on a picture of Ganymede gives a very fair notion of Straton’s style (ii. 425) :¹—

*στείχε πρὸς αἰθέρα διον, ἀπέρχεο παῖδα κομίζων,
 αἰετὲ, τὰς διφυεῖς ἐκπετάσας πτέρυγας,
 στείχε τὸν ἄβρὸν ἔχων Γανυμήδεα, μηδὲ μεθείης
 τὸν Διὸς ἠδίστων οἰνοχόον κυλίκων·
 φείδω δ’ αἰμάξαι κούρον γαμψώνυχι ταρσῶ
 μὴ Ζεὺς ἀλγήσῃ τοῦτο βαρυνόμενος.*

To this may be added an exhortation to pleasure in despite of death (ii. 288).²

Callimachus deserves mention as a third with Meleager and Straton. His style, drier than that of Meleager, more elevated than Straton’s, is marked by a frigidity of good scholarship which only at intervals warms into the fire of passionate poetry. In writing epigrams Callimachus was careful to preserve the pointed character of the composition. He did not merely, as is the frequent wont of Meleager, indite a short poem in elegiacs. This being the case, his love poems, though they are many, are not equal to his epitaphs.

¹ “ Soar upward to the air divine :
 Spread broad thy pinions aquiline :
 Carry amid thy plumage him,
 Who fills Jove’s beaker to the brim :
 Take care that neither crooked claw
 Make the boy’s thigh or bosom raw ;
 For Jove will wish thee sorry speed
 If thou molest his Ganymede.”

² “ Drink now, and love, Democrates ; for we
 Shall not have wine and boys eternally :
 Wreathe we our heads, anoint ourselves with myrrh,
 Others will do this to our sepulchre :
 Let now my living bones with wine be drenched ;
 Water may deluge them when I am quenched.”

To mention all the poets of the amatory chapters would be impossible. Their name is legion. Even Plato the divine, by right of this epigram to Aster : 1—

*ἀστέρας εἰσαθρεῖς ἀστήρ ἐμός· εἶθε γενοίμην
οὐρανὸς ὡς πολλοῖς βμμασιν εἰς σέ βλέπω—*

and of this to Agathon : 2—

*τὴν ψυχὴν Ἀγάθωνα φίλων ἐπὶ χεῖλεσιν ἔσχον·
ἦλθε γὰρ ἡ τλήμων ὡς διαβησομένη—*

takes rank in the erotic cycle. Yet we may touch in passing on the names of Philodemus and Antipater, the former a native of Gadara, the latter a Sidonian, whose epitaph was composed by Meleager. Their poems help to complete the picture of Syrian luxury and culture in the cities of North Palestine, which we gain when reading Meleager. Of Philodemus the liveliest epigram is a dialogue, which seems to have come straight from the pages of some comedy (i. 68) ; but the majority of his verses belong to that class of literature which finds its illustration in the *Gabinetto Segreto* of the Neapolitan Museum. Occasionally he strikes a true note of poetry, as in this invocation to the moon : 3—

*νυκτερινῇ δίκερως φιλοπάννυχε φαῖνε σελήνη,
φαῖνε δι' εὐτρήτων βαλλομένη θυρίδων·
αὔγαζε χρυσέην Καλλιστιον' ἐς τὰ φιλεύντων
ἔργα κατοπττεύειν οὐ φθόνος ἀθανάτη,
ὀλβίβεις καὶ τήνδε καὶ ἡμέας οἶδα σελήνη·
καὶ γὰρ σὴν ψυχὴν ἐφλεγεν Ἐνδυμίων.*

Antipater shines less in his erotic poems than in the numerous epigrams which he composed on the earlier Greek poets, especially on Anacreon, Erinna, Sappho, Pindar, Ibycus. He lived at a period when the study of the lyrics was still flourishing, and each of his couplets contains a fine and thoughtful piece of descriptive criticism.

Another group of amatory poets must be mentioned. Agathias, Macedonius, and Paulus Silentarius, Greeks of Byzantium about the age of Justinian, together with Rufinus, whose date is not quite certain, yield the very last fruits of the Greek genius, after it had been corrupted

1 "Gazing at stars, my star ? I would that I were the welkin,
Starry with infinite eyes, gazing for ever at thee !"

FREDERICK FARRAR.

2 "Kissing Helena, together
With my kiss, my soul beside it
Came to my lips, and there I kept it,—
For the poor thing had wandered thither,
To follow where the kiss should guide it,
Oh cruel I to intercept it !"—SHIELLEY.

3 "Shine forth, night-wandering, horned, and vigilant queen
Through the shy lattice shoot thy silver sheen ;
Illumine Callistion : for a goddess may
Gaze on a pair of lovers while they play.
Thou enviest her and me, I know, fair moon,
For thou didst once burn for Endymion."

by the lusts of Rome and the effeminacy of the East. Very pale and hectic are the hues which give a sort of sickly beauty to their style. Their epigrams vary between querulous lamentations over old age and death, and highly coloured pictures of self-satisfied sensuality. Rufinus is a kind of second Straton in the firmness of his touch, the cynicism of his impudicity. The complaint of Agathias to the swallows that twittered at his window in early dawn (i. 102), his description of Rhodanthé and the vintage feast (ii. 297),¹ and those lines in which he has anticipated Jonson's lyric on the kiss which made the wine within the cup inebriating (i. 107), may be quoted as fair specimens of his style. Of Paulus Silentarius I do not care to allude to more than the poem in which he describes the joy of two lovers (i. 106). What Ariosto and Boiardo have dwelt on in some of their most brilliant episodes, what Giorgione has painted in the eyes of the shepherd who envies the kiss given by Rachel to Jacob, is here compressed into eighteen lines of great literary beauty. But a man need be neither a prude nor a Puritan to turn with sadness and with loathing from these last autumnal blossoms on the tree of Greek beauty. The brothel and the grave are all that is left for Rufinus and his contemporaries. Over the one hangs the black shadow of death; the other is tenanted by ghosts of carnal joy:—

“ when lust,
By unchaste looks, loose gestures, and toul talk,
But most by lewd and lavish act of sin,
Lets in defilement to the inward parts,
The soul grows clotted by contagion,
Imbodies, and imbrutes, till she quite lose
The divine property of her first being.
Such are those thick and gloomy shadows damp
Oft seen in charnel-vaults and sepulchres
Lingering, and sitting by a new-made grave,
As loth to leave the body that it loved,
And linked itself by carnal sensuality
To a degenerate and degraded state.”²

Before taking leave of the erotic poets of the Anthology, I shall here insert a few translations made by me from Meleager, Straton, and some anonymous poets. The first epigram illustrates the Greek custom of going at night, after drinking, with lighted torches to the house of the

¹ “ We trod the brimming wine-press ankle-high,
Singing wild songs of Bacchic revelry :
Forth flowed the must in rills ; our cups of wood
Like cockboats swam upon the honeyed flood :
With these we drew, and as we filled them, quaffed,
With no warm Naiad to allay the draught :
But fair Rhodanthé bent above the press,
And the fount sparkled with her loveliness :
We in our souls were shaken ; yea, each man
Quaked beneath Bacchus and the Paphian.
Ah me ! the one flowed at our feet in streams—
The other fooled us with mere empty dreams ! ”

² *Comus*, 463, etc.

beloved person, and suspending garlands on the door. It is not easy to find an equivalent for the characteristic Greek word *κωμᾶζειν*. I have tried to deal with it by preserving the original allusion to the revel :—

“ The die is cast ! Nay, light the torch !
I'll take the road ! Up, courage, ho !
Why linger pondering in the porch ?
Upon Love's revel we will go.

“ Shake off those fumes of wine ! Hang care
And caution ! What has Love to do
With prudence ? Let the torches flare !
Quick, drown the doubts that hampered you !

“ Cast weary wisdom to the wind !
One thing, but one alone, I know :
Love bent e'en Jove and made him blind !
Upon Love's revel we will go ! ”

The second, by Meleager, turns upon the same custom ; but it is here treated with the originality of imagination distinctive of his style :—

“ I've drunk sheer madness ! Not with wine,
But old fantastic tales I'll arm
My heart in heedlessness divine,
And dare the road nor dream of harm !

“ I'll join Love's rout ! Let thunder break,
Let lightning blast me by the way !
Invulnerable Love shall shake
His ægis o'er my head to-day.”

In a third, Meleager recommends hard drinking as a remedy for the pains of love :—

“ Drink, luckless lover ! Thy heart's fiery rage
Bacchus who gives oblivion shall assuage :
Drink deep, and while thou drain'st the brimming bowl,
Drive love's dark anguish from thy fevered soul.”

Two of these little compositions deal with the old comparison between love and the sea. In the first, the lover's journey is likened to a comfortless voyage, where the house of the beloved will be for him safe anchorage after the storm :—

“ Cold blows the winter wind : 'tis Love,
Whose sweet eyes swim with honeyed tears,
That bears me to thy doors, my love,
Tossed by the storm of hopes and fears.

“ Cold blows the blast of aching Love ;
But be thou for my wandering sail,
Adrift upon these waves of love,
Safe harbour from the whistling gale ! ”

In the second, love itself is likened to the ocean, always shifting, never to be trusted :—

“ Thy love is like an April storm
 Upon a false and fickle sea :
 One day you shine, and sunny warm
 Are those clear smiles you shower on me ;
 Next day from cloudy brows you rain
 Your anger on the ruffled main.

“ Around me all the deeps are dark ;
 I whirl and wander to and fro,
 Like one who vainly steers his bark
 'Mid winds that battle as they blow :—
 Then raise the flag of love or hate,
 That I at last may know my fate ! ”

The peculiar distinction of Meleager's genius gives its special quality to the following dedication, in which the poet either is, or feigns himself to be, made captive by Love upon first landing in a strange country :—

“ The Lady of desire, a goddess, gave
 My soul to thee ;
 To thee soft-sandalled Love hath sent a slave,
 Poor naked me :

“ A stranger on a stranger's soil, tight-bound
 With bands of steel :—
 I do but pray that we may once be found
 Firm friends and leal !

“ Yet thou dost spurn my prayers, refuse my love,
 Still stern and mute ;
 Time will not melt thee, nor the deeds that prove
 How pure my suit.

“ Have pity, king, have pity ! Fate hath willed
 Thee god and lord :
 Life in thy hands and death, to break or build,
 For me is stored ! ”

The next specimen is an attempt to render into English stanzas one of Meleager's most passionate poems :—

“ Did I not tell you so, and cry :
 ‘ Rash soul, by Venus, you'll be caught !
 Ah, luckless soul, why will you fly
 So near the toils that Love had wrought ? ’

“ Did I not warn you ? Now the net
 Has tangled you, and in the string
 You vainly strive, for Love has set
 And bound your pinions, wing to wing :

“ And placed you on the flames to pine,
 And rubbed with myrrh your panting lip,
 And when you thirsted given you wine
 Of hot and bitter tears to sip.

“ Ah, weary soul, fordone with pain !
 Now in the fire you burn, and now
 Take respite for a while again,
 Draw better breath and cool your brow !

“ Why weep and wail ? What time you first
 Sheltered wild Love within your breast,
 Did you not know the boy you nursed
 Would prove a false and cruel guest ?

“ Did you not know ? See, now he pays
 The guerdon of your fostering care
 With fire that on the spirit preys,
 Mixed with cold snow-flakes of despair !

“ You chose your lot. Then cease to weep :
 Endure this torment : tame your will :
 Remember, what you sowed, you reap :
 And, though it burns, 'tis honey still ! ”

Here, lastly, is an Envoy, slightly altered in the English translation from Straton's original :—

“ It may be in the years to come
 That men who love shall think of me,
 And reading o'er these verses see
 How love was my life's martyrdom.

“ Love-songs I write for him and her,
 Now this, now that, as Love dictates ;
 One birthday gift alone the Fates
 Gave me, to be Love's scrivener.”

One large section of the Anthology remains to be considered. It contains what are called the *ἐπιγράμματα ἐπιδεικτικά*, or poems upon various subjects chosen for their propriety for rhetorical exposition. These epigrams, the favourites of modern imitators, display the Greek taste in this style of composition to the best advantage. The Greeks did not regard the epigram merely as a short poem with a sting in its tail—to quote the famous couplet :—

“ Omne epigramma sit instar apis : sit aculeus illi :
 Sint sua mella : sit et corporis exigui.”¹

True to the derivation of the word, which means an inscription or superscription, they were satisfied if an epigram were short and gifted with the honey-dews of Helicon.² Meleager would have called his

¹ “ Three things must epigrams, like bees, have all ;
 A sting and honey and a body small.”—*ΡΗΕΥ*.

² A certain Cyril gives this as his definition of a good epigram (ii. 75 ; compare No. 342 on p. 69) :—

*πάγκαλόν ἐστ' ἐπίγραμμα τὸ δίστιχον' ἢν δὲ παρέλθῃς
 τοὺς τρεῖς, βαψφθεῖς κούκ ἐπίγραμμα λέγεις.*

“ Two lines complete the epigram—or three :
 Write more ; you aim at epic poetry.”

Here the essence of this kind of poetry is said to be brevity. But nothing is said about a sting. And on the point of brevity, the Cyril, to whom this couplet is attributed, is far too stringent when judged by the best Greek standards. The modern notion of the epigram is derived from a study of Martial, whose strongest verses are satirical and therefore of necessity stinging.

collection a Beehive, and not a Flower-garland, if he had acknowledged the justice of the Latin definition which has just been cited. The epigrams of which I am about to speak are simply little occasional poems, fugitive pieces, *Gelegenheitsgedichte*, varying in length from two to twenty lines, composed in elegiac metre, and determined, as to form and treatment, by the exigencies of the subject. Some of them, it is true, are noticeable for their point; but point is not the same as sting. The following panegyric of Athens, for example, approximates to the epigram as it is commonly conceived (ii. 13):¹—

γῆ μὲν ἔαρ κόσμος πολυδένδρεος, αἰθέρι δ' ἄστρον,
Ἑλλάδι δ' ἦδε χθών, οἶδε δὲ τῇ πόλει.

The same may be said about the lines upon the vine and the goat (ii. 15; compare 20):²—

κῆν με φάγῃς ἐπὶ ῥίζαν ὄμως ἔτι καρποφορήσω
ὄσσον ἐπισπείσαι σοὶ τράγε θυομένῳ:

and the following satire, so well known by the parody of Porson (ii. 325):³—

πάντες μὲν Κίλικες κακοὶ ἄνθρωποι· ἐν δὲ Κίλικίῳ
εἷς ἀγαθὸς Κινύρης, καὶ Κινύρης δὲ Κίλικι.

Again the play of words in the last line of this next epigram (ii. 24) gives a sort of pungency to its conclusion:⁴—

ἀτθί κόρα μελίθραπτε, λάλος λάλον ἀρπάξασα
τέττιγα πτανοῖς δαῖτα φέρεις τέκεσιν,
τὸν λάλον ἂ λαλόεσσα, τὸν εὐπτερον ἂ πετρεόσσα,
τὸν ξένον ἂ ξείνα, τὸν θερὸν θερινά;
κούχι τάχος ῥίψις: οὐ γὰρ θέμις οὐδὲ δίκαιον
ἄλλυσθ' ὑμοπόλους ὑμοπόλους στόμασιν.

¹ "Spring with her waving trees
Adorns the earth: to heaven
The pride of stars is given:
Athens illustrates Greece:
She on her brows doth set
Of men this coronet."

² "Though thou shouldst gnaw me to the root,
Destructive goat, enough of fruit
I bear, betwixt thy horns to shed,
When to the altar thou art led."—MERIVALE.

³ "The Germans at Greek
Are sadly to seek,
Not five in five-score,
But ninety-five more;
All—save only Hermann;
And Hermann's a German."—PORSON.

⁴ "Attic maid! with honey fed,
Bear'st thou to thy callow brood
Yonder locust from the mead,
Destined their delicious food?"

The Greek epigram has this, in fact, in common with all good poems, that the conclusion should be the strongest and most emphatic portion. But in liberty of subject and of treatment it corresponds to the Italian Sonnet. Unquestionably of this kind is the famous poem of Ptolemy upon the stars (ii. 118), which recalls to mind the saying of Kant, that the two things which moved his awe were the stars of heaven above him and the moral law within the soul of man :¹—

οἶδ' ὅτι θνατὸς ἐγὼ καὶ ἐφάμερος· ἀλλ' ὅταν ἀστρῶν
μαστεύω πυκινὰς ἀμφιδρόμους ἑλικας,
οὐκέτ' ἐπιψαύω γαίης ποσίν, ἀλλὰ παρ' αὐτῶ
Ζηνὶ θεοτρεφέος πίμπλαμαι ἀμβροσίης.

The poem on human life, which has been attributed severally to Poseidippus and to Plato Comicus, and which Bacon thought worthy of imitation, may take rank with the most elevated sonnets of modern literature (ii. 71) :²—

ποίην τις βιώτοιο τάμη τρίβον ; εἰν ἀγορῇ μὲν
νεῖκεα καὶ χαλεπαὶ πρήξιος· ἐν δὲ δόμοις
φροντίδες· ἐν δ' ἀγροῖς καμάτων ἄλις· ἐν δὲ θαλάσῃ
τάρβος· ἐπὶ ξείνης δ', ἣν μὲν ἔχῃς τι, δέος·
ἣν δ' ἀπορῆς, ἀνηρόν· ἔχεις γάμον ; οὐκ ἀμέριμος
ἔσσεαι· οὐ γαμέεις ; ζῆς ἔτ' ἐρημότερος·
τέκνα πόνου, πῆρωςις ἄπαις βίος· αἰ νεότητες

“ Ye have kindred voices clear,
Ye alike unfold the wing,
Migrate hither, sojourn here,
Both attendant on the spring.

“ Ah ! for pity drop the prize ;
Let it not with truth be said,
That a songster gasps and dies,
That a songster may be fed.”—W. COWPER.

¹ “ Though but the being of a day,
When I yon planet's course survey,
This earth I then despise :
Near Jove's eternal throne I stand,
And quaff from an immortal hand
The nectar of the skies.”—PHILIP SMYTH.

² Bacon's version, “ The world's a bubble, and the life of man—” is both well known and too long to quote. The following is from the pen of Sir John Beaumont :—

“ What course of life should wretched mortals take ?
In courts hard questions large contention make :
Care dwells in houses, labour in the field,
Tumultuous seas affrighting dangers yield.
In foreign lands thou never canst be blessed ;
If rich, thou art in fear ; if poor, distressed.
In wedlock frequent discontentments swell ;
Unmarried persons as in deserts dwell.
How many troubles are with children born ;
Yet he that wants them counts himself forlorn.
Young men are wanton, and of wisdom void ;
Gray hairs are cold, unfit to be employed.

*ἄφρονες, αἱ πολλαὶ δ' ἔμπαλιν ἀδρανέες·
 ἦν ἄρα τοῖν δισσοῖν ἐνὸς αἰρεσις, ἢ τὸ γενέσθαι
 μηδέποτ' ἢ τὸ θανεῖν αὐτίκα τικτόμενον.*

The reverse of this picture is displayed with much felicity and geniality, but with less of force, by Metrodorus (ii. 72) : 1—

*παντοίην βίοιο τάμοις τρίβον· ἐν ἀγορῇ μὲν
 κῦδα καὶ πινυταὶ πρήξιες· ἐν δὲ δόμοις
 ἀμπαυμ'· ἐν δ' ἀγροῖς φύσιος χάρις· ἐν δὲ θαλάσῃ
 κέρδος· ἐπὶ ξείνης, ἦν μὲν ἔχῃς τι, κλέος·
 ἦν δ' ἀπορῆς, μόνος οἶδας· ἔχεις γάμον; οἶκος ἀριστος
 ἔσσειται· οὐ γαμέεις; ζῆς ἔτ' ἐλαφρότερος·
 τέκνα πῶτος, ἀφροντίς ἀπαις βλος· αἱ νεώτητες
 ῥωμαλέαι, πολλαὶ δ' ἔμπαλιν εὐσεβέες·
 οὐκ ἄρα τῶν δισσῶν ἐνὸς αἰρεσις, ἢ τὸ γενέσθαι
 μηδέποτ' ἢ τὸ θανεῖν· πάντα γὰρ ἐσθλὰ βίω.*

Some of the epigrams of this section are written in the true style of Elegies. The following splendid Threnody by Antipater of Sidon upon the ruins of Corinth, which was imitated by Agathias in his lines on Troy, may be cited as perfect in this style of composition (ii. 29) : 2—

*ποῦ τὸ περιβλεπτον κάλλος σέο, Δωρὶ Κόρινθε;
 ποῦ στέφανοι πύργων, ποῦ τὰ πάλαι κτέανα,
 ποῦ νηοὶ μακάρων, ποῦ δώματα, ποῦ δὲ δάμαρτες
 Σισύφαι, λαῶν θ' αἱ ποτὲ μυριάδες;
 οὐδὲ γὰρ οὐδ' ἴχνος, πολυκάμμορε, σείο λέλειπται,
 πάντα δὲ συμμάρψας ἐξέφαγεν πόλεμος·
 μόναι ἀπέρητοι Νηρηίδες, Ὀκεανοῖο
 κούραι, σῶν ἀχέων μίμνομεν ἀλκύνες.*

It is a grand picture of the queen of pleasure in her widowhood and desolation mourned over by the deathless daughters of the plunging

Who would not one of these two offers choose,
 Not to be born, or breath with speed to lose ?”

1 “ In every way of life true pleasure flows :
 Immortal fame from public action grows :
 Within the doors is found appeasing rest ;
 In fields the gifts of nature are expressed.
 The sea brings gain, the rich abroad provide
 To blaze their names, the poor their wants to hide :
 All households best are governed by a wife ;
 His cares are light, who leads a single life :
 Sweet children are delights which marriage bless ;
 He that hath none disturbs his thoughts the less.
 Strong youth can triumph in victorious deeds ;
 Old age the soul with pious motions feeds.
 All states are good, and they are falsely led
 Who wish to be unborn or quickly dead.”

Sir JOHN BEAUMONT.

2 “ Where, Corinth, are thy glories now,
 Thy ancient wealth, thy castled brow,
 Thy solemn fanes, thy halls of state,
 Thy high-born dames, thy crowded gate ?
 There's not a ruin left to tell
 Where Corinth stood, how Corinth fell.
 The Nereids of thy double sea
 Alone remain to wait for thee.”

GOLDWIN SMITH.

sea. Occasionally the theme of the epigram is historical. The finest, perhaps, of this sort is a poem by Philippus on Leonidas (ii. 59) : ¹—

πουλὸ Λεωνίδεω κατιδὼν δέμας αὐτοδάϊκτον
 Ξέρξης ἐχλαίνου φάρεϊ πορφυρέφ·
 κῆκ νεκῶν δ' ἤχρησεν ὁ τᾶς Σπάρτας πολὺς ἦρω·
 οὐ δέχομαι προδόταις μισθὸν ὀφειλόμενον·
 ἀσπίς ἐμοὶ τύμβου κόσμος μέγας· αἶρε τὰ Περσῶν
 χῆξω κείς ἀίδην ὡς Λακεδαιμόνιος.

Few, however, of the epigrams rise to the altitude of those I have been lately quoting. Their subjects are for the most part simple incidents, or such as would admit of treatment within the space of an engraved gem. The story of the girls who played at dice upon the house-roof is told very prettily in the following lines (ii. 31) : ²—

αἱ τρισσαὶ ποτε παῖδες ἐν ἀλλήλαισιν ἐπαιζόν
 κλήρω, τίς προτέρῃ βήσεται εἰς αἶδην·
 καὶ τρεῖς μὲν χειρῶν ἐβαλον κύβον, ἦλθε δὲ πασῶν
 ἐς μίαν· ἢ δ' ἐγάλα κλήρον ὀφειλόμενον·
 ἐκ τέγεος γὰρ ἀελπτον ἐπειτ' ὤλισθε πέσημα,
 δύσμορος, ἐς δ' αἶδην ἤλυθεν, ὡς ἐλαχεν·
 ἀψευδῆς ὁ κλήρος ὅτῳ κακόν· ἐς δὲ τὸ λῶον
 οὐτ' εὐχαὶ θνητοῖς εὐστοχοὶ οὔτε χέρες.

Not the least beautiful are those which describe natural objects. The following six lines are devoted to an oak-tree (ii. 14) : ³—

κλῶνες ἀπῆροιο ταναῆς δρυὸς, εὐσκιον ὕψος
 ἀνδράσιν ἀκρητον καύμα φύλασσομένους,
 εὐπέταλοι, κεράμων στεγανώτεροι, οἰκία φαττῶν,
 οἰκία τεττίγων, ἔνδιοι ἀκρεμόνες,
 κῆμὲ τὸν ὑμετέραισιν ὑποκλινθέντα κόμαισιν
 ῥύσασθ', ἀκτίνων ἡέλιου φυγάδα.

¹ " Seeing the martyred corpse of Sparta's king
 Cast 'mid the dead,
 Xerxes around the mighty limbs did fling
 His mantle red.
 Then from the shades the glorious hero cried :
 ' Not mine a traitor's guerdon. 'Tis my pride
 This shield upon my grave to wear.
 Forbear
 Your Persian gifts ; a Spartan I will go
 To Death below.' "

² " One day three girls were casting lots in play,
 Which first to Acheron should take her way ;
 Thrice with their sportive hands they threw, and thrice
 To the same hand returned the fateful dice ;
 The maiden laughed when thus her doom was told :
 Alas ! that moment from the roof she rolled !
 So sure is Fate whene'er it bringeth bale,
 While prayers and vows for bliss must ever fail."

J. A. SYMONDS, M.D.

³ " Aerial branches of tall oak, retreat
 Of loftiest shade for those who shun the heat,
 With foliage full, more close than tiling, where
 Dove and cicada dwell aloft in air,
 Me, too, that thus my head beneath you lay,
 Protect, a fugitive from noon's fierce ray."

GOLDWIN SMITH.

Here, again, is a rustic retreat for lovers, beneath the spreading branches of a plane (ii. 43) :¹—

ἄ χλοερά πλατάνιστος ἰδ' ὡς ἔκρυψε φιλεύντων
 ὄργια, τὰν ἱερὰν φυλλάδα τεινομένα·
 ἀμφὶ δ' ἄρ' ἀκρεμόνεσσιν εἰοῖς κεχαρισμένους ὦραις
 ἡμερίδος λαρῆς βότρυς ἀποκρέμαται·
 οὕτως, ὦ πλατάνιστε, φύοις· χλοερά δ' ἀπὸ σείο
 φυλλὰς αἰεὶ κεύθοι τοῖς Παφίης ὄρους.

Of the same sort are this invitation (ii. 529) :²—

ὑψίκομον παρὰ τάνδε καθίξεο φωνήεσσαν
 φρίσσοσαν πυκνοῖς κῶνον ὑπὸ Ζεφύροις,
 καὶ σοὶ καχλάζουσιν ἐμοῖς παρὰ νάμασι σύριγγι
 θελγομένων ἀξει κῶμα κατὰ βλεφάρων.

and this plea from the oak tree to the woodman to be spared (ii. 63) :³—

ὄνερ τῶν βαλάνων τὰν ματέρα φείδο κόπτειν,
 φείδο· γηραλέαν δ' ἐκκεράϊζε πίτυν,
 ἢ πέυκαν, ἢ τάνδε πολυστέλεχον παλίουρον,
 ἢ πρίνον, ἢ τὰν αἰαλέαν κόμαρον·
 τηλόθι δ' ἴσχε δρυὸς πελέκυν· κοκῦαι γὰρ ἔλεξαν
 ἅμιν ὡς πρότεροι ματέρες ἐντὶ δρύες.

Among the epigrams which seem to have been composed in the same spirit as those exquisite little *capricci* engraved by Greek artists upon gems, few are more felicitous than the three following. The affection of the Greeks for the grasshopper is one of their most charming *naïvetés*. Everybody knows the pretty story Socrates tells about these *Μουσῶν προφήται*, or Prophets of the Muses, in the *Phædrus*—how they once were mortals who took such delight in the songs of the Muses that, “Singing always, they never thought of eating and drinking, until at last they forgot and died: and now they live again in the grasshoppers, and this is the return the Muses make to them—they hunger no more, neither thirst any more, but are always singing from the moment that they are born, and never eating or drinking.” Thus

¹ “Wide-spreading plane tree, whose thick branches meet
 To form for lovers an obscure retreat,
 Whilst with thy foliage closely intertwine
 The curling tendrils of the clustered vine,
 Still mayst thou flourish, in perennial green,
 To shade the votaries of the Paphian queen.”

W. SHEPHERD.

² “Come sit you down beneath this towering tree,
 Whose rustling leaves sing to the zephyr’s call;
 My pipe shall join the streamlet’s melody,
 And slumber on your charmed eyelids fall.”

J. A. SYMONDS, M.D.

³ “Spare the parent of acorns, good wood-cutter, spare!
 Let the time-honoured fir feel the weight of your stroke,
 The many-stalked thorn, or acanthus worn bare,
 Pine, arbutus, ilex—but touch not the oak!
 Far hence be your axe, for our grandams have sung
 How the oaks are the mothers from whom we all sprung.”

MERIVALE.

the grasshoppers were held sacred in Greece, like storks in Germany and robins in England. Most of the epigrams about them turn on this sanctity. The following is a plea for pity from an imprisoned grasshopper to the rustics who have caught him (ii. 76) :¹—

τίπτε με τὸν φιλήρημον ἀναιδέϊ ποιμένες ἀγρη
τέττιγα δροσερῶν ἔλκετ' ἀπ' ἀκρεμόνων,
τὴν Νυμφῶν παροδίτιν ἀηδόνα, κῆματι μέσσω
οὔρεσι καὶ σκιεραῖς ξουθὰ λαλεῦντα νάπαις ;
ἦνιδε καὶ κίχλην καὶ κόσσυνφον, ἦνιδε τόσσους
ψᾶρας, ἀρουραῖης ἀρπαγας εὐπορίας·
καρπῶν δηλητήρας ἐλεῖν θέμις· ἄλλυτ' ἐκέλευς·
φύλλων καὶ χλοερῆς τίς φθόνος ἐστὶ δρῶσον ;

Another epigram on the same page tells how the poet found a grasshopper struggling in a spider's web and released it with these words :—
“ Go safe and free with your sweet voice of song ! ” But the prettiest of all is this long story (ii. 119) :²—

Εὐνομον, ὦπολλον, σὺ μὲν οἰσθὰ με, πῶς ποτ' ἐνίκων
Σπάρτιν ὁ Λοκρὸς ἐγὼ· πευθομένοις δ' ἐνέπω.
αἰόλον ἐν κιθάρα νόμον ἔκρεκον, ἐν δὲ μεσεύσα
ῶδᾶ μοι χορδᾶν πλάκτρον ἀπεκρέμασεν·
καὶ μοι φθόγγον ἐτόιμον ὀπανίκα καιρὸς ἀπήτει,
εἰς ἀκοὰς ῥυθμῶν τῶτρκεῖς οὐκ ἔνεμεν·
καὶ τις ἀπ' αὐτομάτω κιθάρας ἐπὶ πῆχυν ἐπιπτὰς
τέττιξ ἐπλήρου τοῦλλιπῆς ἀρμονίας·
νεῦρα γὰρ ἐξ ἐτίνασσον· ὀθ' ἐβδομάτας δὲ μελοῖμαν
χορδᾶς, τὰν τούτω γῆρην ἐκιχράμεθα·
πρὸς γὰρ ἐμὰν μελέταν ὁ μεσαμβρινὸς οὔρεσιν ῶδὸς
τῆνο τὸ ποιμενικὸν φθέγμα μεθρημόσατο,
καὶ μὲν ὅτε φθέγγοιτο, σὺν ἀψύχοις τόκα νευραῖς
τῶ μεταβαλλομένῳ συμμετέπιπτε θρόφῳ·
τοῦνεκα συμφῶνῳ μὲν ἔχω χάριν· ὃς δὲ τυπωθεῖς
χάλκεος ἀμετέρας ἔξεθ' ὑπὲρ κιθάρας.

¹ “ Why, ruthless shepherds, from my dewy spray
In my lone haunt, why tear me thus away ?
Me, the Nymphs' wayside minstrel, whose sweet note
O'er sultry hill is heard and shady grove to float ?
Lo ! where the blackbird, thrush, and greedy host
Of starlings fatten at the farmer's cost !
With just revenge those ravagers pursue :
But grudge not my poor leaf and sip of grassy dew.”

WRANGHAM.

² “ Phœbus, thou know'st me—Eunomus, who beat
Spartis : the tale for others I repeat :
Deftly upon my lyre I played and sang,
When 'mid the song a broken harp-string rang,
And seeking for its sound, I could not hear
The note responsive to my descent clear.
Then on my lyre, unasked, unsought, there flew
A grasshopper, who filled the cadence due ;
For while six chords beneath my fingers cried,
He with his tuneful voice the seventh supplied :
The mid-day songster of the mountains set
His pastoral ditty to my canzonet ;
And when he sang, his modulated throat
Accorded with the lifeless strings I smote.
Therefore I thank my fellow-minstrel :—he
Sits on my lyre in brass, as you may see.

So friendly were the relations of the Greeks with the grasshoppers. We do not wonder when we read that the Athenians wore golden grasshoppers in their hair.

Baths, groves, gardens, houses, temples, city-gates, and works of art furnish the later epigrammatists with congenial subjects. The Greeks of the Empire exercised much ingenuity in describing—whether in prose, like Philostratus, or in verse, like Agathias—the famous monuments of the maturity of Hellas. In this style the epigrams on statues are at once the most noticeable and the most abundant. The cow of Myron has at least twoscore of little sonnets to herself. The horses of Lysippus, the Zeus of Pheidias, the Rhamnusian statue of Nemesis, the Praxitelean Venus, various images of Erôs, the Niobids, Marsyas, Ariadne, Herakles, Alexander, poets, physicians, orators, historians, and all the charioteers and athletes preserved in the museums of Byzantium or the groves of Altis, are described with a minuteness and a point that enable us to identify many of them with the surviving monuments of Greek sculpture. Pictures also come in for their due share of notice. A Polyxena of Polyclethus, a Philoctetes of Parrhasius, and a Medea, which may have been the original of the famous Pompeian fresco, are specially remarkable. Then, again, cups engraved with figures in relief of Tantalus or Love, seals inscribed with Phœbus or Medusa, gems and intaglios of all kinds furnish matter for other epigrams. The following couplet on a Bacchus engraved in amethyst turns upon an untranslatable play of words (ii. 149):¹—

ἡ λίθος ἐστ' ἀμέθυστος, ἐγὼ δ' ὁ πότης Διόνυσος·
πεισάτω ἢ νήφειν μ', ἢ μαθέτω μεθύειν.

Amid this multitude of poems it is difficult to make a fair or representative selection. There are, however, four which I cannot well omit. The first is written by Poseidippus on a lost statue of Lysippus (ii. 584):²—

τίς πῶθεν ὁ πλάστης; Σικυώνιος· οὐνομα δὴ τίς;
Λύσιππος. σὺ δὲ τίς; Καιρὸς ὁ πανδαμάτωρ·
τίπττε δ' ἐπ' ἄκρα βέβηκας; αἰὲ τροχάω. τί δὲ ταρσοῦς
ποσσὶν ἔχεις διφθεῖς; ἵπταμ' ὑπηγνέμιος·
χειρὶ δὲ δεξιτερῇ τί φέρεις ξυρόν; ἀνδράσι δαίγμα
ὡς ἀκμῆς πάσης δξύτερος τελέθω.
ἦ δὲ κόμη τί κατ' ὕψιν; ὑπαντιάσαντι λαβέσθαι.

¹ "The stone is amethyst (*i.e.* that which cannot be intoxicated, or which wards off intoxication). But I am the wine-bibber, Dionysus. Let it persuade me to be sober, or let it learn how to be drunken." This crystal was supposed to be an antidote to the effects of wine, and therefore antagonistic in its operation to the god.

² "The sculptor's country? Sicyon. His name? Lysippus. You? Time that all things can tame. Why thus a-tiptoe? I have halted never. Why ankle-winged? I fly like wind for ever. But in your hand that razor? 'Tis a pledge That I am keener than the keenest edge. Why falls your hair in front? For him to bind

νή Δία τάξοπιθεν δ' εἰς τί φαλακρὰ πέλει;
 τὸν γὰρ ἅπασ' πτηνοῖσι παραθρέξαντά με ποσσὶν
 οὐτις ἔθ' ἱμεῖρων δράζεται ἐξόπιθεν.
 τοῦνεχ' ὁ τεχνίτης σε διέπλασεν; εἵνεκεν ὑμῶν,
 ξεῖνε· καὶ ἐν προθύροις θῆκε διδασκαλίην.

The second describes the statue of Nemesis erected near Marathon by Pheidias—that memorable work by which the greatest of sculptors recorded the most important crisis in the world's history (ii. 573):¹—

χιονέην με λίθον παλιναυξέος ἐκ περιωπῆς
 λαοσόπος τμήξας πετροτόμοις ἀκίσι
 Μῆδος ἐποντοπόρευσεν, ὅπως ἀνδρείκελα τεύξῃ,
 τῆς κατ' Ἀθηναίων σύμβολα καμμοῖνης·
 ὡς δὲ δαΐζομένοις Μαραθῶν ἀντέκτυπε Πέρσαις
 καὶ νέες ὑγροπόρουσιν χεῖμασιν αιμαλέοις,
 ἔξεσαν Ἀδρήστειαν ἀριστώδινες Ἀθῆναι,
 δαίμων ὑπερφιάλοισ ἀντίπαλον μερόπων·
 ἀντιταλαντεύω τὰς ἐλπίδας· εἰμὶ δὲ καὶ νῦν
 Νίκη Ἐρεχθεΐδαις, Ἀσσυριοῖς Νέμεσις.

The third celebrates the Aphrodite of Praxiteles in Cnidos, whose garden has been so elegantly described by Lucian (ii. 560):²—

ἡ Πιπλίη Κυθέρεια δι' οἴδατος ἐς Κνίδον ἦλθε
 βουλομένη κατιδέειν εἰκόνα τὴν ἰδίην·
 πάντη δ' ἀθρήσασα περισκέπτω ἐνὶ χώρῳ,
 φθέγγατο· ποῦ γυμνὴν εἶδέ με Πραξιτέλης;

Who meets me. True: but then you're bald behind?
 Yes, because when with winged feet I have passed
 'Tis vain upon my back your hands to cast.
 Why did the sculptor carve you? For your sake
 Here in the porch I stand; my lesson take."

¹ "My snowy marble from the mountain rude
 A Median sculptor with sharp chisel hewed,
 And brought me o'er the sea, that he might place
 A trophied statue of the Greeks' disgrace.
 But when the routed Persians heard the roar
 Of Marathon, and ships swam deep in gore,
 Then Athens, nurse of heroes, sculptured me
 The queen that treads on arrogance to be:
 I hold the scales of hope: my name is this—
 Niké for Greece, for Asia Nemesis."

² "Bright Cytherea thought one day
 To Cnidos she'd repair,
 Gliding across the watery way
 To view her image there.
 But when arrived, she cast around
 Her eyes divinely bright,
 And saw upon that holy ground
 The gazing world's delight,
 Amazed, she cried—while blushes told
 The thoughts that swelled her breast—
 Where did Praxiteles behold
 My form? or has he guessed?"

The fourth is composed with much artifice of style upon a statue of Love bound by his arms to a pillar (ii. 567) :¹—

κλαῖε δυσεκφύκτως σφιγχθεὶς χέρας, ἄκριτε δαῖμον,
 κλαῖε μάλα, στάζων ψυχοτακῆ δάκρυα,
 σωφροσύνας ὑβριστὰ, φρενοκλόπε, ληστὰ λογισμοῦ,
 πτανὸν πῦρ, ψυχᾶς τραδῦμ' ἀόρατον, Ἔρως·
 θνατοῖς μὲν λύσις ἐστὶ γόνων ὁ σὸς, ἄκριτε, δεσμός·
 ᾧ σφιγχθεὶς κωφοῖς πέμπε λιτὰς ἀνέμοις·
 ὄν δὲ βροτοῖς ἀφύλακτος ἐνέφλεγεσ ἐν φρεσὶ πυρσὸν
 ἄθρει νῦν ὑπὸ σῶν σβεννύμενον δακρῶν.

In bringing this review of the Anthology to a close I feel that I have been guilty of two errors. I have wearied the reader with quotations. Yet I have omitted countless epigrams of the purest beauty. The very riches of this flower-garden of little poems are an obstacle to its due appreciation. Each epigram in itself is perfect, and ought to be carefully and lovingly studied. But it is difficult for the critic to deal in a single chapter with upwards of four thousand of these precious gems. There are many points of view which, with adequate space and opportunity, might have been taken for the better illustration of the epigrams. Their connection with the later literature of Greece, especially with the rhetoricians, Philostratus, Alciphron, and Libanius, many of whose best compositions are epigrams in prose—as Jonson knew when he turned them into lyrics; their still more intimate æsthetic harmony with the engraved stones and minor bas-reliefs, which bear exactly the same relation to Greek sculpture as the epigrams to the more august forms of Greek poetry; the lives of their authors; the historical events to which they not unfrequently allude—all these are topics for elaborate dissertation.

Perhaps, however, the true secret of their charm is this; that in their couplets, after listening to the choric raptures of triumphant public art, we turn aside to hear the private utterances, the harmoniously modulated whispers of a multitude of Greek poets telling us their inmost thoughts and feelings. The unique melodies of Meleager, the chaste and exquisite delicacy of Callimachus, the clear dry style of Straton, Plato's unearthly subtlety of phrase, Antipater's perfect polish, the good sense of Palladas, the fretful sweetness of Agathias, the purity of Simonides, the gravity of Poseidippus, the pointed grace of Philip, the few but mellow tones of Sappho and Erinna, the tenderness of Simmias, the biting wit of Lucillius, the sunny radiance of Theocritus—all these good things are ours in the Anthology. But beyond these perfumes of the poets known to fame is yet another. Over very many

¹ " Weep, reckless god; for now your hands are tied:
 Weep, wear your soul out with the flood of tears
 Heart-robber, thief of reason, foe to pride,
 Winged fire, thou wound unseen the soul that sears!
 Freedom from grief to us these bonds of thine,
 Wherein thou wailest to the deaf winds, bring:
 Behold! the torch wherewith thou mad'st us pine,
 Beneath thy frequent tears is languishing!"

of the sweetest and the strongest of the epigrams is written the pathetic word *ἀδέσποτον*—"without a master." Hail to you, dead poets, unnamed, but dear to the Muses! Surely with Pindar and Anacreon, with Sappho and with Sophocles, the bed of flowers is spread for you in those "black-petalled hollows of Pieria" where you bade Euripides farewell.

CHAPTER XXIII

HERO AND LEANDER

Virgil's Mention of this Tale—Ovid and Statius—Autumnal Poetry—Confusion between the Mythical Musæus and the Grammarian—The Introduction of the Poem—Analysis of the Story—Hallam's Judgment on Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*—Comparison of Marlowe and Musæus—Classic and Romantic Art.

Quid juvenis, magnum cui versat in ossibus ignem
Durus amor? Nempe abruptis turbata procellis
Nocte natat cæca serus freta; quem super ingens
Porta tonat cæli, et scopulis inlisa reclamant
Æquora; nec miseri possunt revocare parentes,
Nec moritura super crudeli funere virgo.¹

THIS is the first allusion to a story, rather Roman than Greek, which was destined to play an important part in literature. The introduction of the fable, without names, into a poem like the third *Georgic* shows, however, that the pathetic tale of Hero and Leander's love had already found familiar representation in song or sculpture or wall-painting before Virgil touched it with the genius that turned all it touched to gold. Ovid went further, and placed the maiden of Sestos among the heroines for whom he wrote rhetorical epistles in elegiac verse. In Statius, again, we get a glimpse of the story translated from the sphere of romance into the region of antique mythology. To the hero Admetus, Adrastus gives a mantle dyed with Tyrian purple, and embroidered with Leander's death. There flows the Hellespont; the youth is vainly struggling with the swollen waves; and there stands Hero on her tower; and the lamp already flickers in the blast that will destroy both light and lives at once. It still remained for a grammarian of the fifth century, Musæus, of whom nothing but the name is known, to give the final form to this poem of love and death. The springtide of the epic and the idyll was over. When Musæus entered the Heliconian

¹ "What of the youth, whose marrow the fierceness of Love has turned to flame? Late in the dark night he swims o'er seas boiling with bursting storms; and over his head the huge gates of the sky thunder; and the seas, dashing on the rocks, call to him to return: nor can the thought of his parents' agony entice him back, nor of the maiden doomed to a cruel death upon his corpse."—Virg. *Georg.* iii. 258. Translated by an Oxford Graduate.

meadows to pluck this last pure rose of Greek summer, autumn had already set its silent finger on "bare, ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang." His little poem of three hundred and forty hexameters is both an epic and an idyll. While maintaining the old heroic style of narrative by means of repeated lines, it recalls the sweetness of Theocritus in studied descriptions, dactylic cadences, and brief reflective sayings that reveal the poet's mind. Like some engraved gems, the latest products of the glyptic art, this poem adjusts the breadth of the grand manner to the small scale required by jewellery, treating a full subject in a narrow space, and in return endowing slight motives with dignity by nobleness of handling.

Calm mornings of sunshine visit us at times in early November, appearing like glimpses of departed spring amid the wilderness of wet and windy days that lead to winter. It is pleasant, when these interludes of silvery light occur, to ride into the woods and see how wonderful are all the colours of decay. Overhead, the elms and chestnuts hang their wealth of golden leaves, while the beeches darken into russet tones, and the wild cherry glows like blood-red wine. In the hedges crimson haws and scarlet hips are wreathed with hoary clematis or necklaces of coral briony berries; the brambles burn with many-coloured flames; the dog-wood is bronzed with purple; and here and there the spindle-wood puts forth its fruit, like knots of rosy buds, on delicate frail twigs. Underneath lie fallen leaves, and the brown brake rises to our knees as we thread the forest paths. Everything is beautiful with beauty born of over-ripeness and decline. Green summer comes no more this year, at any rate. In front are death and bareness and the winter's frost.

Such a day of sunlight in the November of Greek poetry is granted to us by *Hero and Leander*. The grace of the poem is soul-compelling—indescribable for sweetness. Yet every epithet, each requisite conceit, and all the studied phrases that yield charm, remind us that the end has come. There is peculiar pathos in this autumnal loveliness of literature upon the wane. In order to appreciate it fully, we must compare the mellow tints of Musæus with the morning glory of Homer or of Pindar. We then find that, in spite of so much loss, in spite of warmth and full light taken from us, and promise of the future exchanged for musings on the past, a type of beauty unattainable by happier poets of the spring has been revealed. Not to accept this grace with thanksgiving, because, forsooth, December, that takes all away, is close at hand, would be ungrateful.¹

¹ It is not only in Musæus that we trace a fascination comparable to that of autumn tints in trees. The description by Ausonius of Love caught and crucified in the garden of Proserpine, which contains the two following lines:—

Inter arundineasque comas gravidumque papaver
Et tacitos sine labe lacus sine murmure rivos :

might be quoted as an instance of the charm. Indeed, it pervades the best Latin poetry of the silver age, the Epistles of Philostratus, many of the later Greek epigrams, and all the Greek romances, with *Daphnis and Chloe* at their head.

Yet, though clearly perceptible by the æsthetic sense, it is far less easy to define its quality than to miss it altogether. We do not gain much, for example, by pointing to the reminiscences of bygone phraseology curiously blended with new forms of language, to the artificial subtleties of rhythm wrung from well-worn metres, to the richness of effect produced by conscious use of telling images, to the iridescent shimmer of mixed metaphors, compound epithets, and daring tropes, contrasted with the undertone of sadness which betrays the "idle singer of an empty day," although these elements are all combined in the autumnal style. Nor will it profit us to distinguish this kind of beauty from the *beauté malade* of morbid art. So difficult, indeed, is it to seize its character with any certainty, that in the case of *Hero and Leander* the uncritical scholars of the Italian Renaissance mistook the evening for the morning star of Greek poetry, confounding Musæus the grammarian with the semi-mythic bard of the Orphean age. When Aldus Manutius conceived his great idea of issuing Greek literature entire from the Venetian press, he put forth *Hero and Leander* first of all in 1498, with a preface that ran as follows:—"I was desirous that Musæus, the most ancient poet, should form a prelude to Aristotle and the other sages who will shortly be imprinted at my hands." Marlowe spoke of "divine Musæus," and even the elder Scaliger saw no reason to suspect that the grammarian's studied verse was not the first clear wood-note of the Eleusinian singer. What renders this mistake pardonable is the fact that, however autumnal may be the poem's charm, no point of the genuine Greek youthfulness of fancy has been lost. Through conceits, confusions of diction, and over-sweetness of style, emerges the clear outline which characterised Greek art in all its periods. Both persons and situations are plastically treated—subjected, that is to say, to the conditions best fulfilled by sculpture. The emotional element is adequate to the imaginative presentation; the feeling penetrates the form and gives it life, without exceeding the just limits which the form imposes. The importance of this observation will appear when we examine the same poem romantically handled by our own Marlowe. If nothing but the *Hero and Leander* of Musæus had survived the ruin of Greek literature, we should still be able to distinguish how Greek poets dealt with their material, and to point the difference between the classic and the modern styles.

What is truly admirable in this poem, marking it as genuinely Greek, is the simplicity of structure, clearness of motives, and unaffected purity of natural feeling. The first fifteen lines set forth, by way of proem, the whole subject:—

εἰπέ, θεὰ, κρυφίῳ ἐπιμάρτυρα λύχρον ἐρώτων,
καὶ νύχιον πλωτῆρα θαλασσοπύρων ὑμεναίων,
καὶ γάμον ἀχλύδεντα, τὸν οὐκ ἶδεν ἀφθιτος Ἥως,
καὶ Σηστὸν καὶ Ἀβυδοῦν ὅπη γάμος ἔννυχος Ἡρούς.¹

¹ "Tell, goddess, of the lamp, the confidant of secret love, and of the youth who swam by night to find his bridal-bed beyond the sea, and of the darkened marriage on which immortal morning never shone, and of Sestos and Abydos, where was the midnight wedding of Hero."

Here, perhaps, a modern poet might have stayed his hand : not so Musæus ; he has still to say that he will tell of Leander's death, and, in propounding this part of the theme, to speak once more about the lamp :—

λύχρον, ἔρωτος ἀγαλμα, τὸν ὠφελεν αἰθέριος Ζεὺς
ἐννύχιον μετ' ἄεθλον ἄγειν ἐς ὀμήγγυριν ἀστρων
καὶ μιν ἐπικλήσαι νυμφοστῶλον ἀστρον ἐρώτων.¹

Seven lines were enough for Homer while explaining the subject of the *Iliad*. Musæus, though his poem is so short, wants more than twice as many. He cannot resist the temptation to introduce decorative passages like the three lines just quoted, which are, moreover, appropriate in a poem that aims at combining the idyllic and epic styles.

After the proem we enter on the story. Sestos and Abydos are divided by the sea, but Love has joined them with an arrow from his bow :—

ἤϊθεον φλέξας καὶ παρθένον· οὐνομα δ' αὐτῶν
ἱμερβείς τε Λέανδρος ἔην καὶ παρθένος Ἡρώ.²

Hero dwelt at Sestos ; Leander lived at Abydos ; and both were "exceeding fair stars of the two cities." By the sea, outside the town of Sestos, Hero had a tower, where she abode in solitude with one old servant, paying her daily orisons to Dame Kupris, whose maiden votary she was, and sprinkling the altars of Love with incense to propitiate his powerful deity. "Still even thus she did not shun his fire-breathing shafts" ; for so it happened that when the festival of Adonis came round, and the women flocked into the town to worship, and the youths to gaze upon the maidens, Hero passed forth that day to Venus' temple, and all the men beheld her beauty, and praised her for a goddess, and desired her for a bride. Leander, too, was there ; and Leander could not content himself, like the rest, with distant admiration :—

εἶλε δέ μιν τότε θάμβος, ἀναιδείη, τρῶμος, αἰδῶς·
ἔτρεμε μὲν κραδίην, αἰδῶς δέ μιν εἶχεν ἀλῶναι·
θάμβεε δ' εἶδος ἄριστον, ἔρωσ δ' ἀπενόσφισεν αἰδῶ·
θαρσαλέως δ' ὑπ' ἔρωτος ἀναιδείην ἀγαπάζων
ἦρέμα ποσσὶν ἔβαινε καὶ ἀντίον ἴστατο κούρης.³

He met the maiden face to face, and his eyes betrayed his passion ; and she too felt the power of love in secret, and repelled him not, but by her silence and tranquillity encouraged him to hope :—

ὁ δ' ἐνδοθι θυμὸν ἰάνθη,
ὅττι πρόβον συνέηκε καὶ οὐκ ἀπεσείσατο κούρης.⁴

¹ "Love's ornament, which Zeus in heaven, after the midnight contest, should have brought into the company of stars, and called it the bride-adorning star of love."

² "By setting on fire a youth and a maiden, of whom the names were love-inspiring Leander and virgin Hero."

³ "Then came upon him astonishment, audacity, trembling, shame ; in his heart he trembled, and shame seized him at having been made captive : yet he marvelled at the faultless form, and love kept shame away ; then manfully by love's guidance he embraced audacity, and gently stepped and stood before the girl."

⁴ "And he within himself was glad at heart, because the maiden understood his love, and cast it not from her."

So far one hundred and nine lines of the poem have carried us. The following one hundred and eleven lines, nearly a third of the whole, are devoted to the scene in the temple between Hero and her lover. This forms by far the most beautiful section of the tale; for the attention is concentrated on the boy and girl between whom love at first sight has just been born. In the twilight of early evening, in the recesses of the shrine, they stand together, like fair forms carved upon a bas-relief. Leander pleads and Hero listens. The man's wooing, the maiden's shrinking; his passionate insistence, her gradual yielding; are presented in a series of exquisite and artful scenes, wherein the truth of a natural situation is enhanced by rare and curious touches. With genuine Greek instinct the poet has throughout been mindful to bring both lovers clearly before the reader's mental vision, so that a succession of pictures support and illustrate the dialogue, which rises at the climax to a love-duet. The descriptive lines are very simple, like these:—

ἡρέμα μὲν θλίβων ῥοδοειδέα δάκτυλα κούρης
βυσσόθεν ἔστονάχιζεν ἀθέσφατον. ἡ δὲ σιωπῆ,
οἶά τε χωομένη, ῥοδέην ἐξέσπασε χεῖρα.¹

Or again:—

παρθενικῆς δ' εὐοδμον ἐύχροον αὐχένα κύσας.²

Or yet again:—

ὄφρα μὲν οὖν ποτὶ γαίαν ἔχεν νεύουσαν ὀπωπῆν,
τόφρα δὲ καὶ Λεάνδρος ἐρωμανέεσσι προσώποις
οὐ κάμεν εἰσρόβων ἀπαλόχροον αὐχένα κούρης.³

We do not want more than this: it is enough to animate the plastic figures presented to our fancy. Meanwhile Hero cannot resist the pleadings of Leander, and her yielding is described with beautiful avoidance of superfluous sentiment:—

ἤδη καὶ γλυκύπικρον ἐδέξατο κέντρον ἐρώτων,
θέρμετο δὲ κραδίην γλυκερῶ πυρὶ παρθένος Ἡρώ,
κάλλει δ' ἡμερέντος ἀνεπτόλητο Λεάνδρου.⁴

A modern poet would have sought to spiritualise the situation: in the hands of the Greek artist it remains quite natural; it is the beauty of Leander that persuades and subdues Hero to love, and the agitations of her soul are expressed in language which suggests a power that comes upon her from without. At the same time there is no hint of levity or sensuality. Hero cannot be mistaken for a light of love. When the time comes, she will break her heart upon the dead body of the youth who wins her by his passion and his beauty. Leander has hitherto been only anxious to possess her for his own. Hero, as soon as she

¹ "Gently pressing the roseate fingers of the maiden, from the depths of his breast he sighed; but she, in silence, as though angered, drew her rosy hand away."

² "Kissing the fair perfumed maiden's neck."

³ "The while she bent her glance upon the ground, Leander tired not with impassioned eyes of gazing at the maiden's smooth-skinned neck."

⁴ "Now she, too, received into her soul the bitter-sweet sting of love, and the heart of maiden Hero was warmed with delicious fire, and before the beauty of love-inspiring Leander she quailed."

perceives that he has won the fight, bethinks her with a woman's wisdom of ways and means. Who is the strange man to whom she must abandon herself in wedlock; and what does he know about her; and how can they meet? Therefore she tells him her name and describes her dwelling:—

πύργος δ' ἀμφιβόητος ἐμὸς δόμος οὐρανομήκης
 ὧ ἐνι ναιετάουσα σὺν ἀμφιπέδῳ τιγί μούνη
 Σησιτάδος πρὸ πλόης ὑπὲρ βαθυκύμονας βχθας
 γείτονα πόντον ἔχω στυγεραῖς βουλῆσι τοκῆων.
 οὐδέ μοι ἐγγύς ἔασιν ὀμήλικες, οὐδέ χορείαι
 ἠϊθέων παρέασιν· αἰεὶ δ' ἀνὰ νύκτα καὶ ἡῶ
 ἐξ ἄλδς ἠνεμέυτος ἐπιβρέμει οὐασιν ἠχή.¹

Having said so much, shame overtakes her; she hides her face, and blames her over-hasty tongue. But Leander, pondering how he shall win the stakes of love proposed to him—*πῶς κεν ἔρωτος ἀθλεύσειεν ἀγῶνα*—is helped at last by Love himself, the wounder and the healer of the heart in one. He bursts into a passionate protestation: “Maiden, for the love of thee I will cross the stormy waves; yea, though the waters blaze with fire, and the sea be unsailed by ships. Only do thou light a lamp upon thy tower to guide me through the gloom:—

ἄφρα νοήσας
 ἔσσομαι ὀλκὰς Ἐρωτος ἔχων σέθεν ἀστέρα λύχρον.²

Seeing its spark, I shall not need the north star or Orion. And now, if thou wouldst have my name, know that I am Leander, husband of the fair-crowned Hero.”

Nothing now remains for the lovers but to arrange the signs and seasons of their future meeting. Then Hero retires to her tower, and Leander returns to Abydos by the Hellespont:—

παννυχίων δ' ὀάρων κρυφίους ποθέοντες ἀέθλους
 πολλάκις ἠρήσαντο μολεῖν θαλαμηπόλον δρῆνν.³

It may be said in passing that this parting-scene, though briefly narrated, is no less well conducted, *wohl motivirt*, as Goethe would have phrased it, than are all the other incidents of the poem (lines 221-231). The interpretation of the passage turns upon the word *παννυχίδας* (night-festivals), in line 225, which must here be taken to mean the vigil before marriage.

At this point the action turns. Musæus, having to work within a narrow space, has made the meeting and the dialogue between the lovers disproportionate to the length of the whole piece. In this way

¹ “A tower, beset with noises of the sea, and high as heaven, is my home: there I dwell, together with one only servant, before the city-walls of Sestos, above the deep-waved shore, with ocean for my neighbour: such is the stern will of my parents. Nor are there maidens of my age to keep me company, nor dances of young men close by; but everlastingly at night and morn a roaring from the windy sea assails my ears.”

² “Minding it, I shall be a ship of love, having thy lamp for star.”

³ “In their desire for the hidden lists of midnight converse, they oftentimes prayed that darkness should descend and lead them to the bridal-bed.”

he secures our sympathy for the youth and maid, whom we learn to know as living persons. He can now afford to drop superfluous links, and to compress the tale within strict limits. The cunning of his art is shown by the boldness of the transition to the next important incident. The night and the day are supposed to have passed. We hear nothing of the impatience of Leander or of Hero's flux and reflux of contending feelings. The narrative is resumed just as though the old thread had been broken, and another had been spun; and yet there is no sense of interruption:—

*ἤδη κνανόπεπλος ἀνέδραμε νυκτὸς ὀμίχλη
ἀνδράσιν ὕπνον ἀγούσα καὶ οὐ ποθέοντι Λεάνδρω.¹*

The lover's attitude of suspense, waiting at nightfall on the beach for Hero's lamp to burn, is so strongly emphasised in the following lines that we are made to feel how anxiously and yearningly the hours of daylight had been spent by him. No sooner does the spark shine forth than Leander darts forward to the waves, and, having prayed to Love, leaps lively in:—

*ὡς εἰπὼν μελέων ἐρατῶν ἀπεδύσατο πέπλον
ἀμφοτέραις παλάμησιν, ἐφ' ὃ' ἔσφιξε καρῆνυφ,
ἠϊόνος δ' ἐξῶρτο, δέμας δ' ἔβριψε θαλάσσης,
λαμπομένου δ' ἔσπευδεν αἰεὶ κατεναντία λύχρον
αὐτὸς ἑὼν ἐρέτης αὐτόστολος αὐτόματος νηῦς.²*

Hero meanwhile is on the watch, and when her bridegroom gains the shore, breathless and panting, he finds himself within her arms:—

*ἐκ δὲ θυράων
νυμφίον ἀσθμαίνοντα περιπτύξασα σιωπῇ
ἀφροκρόμους βραθάμυγγας ἔτι στάζοντα θαλάσσης
ἤγαγε νυμφοκρόμοιο μυχοῦς ἐπὶ παρθενεῶνος.³*

There she washes the stain and saltness of the sea from his body, and anoints him with perfumed oil, and leads him with tender words of welcome to the marriage-bed. The classic poet feels no need of apologising for the situation, nor does he care to emphasise it. The whole is narrated with Homeric directness, contrasting curiously with the romantic handling of the same incident by Marlowe. Yet the point and pathos of clandestine marriage had to be expressed; and to a Greek the characteristic circumstance was the absence of customary ritual. This defect, while it isolated the lovers from domestic sym-

¹ "Now the dark-mantled gloom of night ran over the heavens, bringing to mortals sleep, but not to longing Leander."

² "So having said, he withdrew from his lovely limbs the mantle with both hands, and bound it on his head, and leapt from the shore, and cast his body on the sea, and ever fared face-forward to the burning lamp, himself the oarsman, self-impelled, a self-directed ship."

³ "From the door she passed, and silently embraced her panting bridegroom, dripping with the foamy sprinklings of the sea, and led him to the bride-adorning chamber of her maiden hours."

pathies and troops of friends, attracted attention to themselves, and gave occasion to some of the best verses in the poem :—

ἦν γάμος ἀλλ' ἀχόρευτος· ἔην λέχος ἀλλ' ἄτερ ὕμνων·
 οὐ Ζυγίην Ἥρην τις ἐπευφήμησεν αἰοῖδος·
 οὐ δαΐδων ἤστραπτε σέλας θαλαμηπόδων εὐνήν·
 οὐδὲ πολυσκάρθμω τις ἐπεσκίρτησε χορεία,
 οὐχ ὕμεναιον αἶσε πατήρ καὶ πρόνια μήτηρ·
 ἀλλὰ λέχος στορέσασα τελεεσιγάμοισιν ἐν ὥραις
 σιγῇ παστὸν ἐπηξεν, ἐνυμφοκόμησε δ' ὀμίχλη,
 καὶ γάμος ἦν ἀπάνευθεν αἰδομένων ὕμεναιων.
 νῦξ μὲν ἔην κείνοισι γαμοστόλος, οὐδέ ποτ' ἦως
 νύμφιον εἶδε Λεάνδρον ἀριγνώτοις ἐνὶ λέκτροις·
 νήχετο δ' ἀντιπύροιο πάλιν ποτὶ δῆμον Ἀβύδου
 ἐννυχίων ἀκόρητος ἔτι πνείων ὕμεναιων.
 Ἡρώ δ' ἔλκεσιπέπλος, εὐὸς λήθουσα τοκῆας,
 παρθένος ἡματιῇ νυχίῃ γυνή. Ἀμφότεροι δὲ
 πολλάκις ἠρήσαντο κατελθόμεν ἐς δούσιν ἡώ.¹

So the night passed, and through many summer nights they tasted the sweets of love, *χλοεροῖσιν ἰαινόμενοι μελέεσσιν* (taking delight in the bloom of their young limbs). But soon came winter, and with winter the sea grew stormy, and ships were drawn up on the beach, and the winds battled with each other in the Hellespontine Straits; and now Hero should have refrained from lighting her lamp, *μινυώριον ἀστέρα λέκτρων* (the short-lived star that lighted them to bed); but love and fate compelled her, and the night of tempest and of destiny arrived. Manfully Leander wrestled with the waves; yet the sea swelled higher; his strength ebbed away; an envious gust blew out the guiding lamp; and so he perished in the waters. The picture of his death-struggle is painted with brief incisive touches. The last two lines have a strange unconscious pathos in them, as though the life and love of a man were no better than a candle :—

καὶ δὴ λύχνον ἀπιστον ἀπέσβεσε πικρὸς ἀήτης
 καὶ ψυχὴν καὶ ἔρωτα πολυτλήτσιο Λεάνδρου.²

What remains to be told is but little. The cold gray dawn went forth upon the waste of billows; how gray and comfortless they know who, after lonely watching through night hours, have seen discoloured breakers beat upon a rainy shore. Hero from her turret gazed through the twilight; and there at her feet lay dead Leander, bruised by the rocks and buffeted by slapping waves. She uttered no cry; but tore the embroidered raiment on her breast, and flung herself, face-down-

¹ "There was wedding, but without the ball; there was bedding but without the hymn: no singer invoked bridal Hera; no blaze of torches lit the nuptial couch, nor did the youths and maidens move in myriad mazes of the dance: father and mother sang no marriage chant. But silence spread the bed and strewed the couch, and darkness decked the bride; without hymns of Hymen was the wedding. Night was their bridesmaid, nor did dawning see Leander in the husband's room. He swam again across the straits of Abydos, still breathing of bridal in his soul unsatisfied of joy. Hero, meanwhile, by day a maid, at night a wife, escaped her parents' eyes: both bride and bridegroom oftentimes desired that day should set."

² "And so the bitter blast extinguished the faithless lamp and the life and love of suffering Leander."

ward, from the lofty tower. In their death, says the poet after his own fashion, they were not divided :—

ἀλλήλων δ' ἀπέθαντο καὶ ἐν πυμάτῳ περ ὀλέθρου.¹

This line ends the poem.

This is but a simple story. Yet for that very reason it is one of those stories which can never grow old. As Leigh Hunt, after some unnecessary girding at scholars and sculptors, has sung :—

“ I never think of poor Leander's fate,
And how he swam, and how his bride sat late,
And watched the dreadful dawning of the light,
But as I would of two that died last night,
So might they now have lived, and so have died ;
The story's heart, to me, still beats against its side.”

What makes it doubly touching is, that this poem of young love and untimely fate was born, like a soul “ beneath the ribs of death,” in the dotage and decay of Greek art. I do not know whether it has often been noticed that the qualities of romantic grace and pathos were chiefly appreciated by the Greeks in their decline. It is this circumstance, perhaps, which caused the tales of *Hero and Leander* and *Daphnis and Chloe* to attract so much attention at the time of the Renaissance. Modern students found something akin to their own modes of feeling in the later classics. Are not the colours of the autumn in harmony with the tints of spring ?

The judicious Hallam, in a famous passage of the *History of Literature*, records his opinion that “ it is impossible not to wish that Shakespeare had never written ” the sonnets dedicated to Mr. W. H. With the same astounding ἀπειροκαλία, or insensibility to beauty, he ventures to dismiss the *Hero and Leander* of Marlowe as “ a paraphrase, in every sense of the epithet, of the most licentious kind.” Yet this severe high-priest of decorum has devoted three pages and a half to the analysis of *Romeo and Juliet*, in which play we have, as he remarks with justice, “ more than in any other tragedy, the mere passion of love ; love, in all its vernal promise, full of hope and innocence, ardent beyond all restraint of reason, but tender as it is warm.” What can be said of the critical perceptions of one who finds so strongly marked a moral separation between the motives of Marlowe's poem and Shakespeare's play ?

The truth is that the words used by Hallam to characterise the subject of *Romeo and Juliet* are almost exactly applicable to *Hero and Leander*, after due allowance made for the distinction between the styles of presentation proper to a tragedy in the one case, and in the other to a narrative poem. Reflecting upon this, it is probable that the impartial student will side with Swinburne when he writes : “ I must avow that I want and am well content to want the sense, whatever it be, which would enable me to discern more offence in that

¹ “ They enjoyed each other even thus in the last straits of doom.”

lovely picture of the union of two lovers in body as in soul than I can discern in the parting of Romeo and Juliet."

To discuss the morality of Marlowe's Muse is, however, alien to the present purpose. What has to be brought plainly forward is the artistic difference between the methods of Marlowe and Musæus. Hallam, in calling the English *Hero and Leander* a "paraphrase," was hardly less wrong than Warton, who called it a "translation." It is in fact a free and independent reproduction of the story first told by Musæus. Without the poem of Musæus the poem of Marlowe would not have existed; but though the incidents remain unchanged, the whole manner of presenting them, of selecting characteristic details, and of guiding the sympathy and imagination of the reader is altered. In other words, the artistic consciousness had shifted its point of gravity between the ages of Musæus and Marlowe, and a new poem was produced to satisfy the new requirements of the æsthetic ideal. Musæus, as we have already seen, thought it essential to set forth the whole of his subject at the opening in its minutest details: Sestos and Abydos, the marriage-bed on which the morning never shone, the swimming feat of Leander, and the lamp, which was the star of love, till envious fate blew out both love and light and life itself together, all find their proper place in the proemium. In conducting the narrative he is careful to present each motive, as it were, from the outside, to cast the light of his imagination upon forms rendered as distinct as possible in their plasticity, just as the sun's light falls upon and renders visible a statue. There is no attempt to spiritualise the subject, to flood it with emotion, thought, and passion, to pierce into its inmost substance, to find the analogue to its implicit feeling in the depth of his own soul, and, by expressing that, to place his readers at the point of view from which he contemplates the beauty of the fable. The poet withdraws his personality, leaving the animated figures he has put upon the stage of fancy, the carefully-prepared situations that display their activity, and the words invented for them, to tell the tale. He can therefore afford to be both simple and direct, brief in descriptive passages, and free from psychological digressions. A few gnomic sentences, here and there introduced, suffice to maintain the reflective character of a meditated work of art. All this is in perfect concord with the Greek conception of art, the sculpturesque ideal.

Marlowe takes another course. The three hundred and forty lines, which were enough for Musæus, are expanded into six sestiams or cantos, each longer than the whole Greek poem.¹ Yet to this lengthy narrative no prelude is prefixed. Unlike Musæus, Marlowe rushes at once into the story. He does not wait to propound it, or to talk about the fatal lamp, or to describe Hero's tower. That Hero lived in a tower at all, we only discover by accident on the occasion of her visit to the shrine of Venus, and Leander makes his first appearance there, guided by no lamp, but by his own audacity. On the other hand, all

¹ Marlowe lived to write only the first two sestiams.

descriptions that set free the poet's feeling are enormously extended. The one epithet *ἰμερόεις*, or love-inspiring, for instance, which satisfied Musæus, is amplified by Marlowe through forty lines throbbing with his own deep sense of adolescent beauty. The temple of Venus, briefly alluded to by Musæus, is painted in detail by Marlowe, with a luminous account of its frescoes, bas-reliefs, and pavements. The first impassioned speech of Leander runs at one breath over ninety-six verses, while mythological episodes and moral reflections are freely interpolated. All the situations, however delicate, so long as they have raised the poet's sense of beauty to enthusiasm, are treated with elaborate and loving sympathy. In presenting them with their fulness of emotion to the reader, Marlowe taxes his inexhaustible invention to the utmost, and permits the luxuriance of his fancy to run riot. The passion which carries this soul of fire and air up to the empyrean, where it moves at ease, sometimes betrays him into what we know as faults of taste. It is as though the love-ache, grown intense, had passed over for a moment into pain, as though the music, seeking for subtler and still more subtle harmonies, had touched at times on discord.

Compared with the Greek poem, this *Hero and Leander* of Marlowe is like some radiant double rose placed side by side with the wild briar whence it sprang by cultivation. The petals have been multiplied, the perfume deepened and intensified, the colours varied in their modulations of a single tint. At the same time something in point of simple form has passed away for ever. The first thing, then, that strikes us in turning from Musæus to Marlowe is that what the Greek poet considered all-important in the presentation of his subject, has been dropped or negligently handled by the English, while the English poet has been prodigal in places where the Greek displayed his parsimony. On looking further, we discover that the modern poet, in all these differences, aims at effects not realised by ancient art. The life and play and actual pulsations of emotion have to be revealed, both as they exist in the subject of the poem and as the poet finds them in his own soul. Everything that will contribute to this main achievement is welcomed by the poet, and the rest rejected. All the motives which had an external statuesque significance for the Greek must palpitate with passion for the English. Those that cannot clothe themselves with spirit as with a garment are abandoned. He wants to make his readers feel, not see: if they see at all, they must see through their emotion; whereas the emotion of the Greek was stirred in him through sight. We do not get very far into the matter, but we gain something, perhaps, by adding that, as sculpture is to painting and music, so is the poetry of Musæus to that of Marlowe. In the former, feeling is subordinate or at most but adequate to form: in the latter, *Gefühl ist alles*.

What has just been advanced is stated broadly, and is therefore only accurate in a general sense. For while the Greek *Leander* contains

exquisite touches of pure sentiment, so the English *Leander* offers fully perfected pictures of Titianesque beauty. Still, this does not impair the strength of the position: what is really instructive in the comparative study of the two tales of *Hero and Leander* will always be that the elder poem, in spite of its autumnal quality, is classical, the younger, in spite of its most utter paganism, is romantic. To enter into minute criticism of Marlowe's poem would be out of place here; and, were it included in my programme, I should shrink from this task as a kind of profanation. Those who have the true sense of ideal beauty, and who can rise by sympathy above the commonplaces of everyday life, into the free atmosphere of art, which is nature permeated with emotion, will never forget the prolonged, recurring, complex cadences of that divinest dithyramb poured forth from a young man's soul. Every form and kind of beauty is included in his adoration, and the whole is spiritualised with imagination, ardent and passionate beyond all words.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE GENIUS OF GREEK ART

Separation between the Greeks and us—Criticism—Nature—The Olive—Greek Sculpture—Greek Sense of Beauty—Greek Morality—Greece, Rome, Renaissance, the Modern Spirit.

THE Greeks had no past : “ no hungry generations trod them down ” : whereas the multitudinous associations of immense antiquity envelop all our thoughts and feelings.¹ “ O Solon, Solon,” said the priest of Egypt, “ you Greeks are always children ! ” The world has now grown old ; we are gray from the cradle onwards, swathed with the husks of outworn creeds, and rocked upon the lap of immemorial mysteries. The travail of the whole earth, the unsatisfied desires of many races, the anguish of the death and birth of successive civilisations, have passed into our souls. Life itself has become a thousand-fold more complicated and more difficult for us than it was in the springtime of the world. With the increase of the size of nations, poverty and disease and the struggle for bare existence have been aggravated. How can we then bridge over the gulf which separates us from the Greeks ? How shall we, whose souls are aged and wrinkled with the long years of humanity, shake hands across the centuries with those young-eyed, young-limbed immortal children ? Can we make criticism our Medea—bid the magnificent witch pluck leaves and flowers of Greek poetry and art and life, distilling them for us to bathe therein and regenerate our youth like Æson ?

Like a young man newly come from the wrestling-ground, anointed, chapleted, and very calm, the Genius of the Greeks appears before us. Upon his soul there is no burden of the world's pain ; the creation that groaneth and travaileth together has touched him with no sense of anguish ; nor has he yet felt sin. The pride and the strength of adolescence are his—audacity and endurance, swift passions and

¹ This chapter was written with the purpose of simply illustrating the *æsthetic* spirit of the Greeks. I had no intention of writing a treatise on the spirit of the Greeks as illustrated by their history and philosophy. The last chapter of this volume contains a supplemental treatment of several points suggested in these pages. Pursuing the design explained in the preface, I have not attempted to fuse the two chapters.

exquisite sensibilities, the alternations of sublime repose and boyish noise, grace, pliancy, and stubbornness and power, love of all fair things and splendours of the world, the frank enjoyment of the open air, free merriment, and melancholy well beloved. Of these adolescent qualities, of this clear and stainless personality, this conscience whole and pure and reconciled to nature, what survives among us now? The imagination must be strained to the uttermost before we can begin to sympathise with such a being. The bleary-eyed mechanic, stifled in a hovel of our sombre northern towns, canopied through all the year with smoke, deafened with wheels that never cease to creak, stiffened by toil in one cramped posture, oblivious of the sunlight and green fields, could scarcely be taught even to envy the pure clear life of art made perfect in humanity, which was the pride of Hellas. His soul is gladdened, if at all, by a glimpse of celestial happiness far off: the hope that went abroad across the earth so many centuries ago has raised his eyes to heaven. How can he comprehend a mode of existence in which the world itself was adequate to all the wants of the soul, and when to yearn for more than life affords was reckoned a disease?

We may tell of blue Ægean waves, islanded with cliffs that seem less real than clouds, whereon the temples stand, burning like gold in sunset or turning snowy fronts against the dawn. We may paint high porches of the gods, resonant with music and gladdened with choric dances; or describe perpetual sunshine and perpetual ease—no work from year to year that might degrade the body or impair the mind, no dread of hell, no yearning after heaven, but summer-time of youth, and autumn of old age, and loveless death bewept and bravely borne.¹ The life of the schools, the theatre, the wrestling-ground, the law-courts; generous contests on the Pythian or Olympian plains; victorious crowns of athletes or of patriots; Simonidean epitaphs and funeral orations of Pericles for fallen heroes; the prize of martial prowess or poetic skill; the honour paid to the pre-eminence of beauty;—all these things admit of scholar-like enumeration. Or we may recall by fancy the olive-groves of the Academy; discern Hymettus pale against the burnished sky, and Athens guarded by her glistening goddess of the mighty brow—Pallas, who spreads her shield, and shakes her spear above the labyrinth of peristyles and pediments in which her children dwell. Imagination can lead us to the plane-trees on Cephisus' shore, the labours of the husbandmen who garner dues of corn and oil, the galleys in Peiræan harbourage. Or with the *Lysis* and the *Charmides* beneath our eyes, we may revisit the haunts of the wrestlers and the runners, true-born Athenians, fresh from the bath

¹ But, while we tell of these good things, we must not conceal the truth that they were planted, like exquisite exotic flowers, upon the black rank soil of slavery. That is the dark background of Greek life. Greek slaves may not have been worse off than other slaves—may indeed most probably have been better treated than the serfs of feudal Germany and Spanish Mexico. Yet who can forget the stories of Spartan Helotry, or the torments of Syracusan stone-quarries, or the pale figure of Phædon rescued, true-born Elean as he was, by Socrates from an Athenian brothel?

and crowned with violets, chaste, vigorous, inured to rhythmic movements of the passions and the soul.

Yet after all, when the process of an elaborate culture has thus been toilsomely accomplished, when we have trained our soul to sympathise with that which is so novel and so strange and yet so natural, few of us can fairly say that we have touched the Greeks at more than one or two points. *Novies Styx interfusa coerct* : "between us and them crawls the nine times twisted stream of Death." The history of the human race is one ; and without the Greeks we should be nothing. But just as an old man of ninety is not the same being as the boy of nineteen,—nay, cannot even recall to memory how and what he felt when the pulse of manhood was yet gathering strength within his veins,—even so now civilised humanity looks back upon the youth of Hellas and wonders what she was in that blest time. A few fragments yet remain from which we strive to reconstruct the past. Criticism is the product of the weakness as well as of the strength of our age. In the midst of our activity we have so little that is artistically salient or characteristic in our life, that we are not led astray by our own individuality or tempted to interpret the past wrongly by making it square with the present. Impartial clearness of judgment in scientific research, laborious antiquarian zeal, methodic scrupulousness in preserving the minutest details of local colouring, and an earnest craving to escape from the dreary present of commonplace respectability into the spirit-stirring freedom of the past—these are qualities of the highest value which our century has brought to bear upon history. They make up in some measure for our want of the creative faculties which more productive but less scientific ages have possessed, and enable those who have but little original imagination to enjoy imaginative pleasures at second hand, by living as far as may be in the clear light of antique beauty.

The sea, the hills, the plains, the sunlight of the South, together with some ruins which have peopled Europe with phantoms of dead art, and the reliques of Greek literature, are our guides in the endeavour to restore the past of Hellas. Among rocks golden with broom-flowers, murmurous with bees, burning with anemones in spring and oleanders in summer, and odorous through all the year with thyme, we first assimilate the spirit of the Greeks. In the silence of mountain valleys, thinly grown with arbutus and pine and oak, open at all seasons to pure air, and breaking downwards to the sea, we understand the apparition of Pan to Pheidippides, and divine the secret of an architecture which aimed at definition before all things. The Bay of Naples, the coast of Sicily, are instinct with the memory of those first settlers, who coasting round the silent promontories, ran their keels upon the shelving shore, and drew them up along the strand, and named the spot Neapolis or Gela. The boys of Rome were yet in the wolf's cavern. Vesuvius was a peaceful hill on which the olive and the vine might slumber. The slopes of Pozzuoli were green with herbs, over which

no lava had been poured. Wandering about Sorrento, the spirit of the *Odyssey* is ours. Those fishing-boats with lateen sail are such as bore the heroes from their ten years' toil at Troy. Those shadowy islands caught the gaze of Æneas straining for the promised land. Into such clefts and rents of rock strode Herakles and Jason when they sought the golden apples and the golden fleece. Look down. There gleam the green and yellow dragon-scales, coiled on the basement of the hills, and writhing to each curve and cleavage of the chasm. Is it a dream? Do we in fact behold the mystic snake, or in the twilight do those lustrous orange-trees deceive our eyes? Nay: there are no dragons in the ravine—only thick boughs, and burnished leaves, and snowy bloom, and globes of glittering gold. Above them on the cliff sprout myrtle-rods, sacred to Love, myrtle-branches, with which the Athenians wreathed their swords in honour of Harmodius. Lilies and jonquils and hyacinths stand, each straight upon his stem—a youth, as Greeks imagined, slain by his lover's hand, or dead for love of his own loveliness, or cropped in love's despite by death, that is the foe of love. Scarlet and white anemones are there, some born of Adonis' blood, and some of Aphrodite's tears. All beauty fades: the flowers of earth, the bloom of youth, man's strength, and woman's grace, all wither and relapse into the loveless and inexorable grave. This the Greeks knew, mingling mirth with melancholy, and love with sadness, their sweetest songs with elegiac melodies.

Beneath the olive-trees, among the flowers and ferns, move stately maidens and bare-chested youths. Their eyes are starry-softened or flash fire, and their lips are parted to drink in the breath of life. Some are singing in the fields an antique world-old monotone of song. Was not the lay of Linus, the burden of *μακρὰι ταὶ δρῦες ὦ Μενάλκα* (High are the oak-trees, O Menalcas), some such canzonet as this? These late descendants of Greek colonists are still beautiful—like moving statues in the sunlight and the shadow of the boughs. Yonder tall straight girl, whose pitcher, poised upon her head, might have been filled by Electra or Chrysothemis with lustral waters for a father's tomb, carries her neck as nobly as a Fate of Pheidias. Her body sways upon the hips, where rests her modelled arm; the ankle and the foot are sights to sit and gaze at through a summer's day. And where, if not here, shall we meet with Hylas and Hyacinth, with Gany-mede and Hymenæus, in the flesh? As we pass, the laughter and the singing die away. Bright dresses and pliant forms are lost. We stray onward through the sheen and shade of olive-branches.

The olive was Athene's gift to Hellas, and Athens carved its leaves and berries on her drachma with the head of Pallas and her owl. The light which never leaves its foliage, silvery beneath and sparkling from the upper surface of burnished green, the delicacy of its stem, which in youth and middle and old age retains the distinction of finely accentuated form, the absence of sombre shadow on the ground beneath its branches, might well fit the olive to be the symbol of the purity

of classic art. Each leaf is cut into a lance-head of brilliancy, not jagged or fanciful or woolly like the foliage of northern trees. There is here no mystery of darkness, no labyrinth of tortuous shade, no conflict of contrasted forms. Excess of light sometimes fatigues the eye amid those airy branches, and we long for the repose of gloom to which we are accustomed in our climate. But gracefulness, fertility, power, radiance, pliability, are seen in every line. The spirit of the Greeks itself is not more luminous and strong and subtle. The colour of the olive-tree, again, is delicate. Its pearly grays and softened greens in no wise interfere with the lustre which is the true distinction of the tree. Clear and faint like Guido's colours in the Ariadne of St. Luke's at Rome, distinct as the thought in a Greek epigram, the olive-branches are relieved against the bright blue of the sea. The mountain slopes above are clothed by them with light as with a raiment: clinging to knoll and vale and winding creek, rippling in hoary undulations to the wind, they wrap the hills from feet to flank in lucid haze. Above the olives shine bare rocks in steady noon or blush with dawn and evening.¹ Nature is naked and beautiful beneath the sun—like Aphrodite, whose raiment falls waist-downward to her sandals on the sea, but whose pure breasts and forehead are unveiled.

Nature is thus the first, chief element by which we are enabled to conceive the spirit of the Greeks. The key to their mythology is here. Here is the secret of their sympathies, the wellspring of their deepest thoughts, the primitive potentiality of all they have achieved in art. What is Apollo but the magic of the sun whose soul is light? What is Aphrodite but the love-charm of the sea? What is Pan but the mystery of nature, the felt and hidden want pervading all? What again are those elder, dimly-discovered deities, the Titans and the brood of Time, but forces of the world as yet beyond the touch and ken of human sensibilities? But nature alone cannot inform us what that spirit was. For though the Greeks grew up in scenes which we may visit, they gazed on them with Greek eyes, eyes different from ours, and dwelt upon them with Greek minds, minds how unlike our own! Unconsciously, in their long and unsophisticated infancy, the Greeks absorbed and assimilated to their own substance that loveliness which it is left for us only to admire. Between them and ourselves—even face to face with mountain, sky, and sea, unaltered by the lapse of years—flow the rivers of death and Lethe, and the mists of thirty centuries of human life are woven like a veil. To pierce that veil, to learn even after the most partial fashion how they transmuted the splendours of the world into æsthetic forms, is a work which involves the further interrogation of their sculpture and their literature.

The motives of that portion of Greek sculpture which brings us close to the incidents of Greek life are very simple. A young man binding a fillet round his head; a boy drawing a thorn from his foot;

¹ See the introduction to my chapter on Athens in *Sketches in Italy and Greece* for the characteristic quality given to Attic landscape by gray limestone mountain ranges.

a girl who has been wounded in the breast, raising her arm to show where the sword smote her ; an athlete bending every sinew to discharge the quoit ; a line of level-gazing youths on prancing horses, some faring forward with straight eyes, one turning with bridle-hand held lightly to encourage his companion, another with loose mantle in the act to mount, others thrown back to rein upon their haunches passionate steeds ; a procession of draped maidens bearing urns :—such are the sculptured signs by which we read the placid physical fulfilment of Greek life. That the serenity of satisfied existence is an end in itself and that death in the plenitude of vigour is desirable, the reliefs of Pheidias and the Æginetan marbles teach us. In these simple but consummate works of art the beauty of mere health, animal enjoyment, temperance, mental vigour, and heroic daring mingle and create one splendour of a human being sensitive to all influences and vital in every faculty. Excess can nowhere be discovered. Compare with these forms for a moment the Genii painted by Michael Angelo upon the roof of the Sistine Chapel. Over them has passed the spirit with its throes : *la maladie de la pensée* is there. Of no Phœbus and no Pallas are they the servants ; but ministers of prophets and sibyls, angels of God fulfilling His word, they incarnate the wrestlings and the judgments and the resurrections of the soul. Now take a banquet-scene from some Greek vase. Along the cushioned couch lie young men, naked, crowned with myrtles : in their laps are women, and at their sides broad jars of honeyed wine. A winged Erôs hovers over them, and their lips are opened to sing a song of ancient love. Yet this is no forecast of Borgia revels in Rome, or of the French Regent's Parc aux Cerfs. When Autolycus entered the symposium of Xenophon, all tongues were stricken dumb ; man gazed at man in wonder at his bloom of adolescence. When Charmides, heading the troop of wrestlers, joined Socrates in the palæstra, the soul of the philosopher was troubled ; he saw the boy's breast within the tunic, and blushed, and felt his heart aflame. Simætha, in the *Pharmaceutria* of Theocritus, beheld the curls of youths on horseback like laburnum-flowers, and their bosoms whiter than the moon.

We need not embark on antiquarian, or metaphysical, or historical discussions in order to understand the sense of Beauty which was inherent in the Greeks. Little hints scattered by the wayside are far more helpful. Take, for example, the *Clouds* of Aristophanes, and after reading the speech of the Dikaios Logos, stand beneath the Athlete of Lysippus,¹ in the Braccio Nuovo of the Vatican. "Fresh and fair in beauty-bloom you shall pass your days in the wrestling-ground, or run races beneath the sacred olive-trees, crowned with white reed, in company with a pure-hearted friend, smelling of bindweed

¹ This statue, usually called the Apoxyomenos, may possibly be a copy in marble of the Athlete of Lysippus which Tiberius wished to remove from the Baths of Agrippa. The Romans were so angry at the thought of being deprived of their favourite, that Tiberius had to leave it where it stood.

and leisure hours and the white poplar that sheds her leaves, rejoicing in the prime of spring, when the plane-tree whispers to the lime." This life the *Dikaios Logos* offers to the young Athenian, if he will forego the law-courts and the lectures of the sophists and the house of the hetaira. This life rises above us imaged in the sculptor's marble. The athlete, tall and stately, tired with running, lifts one arm, and with his strigil scrapes away the oil with which he has anointed it. His fingers hold the die that tells his number in the race. Upon his features there rests no shade of care or thought, but the delicious languor of momentary fatigue, and the serenity of a nature in harmony with itself. A younger brother of the same lineage is the Adorante of the Berlin Museum. His eyes and arms are raised to heaven. Perfect in humanity, beneath the lightsome vault of heaven he stands and prays—a prayer of joy and calm thanksgiving, a Greek prayer—no Roman adoration with veiled eyes and muttering lips, no Jewish prostration with the putting off of sandals on the holy ground, no Christian genuflexion like the bending of wind-smitten reeds beneath the spirit-breath of sacraments. Iamos in the mid-waves of Alpheus might have prayed thus when he heard the voice of Phœbus calling to him and promising the twofold gift of prophecy. All the statues of the athletes bear the seal and blossom of *σωφροσύνη*—that truly Greek virtue of moderation and self-restraint, the correlative in morals to the passion for Beauty. "When I with justice on my lips flourished," says the *Dikaios Logos*, "and modesty was held in honour, then a boy's voice was not heard; but they went orderly through the streets in bands together from their quarters to the harp-player's school, uncloaked and barefoot, even though it snowed like meal." Of this sort are the two wrestling boys at Florence, whose heads and faces form in outline the ellipse which is the basis of all beauty, and whose strained muscles exhibit the chord of masculine vigour vibrating with tense vitality. If we in England seek some living echo of this melody of curving lines, we must visit the water-meadows where boys bathe in early morning, or the playgrounds of our public schools in summer, or the banks of the Isis when the eights are on the water, or the riding-schools of young soldiers. We cannot reconstitute the elements of Greek life; but here and there we may gain hints for adding breath and pulse and movement to Greek sculpture.

The charm which the simplest things acquired under the hand of a Greek artificer may be seen in the adornment of a circular hand-mirror.¹ Ivy-branches, dividing both ways from the handle, surround its rim with a delicate tracery of sharp-cut leaf and corymb. The central space is occupied by four figures—on the right the boy Dionysus, who welcomes his mother in heaven, on the left Phœbus and a young Paniscus playing on the double pipes. Grace can go no further than in the attitude and the expression of this group. Dionysus is thrown backward; both his arms are raised to encircle the neck of Semele,

¹ Engraved in Müller's *Denkmäler der alten Kunst*, Plate XLI.

who bends to kiss his upturned lips. A necklace with pendent balls defines the throat of the stripling where it meets his breast, suggesting by some touch beyond analysis the life that pulses in his veins. He has armlets too below the elbow, and his rich hair ripples in ringlets between cheek and shoulder. The little Paniscus is seated, attending only to his music, with such childish earnestness as shows that his whole soul goes forth in piping. Phœbus, half-draped and lustrous, stands erect beside a slender shaft of laurel planted on the ground. Such are the delights of Paradise to which, as Greeks imagined, a deity might welcome his earthly mother, leading her by the hand from Hades. It would be easy enough to fill a volume with such descriptions—to unlock the cabinets of gems and coins, or to linger over vases painted with the single figure of a winged boy in tender red upon their blackness, and showing the word ΚΑΛΟΣ negligently written at the side.¹

But it is more to the purpose to note in passing that delicate perception of associated qualities which led the Greeks to maintain a sympathy between cognate deities, while distinguishing to the utmost their specific attributes. Aphrodite, Erôs, Dionysus, Hermes, Hermaphrodite, the Graces, the Nymphs, the Genius of Death—these, for example, though carefully individualised, are still of one kindred. They blend and mingle in a concord of separate yet interpenetrating beauties. Between the radiant Aphrodite of Melos, who in her triumphant attitude seems to be an elder sister of the brazen-winged Victory of Brescia, and the voluptuous Aphrodite Callipygos,² a whole rhythm of finely modulated forms may be drawn out, each one of which corresponds to some mood or moment of the enamoured soul. Her immortal son in the Erôs of Pheidias³ is imaged as the “first of gods,” θεῶν πρότυπος, upstarting in his slenderness of youth from Chaos—the keen fine light of dawn dividing night from day. In the Praxitelean Cupid,

“that most perfect of antiques,
They call the Genius of the Vatican,
Which seems too beauteous to endure itself
In this rough world—”

he becomes the deity described by Plato in the *Phædrus*, an incarnation of the tenderest passion, tinged, in spite of his own radiance, with sadness. What thought has made him sorrowful and bowed his head? Perhaps Theognis can tell us :⁴—

ἄφρονες ἄνθρωποι καὶ νήπιοι, οἷτε θανόντας
κλαίουσ' οὐδ' ἤβης ἄνθος ἀπολλύμενον.

The winged boy, again, bending his bow against the hearts of lovers,

¹ It is not uncommon to find jars with καλὸς ὁ παῖς, καλὸς Διομήνευς, and so forth, inscribed upon them. They were possibly intended for complimentary presents. Lovers scrawled similar expressions upon trees and walls.

² Neapolitan Museum.

³ British Museum.

⁴ “Ah, vain and thoughtless men, who wail the dead,
But not one tear for youth's frail blossom shed !”

with his lion's skin beside him,¹ is the Erôs of Agathon—he who delights to walk delicately upon the tender places of the soul. Next we find him asleep upon his folded pinions, the mischievous child who rewarded Anacreon's hospitality by wounding him, and who gave to the thirsty heart of Meleager scalding tears to drink. How in the last place are we to distinguish Love from Harpocrates, the silent, with one finger on his lip?

Turn next to Hermes. When the herald of Olympus met Priam midway between Troy-town and Achilles' tent, he was, says Homer,

*νεηλὴ ἀνδρὶ ἐοικώς,
πρῶτον ὑπνήτην, τοῦπερ χαριεστάτη ἦβη,—*

“like a young man, with budding beard, whose bloom is in the prime of grace.” This adolescent loveliness belongs throughout to Hermes. As the genius of the gymnasium,² he is a divinised athlete, scarcely to be distinguished from the quoit-throwers and the runners he protects. The Hermes, who woos a nymph with his arm around her waist,³ has Persuasion for his parent. Again the seated Hermes with wings upon his ankles is the swiftness of auroral light incarnate. Of all the series of statues dedicated to this god, the most supreme in loveliness is the Hermes of Praxiteles, lately discovered at Olympia. Nor lastly, when, with chlamys thrown upon his shoulder and petasos slung from his neck, he leads souls to Hades, caduceus in hand, has he lost this quality of youth and lustre. He upon Aphrodite begat Hermaphrodite. Their union—the union of athletic goodliness and consummate womanhood—produced a blending of two beauties forgotten by an oversight of nature. There exists a Term or Hermes⁴ which combines Aphrodite, Priapus, and Hermaphrodite in one—three heads upon a common pedestal—forming a trinity of sensuous joy.

How various again is Bacchus, passing from the stately mildness of the bearded Indian god to the luxuriant wantonness of Phales, the “night-wandering reveller”! At one time you can scarcely distinguish him from young Apollo or young Herakles; at another his brows and tresses have the chastity of Love; again he assumes the voluptuous form which befits the sire by Aphrodite of Priapus. The fascination of the grape-juice lends itself to all qualities that charm the soul of man. Yet another of these cognate deities may be mentioned. That is the Genius of Eternal Slumber,⁵ reclining with arms folded above his head, upright against a tree. To judge by his attitude he might be Bacchus, wine-drowsy, as in a statue of the gallery at Florence. Looking at his long tresses, we call him Love: and what deities are of closer kin than Love and Death? His stately form, not unlike that of Phœbus, makes us exclaim in Æschylean language
ὦ θάνατε παιῶν (O Death, the Healer!). But he is stronger and more

¹ Of this statue there are many slightly different copies. The best is in the Vatican.

² See the so-called Antinous of the Belvedere.

³ Engraved in Clarac, *Musée de Sculpture*, Planches, vol. iv. pl. 666 c.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pl. 613.

⁵ Louvre.

perdurable, less swift to move, less light of limb, than any of these. It was a deep and touching intuition of the Greeks which prompted them to ascribe these kinships to Death. Who knows even now whether the winged and sworded Genius of the Ephesus column be Love or Death? To trace such analogies further would be fanciful: it is enough to pluck at random a few blossoms, and to scatter them for lovers. To Winckelmann and the antiquaries may be left the accurate distinctions of the Greek deities. Without seeking to confound these, but rather studying them most carefully, we may yet discern by passing hints that purity of tact which enabled the Greeks to interpret in their statuary every *nuance* of feeling and of fancy, and to mark by subtlest suggestions their points of agreement as well as of divergence.

When Hippolytus in Euripides first appears upon the scene, he greets Artemis with these words:—

“ Lady, for thee, this garland have I woven
Of wilding flowers, plucked from an unshorn meadow,
Where neither shepherd dares to feed his flock,
Nor ever scythe hath swept, but through the grasses
Unshorn in spring the bee pursues her labours,
And maiden modesty with running rills
Waters the garden.”

Before the Meleager of the Vatican, so calm and strong and redolent of forest odours, this orison rings in our memory, and the Diana of the Louvre seems ready to spring forth, and loose her hind, and call on the hero to hunt with her. The life of woods and mountains was divined and interpreted with exquisite sensibility by the Attic sculptors. Children of the earth, and conscious of their own recent birth from the bosom of the divine in nature, they loved all fair and fresh things of the open world fraternally. Therefore they could carve the mystery of the Praxitelean Faun,¹ whose subtle smile is a lure for souls, and the voluptuous sleep of the Barberini Faun,² who seems to have but half escaped from elemental existence, and still to own some kindred with unconscious things. The joy of the shepherd who carries on his back a laughing child at Naples; the linked arms of Bacchus and Ampelus; the young Triton³ who blows his horn over the crests of the waves, and calls upon his brethren the billows to rejoice with him, as he bears his nymph away; the subtle charm of double life in Hermaphrodite, in whom two sexes are hidden, like a bitter and a sweet almond in one beautiful but barren husk; the frank sensuality of Silenus and Priapus; the dishevelled hair and quivering flanks of Mænads; the laughter of Erôs wreathed around with coils of the enamoured dolphin's tail;⁴ the pride of the eagle soaring heavenward with Ganymede among his plumes: from tokens like these, together with the scenes of the *Bacchæ* and the *Cyclops* of Euripides, the *Idylls* of Theocritus, and the dedicatory epigrams of the Anthology, we learn of what sort was the sympathy

¹ The Capitol.

² Glyptothek, Munich.

³ The Vatican.

⁴ Naples.

of the Greeks for nature. Their beautiful humanity is so close to the mother ever youthful of all life, to the full-breasted earth, that they seem calling through their art to the woods and waves and rivers, crying to their brethren that still tarry: "Come forth, and be like us; begin to feel and know your happiness; put on the form of flesh in which the world's soul reaches consciousness"! Humanity defined upon the borderland of nature is the life of all Greek sculpture. Even the gods are films of fleshly form emergent on the surface of the elements. The circle of the sun dilates, and Phœbus grows into distinctness with the glory round him; out of the liquid ether gaze the divine eyes of Zeus; Poseidon rises breast-high from the mirrors of the sea. Man for the first time conscious of his freedom, yet clinging still to the breasts that gave him suck, like a flower rooted to the kindly earth, expresses all his thought and feeling in the language of his own shape. "The Greek Spirit," says Hegel, "is the plastic artist forming the stone into a work of art." And this work of art is invariably the image of a man or woman. The most sublime aspirations, the subtlest intuitions, the darkest forebodings, the audacities of passion, the freedom of the senses, put on personality in Hellas and assume a robe of carnal beauty. In Egypt and the Orient humanity lay still upon "the knees of a mild mystery." The Egyptians had not discovered the magic word by means of which the world might be translated into the language of mankind: their art still remained within the sphere of symbolism which excludes true sympathy. The Jews had concentrated their thought upon moral phenomena: in their jealousy of the abstract purity of the soul they banned the arts as impious.

Theognis tells us that when the Muses and the Graces came down from Olympus to the marriage-feast of Cadmus and Harmonia, they sang a song with this immortal burden: ¹—

ὄττι καλόν, φίλον ἐστί· τὸ δ' οὐ καλὸν οὐ φίλον ἐστί.

"What is fair, we love: what is not fair, we love not."

This strikes the keynote to the music of the Greek genius. Beauty is the true province of the Greeks, their indefeasible domain. But their conception of beauty was both more comprehensive and more concrete than any which a modern race, perturbed by the division of the flesh and spirit, conscious of Jewish no less than Greek tradition, can attain to. When Goethe expressed his theory of life in the following couplet:—

"Im Ganzen Guten Schönen
Resolut zu leben": ²

he supplied us with a correct definition of the spirit which governed Hellas. Beauty to the Greeks was one aspect of the universal synthesis,

¹ See p. 165 for an English verse translation of this line.

² "To live with steady purpose in the whole, the Good, the Beautiful." These two lines have been misquoted—Schönen being exchanged for Wahren, Beauty for Truth.

commensurate with all that is fair in manners and comely in morals. It was the harmony of man with nature in a well-balanced and complete humanity, the bloom of health upon a conscious being, satisfied, as flowers and beasts and stars are satisfied, with the conditions of temporal existence. It was the joy-note of the whole world, heard and echoed by the sole being who could comprehend it—Man. That alone was beautiful which uttered a sound in unison with the whole; and all was good which had this quality of concord. To be really beautiful was to be an integral part of the world's symphony, to be developed fully in all parts, without an undue preference for the soul before the body or for the passions before the reason—to maintain the rhythm and the measure and the balance of those faculties which characterise man, nature's masterpiece. The profounder reaches of this thought were explored by philosophers, who figured the soul as a harmony, who conceived of God as the Idea of Beauty, or who, like Marcus Aurelius, defined virtue to be a living and enthusiastic sympathy with nature. In the region of social life it led the Greeks to treat the State as an organic whole, which might be kept in preservation by the balance of its several forces. In the sphere of religion it produced a race of gods, each perfect in his individuality, distinct and self-contained, but blending, like the colours of the prism, in the white light of Zeus, who was the whole.¹ In actual life it facilitated the development of characters which, by the free expansion of personality and by a conscious culture, were themselves consummate works of art. Just as the unity of the Greek religion was not the unity of the One but of the Many blent and harmonised in the variety that we observe in nature, so the ideal of Greek life imposed no commonplace conformity to one fixed standard on individuals, but each man was encouraged to complete and realise the type of himself to the utmost. Pericles devoted his energy to the perfecting of statesmanship and became the incarnation of the Athenian spirit; Pindar was a poet through and through; for the Olympian victor it was enough to be a splendid animal; Pheidias lived in concord with the universe by his exclusive devotion to his art. Thus formed and modelled to the utmost perfection each of his own kind, these characters, when contemplated together from a distance, like the deities of Olympus, present, in the harmony that springs from difference, an ideal of humanity. The Greek no less than the Christian might need to cut off his right hand,—to debar himself like Pericles from the pleasures of society,—or to cast aside the sin that doth so easily beset us—like Socrates who trampled under foot his sensual instincts,—for the attainment of that self-evolution which gave him the right to be one note in the concord of the whole, one colour in the prism of humanity. The one thing needful to him was, not belief in the unseen, nor of necessity holiness, but a firm resolve to comprehend

¹ The Greek Pantheon, regarded from one point of view, represents an exhaustive psychological analysis. Nothing in human nature is omitted: but each function and each quality of man is deified. To Zeus as the supreme reason all is subordinated.

and cultivate his own capacity, and thus to add his quota to the sum of beauty in the world.

The Greeks were essentially a nation of artists. Of the infinite attributes of God, of the infinite qualities of the whole, they clearly apprehended Beauty. *That* they conceived largely and liberally, not narrowly, as we are wont to do. And like consummate craftsmen, they did thoroughly whatsoever in the region of things plastic their hands found to do—so thoroughly that men have only done the work again in so far as they have followed the Greek rule. When we speak of the Greeks as an æsthetic nation, this is what we mean. Guided by no supernatural revelation, with no Mosaic law for conduct, they trusted their *αἴσθησις* (percipient reason), delicately trained and preserved in a condition of the utmost purity. This tact is the ultimate criterion in all matters of art—a truth which we recognise in our use of the word æsthetic, though we too often attempt to import the alien elements of metaphysical dogmatism and moral prejudice into the sphere of beauty. This tact was also for the Greeks the ultimate criterion of ethics. Ὑγιαίνειν μὲν ἄριστον ἀνδρὶ θνατῶ (health is the best blessing for mortal man), says Simonides.¹ A man in perfect health of mind and body, enjoying the balance of mental, moral, and physical qualities, which health implies, carried within himself the norm and measure of propriety. Those were the days when “love was an unerring light, and joy its own security.” What we call the conscience, our continual reference to the standard of the Divine will, scarcely existed for the Greek. But instead of it he had for a guide this true artistic sensibility, developed by centuries of training, fortified by traditional canons of good taste and prudence, and subject to continual correction by reciprocal comparison and dialectical debate. The lawgiver, the sculptor, the athlete, the statesman, the philosopher, the poet, the warrior, the musician, each added something of his own to the formation of a *κοινὴ αἴσθησις*, or common taste, by which the individual might regulate his instincts.

To suppose that the Greeks were not a highly moralised race is perhaps the strangest misconception to which religious prejudice has ever given rise. If their morality was æsthetic and not theocratic, it was none the less on that account humane and real. The difficulty for the critic is to seize exactly that which is Hellenic—enduring and common to the race, not transient and due to individuals—in their religion and their ethics. In order to appreciate the first fine flavour of the Greek intellect it is necessary to go back to Homer, who represents a period when the instincts of the Hellenes had not been sophisticated by philosophical reflection or vitiated by contact with Asiatic luxury. Homer joins hands with Pheidias and Aristophanes and Sophocles in a chain of truly Greek tradition. But side by side with them there runs a deeper and more mystic strain. The blood-justice of the Eumenides, the asceticism of Pythagoras, the purificatory rites

¹ See above, p. 187, for a translation of this Scolion, attributed to Simonides.

of Empedocles and Epimenides, the fetichistic belief in a jealous God, and the doctrine of hereditary guilt in Theognis, Herodotus, and Solon, are fragments of primitive or Asiatic superstition unharmonised with the serene element of the Hellenic spirit. At the same time the orgiastic cult of Dionysus, and the voluptuous worship of the Corinthian Aphrodite are intrusions from without. To eliminate such cruder moral and religious notions was the impulse of the vigorous Greek mind. Yet at one critical moment of history mysticism attained a titanic development and bid fair to force the Hellenic genius into uncongenial regions. The Persian war, by its lesson of a mortal peril escaped miraculously, quickened the spiritual convictions of the race.¹ It was then that Æschylus produced his tragedy of *Retribution*, whereof the motto is τῷ δρᾶσαντι παθεῖν (he who sins must suffer), and Pindar sounded with an awful sense of mystery the possible abysses of a future life. Greece, after the struggle with Xerxes, passed through a period of feverish exaltation, in which her placid contemplation of the beauty of the world was interrupted. She, whose vocation it was to see only by the light of the serene and radiant sun, seemed on the verge of becoming a clairvoyante. But the balance was soon righted. Even in Pindar, moral mysticism is, as it were, encysted, like an alien deposit, in the more vital substance of æsthetic conceptions. Sophocles corrects the gloomy extravagance of Æschylus. The law of tragedy in Sophocles is no longer that the doer of a deed must suffer, but that he who offends unwittingly will be accounted innocent. Euripides shifts the ground of moral interest from religious beliefs to sophistical analysis. Meanwhile Aristophanes, the true Athenian conservative, is equally opposed to metaphysical subtleties and to superstitious fancies; while Socrates directs his polemic against sciolism in philosophy and childishness in mythology, without thinking it worth while to attack the δεισιδαιμονία (fear of the supernatural) of the mystics. In Plato's ethics the highest altitude of sane Greek speculation is attained. Aristophanes reflects the clearest image of Greek versatility and cheerfulness. Pericles, freed by Anaxagoras from foolish fears, realises the genuine Greek life of cheerful, self-reliant activity. The drama of Sophocles sets forth a complete view of human destiny as conceived by the most perfect of Greek intellects. Antigone dares to trust her own sense of what is right in opposition to unnatural law. Œdipus suffers no further than his own quality of rashness justifies. When we arrive at Aristotle, who yields the abstract of all that previously existed in the Greek mind, we see that the scientific spirit has achieved a perfect triumph.

¹ It would form the subject of a curious psychological treatise to trace the growth of the morality of Nemesis and the Divine φθόνος (envy) in the earlier Greek authors, its purification by Æschylus, and still further subsequent refinement by Sophocles, finally its rejection by Plato, who says emphatically: "Envy has no place in the heavenly choir." A childish fear of the divine government pervaded the Greeks of the age of Herodotus. This by the Dramatists was exalted to a conception of the holy and the jealous God. But the good sense of the Greeks led the philosophers to eliminate from their theory of the world even the sublime theosophy of Æschylus. The soul of man, as analysed by Plato in the *Republic*, has only to suffer from the inevitable consequences of its own passions. Plato theorises the humanity implicit in Homer

His science is the correlative in the region of pure thought to the Art which in Sculpture had pursued an uninterrupted course of natural evolution.

In the adolescent age of the Greek Genius, mankind, not having yet arrived at spiritual self-consciousness, was still as sinless and simple as any other race that lives and dies upon the globe, forming a part of the natural order of the world. The sensual impulses, like the intellectual and the moral, were then held void of crime and harmless. Health and good taste controlled the physical appetites of man, just as the appetites of animals are regulated by unerring instinct. In the same way a standard of moderation determined moral virtue and intellectual excellence. But in addition to this protective check upon the passions, a noble sense of the beautiful, as that which is balanced and restrained within limits, prevented the Greeks of the best period from diverging into Asiatic extravagance of pleasure. Licence was reckoned barbarous, and the barbarians were slaves by nature (*φύσει δοῦλοι*): Hellenes, born to be free men, took pride in temperance. Their moderation, coextensive as a protective virtue with the whole of their sense of beauty, was essentially Greek—the quality beloved by Phœbus, in whom was no dark place nor any flaw. With the Romans, humanity, not having yet transcended the merely natural order, remaining unconscious of a higher religious ideal, and at the same time uncontrolled by exquisite Greek sense of fitness, began to wax wanton. To the state of Paradisal innocence succeeded the Fall. The bestial side of our mixed nature encroached upon the spiritual, and the sense of beauty was perturbed by lust. That true health, without which the tact of the percipient reason is a false guide, failed; no fine law of taste corrected appetite. It was at this moment that Christianity convicted mankind of sin. The voice of God was heard crying in the garden. The unity of man with nature was abruptly broken. Flesh and spirit were defined and counterposed. Man, abiding far from God in his flesh, sought after God in his spirit. His union with God was no longer an actual state of mundane innocence, but a distant, future, dim, celestial possibility, to be achieved by the sacrifice of this fair life of earth. “Your lives are hid with Christ in God.” Together with this separation of the flesh and spirit wrought by Christianity, came the abhorrence of beauty as a snare, the sense that carnal affections were tainted with sin, the unwilling toleration of sexual love as a necessity, the idealisation of celibacy and solitude. At the same time humanity acquired new faculties and wider sensibilities. A profounder and more vital feeling of the mysteries of the universe arose. Our life on earth was seen to be a thing by no means rounded in itself and perfect, but only one term of an infinite and unknown series. It was henceforward impossible to translate the world into the language of purely æsthetic form. This stirring of the spirit marks the transition of the ancient to the modern world.

At the time of the Renaissance the travail was well-nigh over;

the lesson had been learned ; mankind began to resent the one-sidedness of monastic Christianity, and to yearn once more for the fruit and flowers of the garden which was Greece. Yet the spirit and the flesh still remained in unreconciled antagonism. Over the gate of Eden the arm of the Seraph waved his terrible sword. But humanity in rebellion, while outcast from God and convicted of sin, would not refrain from plucking the pleasure of the sense. This was the time of the insolence of the flesh, when Antichrist sat in St. Peter's chair, and when man, knowing his nakedness, submitted to the fascinations of the siren, Shame. The old health of the Greeks was gone : to recover that was impossible. Christ crowned with thorns, the Sabbaths and ablutions of the Jews, the "thundrous vision" of St. Paul had intervened and fixed a gulf between Hellas and modern Europe. In that age the love of beauty became a tragic disease like the plague which Aphrodite sent in wrath on Phædra. Even Michael Angelo at the end of a long life spent in the service of the noblest art, remembering Savonarola, felt constrained to write :—

" Now hath my life across a stormy sea,
 Like a frail bark, reached that wide port where all
 Are bidden ere the final judgment fall,
 Of good and evil deeds to pay the fee.
 Now know I well how that fond phantasy,
 Which made my soul the worshipper and thrall
 Of earthly art, is vain ; how criminal
 Is that which all men seek unwillingly.
 Those amorous thoughts which were so lightly dressed,
 What are they when the double death is nigh ?
 The one I know for sure, the other dread.
 Painting nor sculpture now can lull to rest
 My soul, that turns to His great love on high,
 Whose arms to clasp us on the cross were spread."

In his work sculpture is forced to express what lies beyond its province—the throes and labour of the spirit. Michael Angelo was not a plastic character in the sense in which Hegel used this phrase. His art reflects the combat of his nature and his age ; whence comes what people call its extravagance and emphasis. Raphael from the opposite side introduced Pagan form and feeling into his purely religious work of art ; whence came what people call his decadence. Puritan England, Inquisition-ridden Spain, and critical Germany, offer still more permanent signs of this deep-seated division in the modern world between the natural instincts and the spiritual aspirations of humanity. Even to the present day this division distorts our sense of beauty and prevents our realising an ideal of art.

After all, the separation between the Greeks and us is due to something outside us rather than within—principally to the Hebraistic culture we receive in childhood. We are taught to think that one form of religion contains the whole truth, and that one way of feeling is right, to the exclusion of the humanities and sympathies of races

no less beloved of God and no less kindred to ourselves than were the Jews. At the same time the literature of the Greeks has for the last three centuries formed the basis of our education; their thoughts and sentiments, enclosed like precious perfumes in sealed vases, spread themselves abroad and steep the soul in honey-sweet aromas. Some will always be found, under the conditions of this double culture, to whom Greece is a lost fatherland, and who, passing through youth with the *mal du pays* of that irrecoverable land upon them, may be compared to visionaries, spending the nights in golden dreams and the days in common duties.¹ Has then the modern man no method for making the Hellenic tradition vital instead of dream-like—invigorating instead of enervating? There is indeed this one way only—to be natural. We must imitate the Greeks, not by trying to reproduce their bygone modes of life and feeling, but by approximating to their free and fearless attitude of mind. While frankly recognising that much of their liberty would for us be licence, and that the moral progress of the race depends on holding with a firm grasp what the Greeks had hardly apprehended, we ought still to emulate their spirit by cheerfully accepting the world as we find it, acknowledging the value of each human impulse, and aiming after virtues that depend on self-regulation rather than on total abstinence and mortification. To do this in the midst of our conventionalities and prejudices, our interminglement of unproved expectations and unrefuted terrors, is no doubt hard. Yet if we fail of this, we lose the best the Greeks can teach us.

In the struggle of the adverse forces, felt so strongly ever since the reactionary age of the Renaissance, there is, however, now at least a hope of future reconciliation. A mediator may be confidently expected—even if he has not already appeared in Goethe, who, holding science in his right hand as a lamp, fearlessly explored the world, and lived a Greek life in the nineteenth century. The motto

“ Im Ganzen, Guten, Schönen
Resolut zu leben ”

is not a strictly Christian sentence. St. Paul had said: “To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” But it is essentially human. The man who lives by it is restored to that place in the world which he

¹ With what purity of style and feeling has Landor not expressed this nostalgia of the poet's soul for Hellas! These lines are a prelude to his volume, *The Hellenics*—

Come back, ye wandering Muses, come back, home,
Ye seem to have forgotten where it lies:
Come, let us walk upon the silent sands
Of Simois, where deep footmarks show long strides;
Thence we may mount perhaps to higher ground,
Where Aphrodité from Athenè won
The golden apple, and from Herè too,
And happy Ares shouted far below.
Or would ye rather choose the grassy vale,
Where flows Anapos through anemones,
Hyacinths, and narcissuses that bend
To show their rival beauty in the stream?
Bring with you each her lyre, and each in turn
Temper a graver with a lighter song.

has a right to occupy, instead of regarding himself as an alien and an outcast from imagined heaven. Science must be our redeemer. Science which teaches man to know himself, and explains to him his real relation to nature. Through scientific certainty God and the human conscience shall at last be reconciled, not in the merely paradisaical unity which the Greeks enjoyed, not in the spiritual union of an unrealised future promised by Christianity, but in a natural union. The healthy acceptance of the physical laws to which we are subordinated need not prevent our full consciousness of moral law. It is true that the beautiful Greek life, as of leopards and tiger-lilies and eagles, cannot be restored. Yet neither need we cling to the convent or the prison life of early Catholicity. The new freedom of man must consist of submission to the order of the universe as it exists. The final discovery that there is no antagonism between our physical and spiritual constitution, but rather a most intimate connection, must place the men of the future upon a higher level and a firmer standing ground than the Greeks. They by experience and demonstration will know what the Greeks felt instinctively. Their percipient sense of what is right will be fortified by the recognition of immutable law. The tact of healthy youth will be succeeded by the calm reason of maturity.

CHAPTER XXV

CONCLUSION

Sculpture the Greek Art *par excellence*—Plastic Character of the Greek Genius—Stern Aspects of Greek Art—Subordination of Pain and Discord to Harmony—Stoic-Epicurean Acceptance of Life—Sadness of Achilles in the *Odyssey*—Endurance of Odysseus—Myth of Prometheus—Sir H. S. Maine on Progress—The Essential Relation of all Spiritual Movement to Greek Culture—Value of the Moral Attitude of the Greeks for us—Three Points of Greek Ethical Inferiority—The Conception of Nature—The System of Marcus Aurelius—Contrast with the *Imitatio Christi*—The Modern Scientific Spirit—Indestructible Elements in the Philosophy of Nature.

I MAY, perhaps, be allowed in this last chapter to quit the impersonal style of the essayist and to refer to some strictures passed upon the earlier series of my *Studies of Greek Poets*. Critics, for whose opinion I feel respect, have observed that, in what I wrote about the genius of Greek Art at the end of that volume, I neglected to notice the sterner and more serious qualities of the Greek spirit, that I exaggerated the importance of sculpture as the characteristic Hellenic art, and that I did not make my meaning clear about the value of the study of Greek modes of thought and feeling for men living in our scientific age. To take up these topics in detail, and to answer some of these indictments, is my purpose in the present chapter. They are so varied that I may fairly be excused for adopting a less methodical and connected development of ideas than ought to be demanded from a man who is not answering objections, but preferring opinions.

To take the least important of these questions first : why is sculpture selected as the most eminent and characteristic art of the Hellenic race, when so much remains of their poetry, and of prose work in the highest sense artistic ? To my mind the answer is simple enough. One modern nation has produced a drama which can compete with that of Athens. Another has carried painting to a perfection we have little reason to believe it ever reached in Greece. A third has satisfied the deepest and the widest needs of our emotional nature, by such music as no Greek, in all probability, had any opportunity of hearing.

In the last place, Gothic architecture, the common heritage of all the European nations of the modern world, is at least as noble as the architecture of the ancients. The Greeks alone have been unique in sculpture: what survives of Pheidias and Praxiteles, of Polycletus and Scopas, and of their schools, transcends in beauty and in power, in freedom of handling and in purity of form, the very highest work of Donatello, Della Quercia, and Michael Angelo. We have, therefore, a *primâ facie* right to lay great stress on sculpture as a Greek art, just as we have the *primâ facie* right to select painting as an Italian art. The first step taken from this position leads to the reflection that, within the sphere of art at any rate, the one art which a nation has developed as its own, to which it has succeeded in giving unique perfection, and upon which it has impressed the mark of its peculiar character, will lend the key for the interpretation of its whole æsthetic temperament. The Italians cannot have been singularly and pre-eminently successful in painting without displaying some of the painter's qualities in all their artistic products. The Greeks cannot have made sculpture unapproachably complete without possessing a genius wherein the sculptor's bent of mind was specially predominant; and thus infusing somewhat of the sculpturesque into the sister arts. Painting for Italy and sculpture for Greece may be fairly taken as the fully-formed and flawless crystals in a matrix of congenial, but not equally developed, matter. The ideal to which either race aspired instinctively in all its art was realised to the fullest, by the one in sculpture, by the other in painting. So we are justified in testing the whole of their æsthetic products by the laws of painting and of sculpture respectively. This, broadly stated, without economy of phrase or cautious reservation, is the reason why a student who has tried, however imperfectly, to assimilate to himself the spirit displayed in the surviving monuments of Greek art, is brought back at every turn to sculpture as the norm and canon of them all.

Whatever knowledge he may gain about the circumstances of Greek life and the peculiar temper of Greek thought, will only strengthen his conviction. The national games, the religious pageants, the theatrical shows, and the gymnastic exercises of the Greeks were sculpturesque. The conditions of their speculative thought in the first dawn of civilised self-consciousness, when spiritual energy was still conceived as incarnate only in a form of flesh, and the soul was inseparable from the body except by an unfamiliar process of analysis, harmonised with the art which interprets the mind in all its movements by the features and the limbs. Their careful choice of distinct motives in poetry, their appeal in all imaginative work to the inner eye that sees, no less than to the sympathies that thrill, their abstinence from descriptions of landscape and analyses of emotion, their clear and massive character-delineation, point to the same conclusion. Everything tends to confirm the original perception that the simplicity of form, the purity of design, the self-restraint, and the parsimony

both of expression and material, imposed by sculpture on the artist, were observed as laws by the Greeks in their mental activity, and more especially in their arts. It is this which differentiates them from the romantic nations. When, therefore, we undertake to speak of the genius of Greek art, we are justified in giving the first place to sculpture and in assuming that sculpture strikes the keynote of the whole music.

To take a far more serious objection next. It is true that, while gazing intently upon the luminous qualities of the Greek spirit, we are tempted to neglect its sterner and more sombre aspect. Not, indeed, that the shadows are not there, patent to superficial observers, and necessary even to the sublimity of the ideal we admire in its serene beauty; but they are so consistently subordinated to light and lustre that he who merely seeks to seize predominant characteristics may find it difficult to appreciate them duly without missing what is even more essential. A writer on the arts of the Greeks is not bound to take into consideration the defects of their civil and domestic life, the discords and disturbance of their politics, the pains they felt and suffered in common with humanity at large, the incomplete morality of a race defined by no sharp line but that of culture from barbarians. It is rather his duty to note how carefully these things, which even we discern as discords, were excluded by them from the sphere of beauty; since it is precisely this that distinguishes the Greeks most decidedly from the modern nations, who have used pain, perplexity, and apparent failure as subjects for the noblest æsthetic handling. The world-pain of our latter years was felt, as a young man may feel it, by the Greeks of the best age; but their artists did not, like Shakespeare and Michael Angelo, Goethe and Beethoven, make this the substance of their mightiest works. Ancient Hellas contained nothing analogous to Hamlet, or the Tombs of the Medici, to Faust, or the C minor Symphony. The desolation of humanity adrift upon a sea of chance and change finds expression here and there in a threnos of Simonides or an epigram of Callimachus. The tragic poets are never tired of dwelling upon destiny, inherent partly in the transmitted doom of ancestors, and partly in the moral character of individuals. The depth of Pindar's soul is stirred by the question that has tried all ages: "Creatures of a day! What are we and what are we not?" Such strains, however, are, as it were, occasional and accidental in Greek poetry. The Greek artist, not having a background of Christian hope and expectation against which he could relieve the trials and afflictions of this life, aimed at keeping these things in a strictly subordinate place. He sought to produce a harmony in his work which should correspond to health in the body and to temperance in the soul, to present a picture of human destiny, not darkened by the shadows of the tomb, but luminous beneath the light of day. It was his purpose, as indeed it is of all good craftsmen, not to weaken, but to fortify, not to dispirit and depress, but to exalt and animate. The very imperfect conceptions he had formed of immortality deter-

mined the course he pursued. He had no hell to fear, no heaven to hope for. It was in no sense his duty to cast a gloom over the only world he knew by painting it in sombre colours, but rather to assist the freedom of the spirit, and to confirm the energies of men by bringing what is glad and beautiful into prominence. In this way the Greeks, after their own fashion, asserted that unconquerable faith in the goodness of the universe, and in the dignity of the human race, without which progress would be impossible. Though the life of man may be hard and troublous, though diseases and turbulent passions assail his peace, though the history of nations be but a tale that is told, and the days of heroes but a dream between two sleeps, yet the soul is strong to rise above these vapours of the earth into a clearer atmosphere. The real way of achieving a triumph over chance and of defying fate, is to turn to good account all fair and wholesome things beneath the sun, and to maintain for an ideal the beauty, strength, and splendour of the body, mind, and will of man. The mighty may win fame, immortal on the lips of poets and in the marble of the sculptor. The meanest may possess themselves in patience and enjoy. Thus the Greeks adopted for their philosophy of life what Clough described as a "Stoic-Epicurean acceptance" of the world. They practised a genial accommodation of their natures to the facts which must perforce regulate the existence of humanity. To ascertain the conditions of nature, and to adapt themselves thereto by training, was the object of their most serious schemes of education. Later on, when the bloom began to pass from poetry and art, and the vigour of national life declined, this attitude of simple manliness diverged into hedonism and asceticism. Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die, said one section of the thinkers. Let us bear all hardness, lest we become the slaves of chance and self, said the other. But neither proposition expressed the full mind of the Greeks of the best age. They clearly saw that, in spite of disaster and disease, life was a good thing for those who maintained the balance of moral and physical health. Without asceticism they strove after well-ordered conduct. Without hedonism they took their frugal share of the delightful things furnished by the boon earth in prodigal abundance. The mental condition of such men, expectant, grateful, and serenely acquiescent, has been well expressed by Goethe in lines like these :—

" That nought belongs to me I know
Save thoughts that never cease to flow
From founts that cannot perish,
And every fleeting shape of bliss
That kindly fortune lets me kiss
And in my bosom cherish."

It is this mental attitude which I think must be regained by us who seek firm foothold in the far more complicated difficulties of the present age. While it is easy, therefore, to omit the darker shadows from our picture of Greek life, because, although they are there, they

are almost swallowed up in brightness, it is not easy to exaggerate the tranquil and manly spirit with which the Greeks faced the evils of the world and rose above them. Owing to this faculty for absorbing all sad things and presenting, through art, only the splendour of accomplished strength and beauty, the Greeks have left for the world a unique treasure of radiant forms in sculpture, of lustrous thoughts in poetry, of calm wisdom in philosophy and history. Their power upon all arts and sciences is the power of a harmonising and health-giving spirit. This it is which, in spite of their perception of the sterner problems of the world, obliges us to describe their genius as adolescent; for adolescence has of strength, and sorrow, and reflection so much only as is compatible with beauty. This, again, it is which makes their influence so valuable to us now, who need for our refreshing the contact with unused and youthful forces.

At the same time, while insisting upon the truth of all this, many of the chapters in these two volumes have forced upon our minds what is severe and awful in the genius of the Greeks. The Chthonian deities form a counterpart to the dwellers on Olympus. The voice of the people in the Hesiodic poems rises like the cry of Israel from Pharaoh's brickfields rather than the song-like shout of Salaminian oarsmen. Who, again, in reading the *Iliad*, has not felt that the splendour of Achilles, coruscating like a star new-washed in ocean waves, detaches itself from a background of impenetrable gloom? He blazes in his god-like youth for one moment only above the mists of Styx, the waters of Lethe; and it is due to the triumphant imagination of his poet that the consciousness of impending fate adds lustre to his heroism instead of dooming him to the pathetic pallor of the Scandinavian Balder. When we meet Achilles in Hades, and hear him sigh,

“ Rather would I in the sun's warmth divine
Serve a poor churl who drags his days in grief,
Than the whole lordship of the dead were mine,”

we touch the deepest sorrow of the Greek heart, a sorrow lulled to rest in vain by anodynes of Eleusinian mysteries and Samothracian rites, a sorrow kept manfully in check by resolute wills and burning enthusiasms, but which recurred continually, converting their dream of a future life into a nightmare of unsubstantial *ennui*. If the story of Achilles involves a dreary insight into the end of merely human activity, that of Odysseus turns immediately upon the troubles of our pilgrimage through life. Exquisitely beautiful as are all the outlines, surface touches, and colours in the *Odyssey*, as of some Mediterranean landscape crowded with delicate human forms, yet beneath the whole there lies an undertone of sombreness. The energy of the hero is inseparable from endurance.

τέτλαθι δὴ κραδίη· καὶ κύντερον ἄλλο ποτ' ἔτλης.

“ Bear and be brave, my heart: thou hast borne more grisly trials in times past.”

That is the exclamation of no light-hearted youngling, but of one who has sounded all the deeps and shallows of the river of experience. And if we have to speak thus of the heroes, what shall we say about the countless common people following their lords to Troy in the cause of a strange woman, those beautiful dead warriors over whom the Æschylean Chorus poured forth the most pathetic of lamentations? To pretend that the Greeks felt not the passion and the pain of human agony and strife, would be a paradox implying idiocy in him who put it forth. Still, it were scarcely less feeble to forget that their strength lay in restraining the expression of this feeling, and in subduing its vehemence. The wounded heroes on the Æginetan pediment are dying with smiles upon their lips; and this may serve as a symbol for the mode of treatment reserved by the Greek artists for what is dark and terrible.

Enough has been already said while dealing with the dramatists about the profound morality and the stern philosophy of the Greek tragic poets. It is not necessary again to traverse that ground. Yet for a moment we may once more remember here what depths of pity and of pathos lie hidden in the legend of Prometheus, whether we think of him as the divine champion of erring men at war with envious deities, or as personified humanity struggling against the forces of niggardly nature. Prometheus and Epimetheus and Pandora dramatise a legend of life supremely sad—so sad, indeed, that the calm genius of the Greeks regarded it with half-averted eyes, and chose rather to blur its outlines than to define what it contained, enough of sorrow to unman the stoutest. Poets of a northern race would have brooded over this mythus until it became for them the form of all the anguish and revolt and aspiration of the soul of man. Not so the Greeks. Hesiod leaves the Saga in obscurity. Æschylus employs it to exhibit the spirit unperturbed by menaces of mere brute force, and wisely pliant in the end to unavoidable fate. Subsequent poets and philosophers remember Prometheus together with Orpheus only as the founders of the arts and sciences that make men happy. To eliminate the mysterious and the terrible, to accentuate the joyous and the profitable for humane uses, was the truest instinct of the Greeks. Even the tale of Herakles, who chose the hard paths of life, and ascended at last only through flames to clasp Hebe, eternal youth, upon Olympus, “with joy and bliss in over-measure for ever,” in spite of its severe lesson of morality, is a poem of beautiful human heroism from which the discordant elements are purged away.

To recover, if that be possible, this “Stoic-Epicurean acceptance,” and to face the problems of the world in which we live, with Greek serenity, concerns us at the present time. Having said thus much, I am brought to touch upon the third topic mentioned at the outset of this chapter. Owing to insufficient exposition, I did not in my first series of *Studies of Greek Poets* make it clear in what way I thought the Greeks could teach those of us for whom the growth of rationalism

and the discoveries of science have tended to remove old landmarks. What we have to win for ourselves is a theory of conduct which shall be human, and which shall be based upon our knowledge of nature. Greek morality was distinguished by precisely these two qualities. In its best forms, moreover, it was not antagonistic to the essence of Christianity, but thoroughly in accord with that which is indestructible in Christian teaching. It therefore contained that vital element we now require.

A remarkable passage in Sir H. S. Maine's Rede Lecture for 1875 will force itself upon the attention of all who believe that there are still lessons to be learned from the Greeks by men of the nineteenth century. "Whatever may be the nature and value of that bundle of influences which we call Progress," he writes, "nothing can be more certain than that, when a society is once touched by it, it spreads like a contagion. Yet, so far as our knowledge extends, there was only one society in which it was endemic; and putting that aside, no race or nationality, left entirely to itself, appears to have developed any very great intellectual result, except, perhaps, Poetry. Not one of those intellectual excellencies which we regard as characteristic of the great progressive races of the world—not the law of the Romans, not the philosophy and sagacity of the Germans, not the luminous order of the French, not the political aptitude of the English, not that insight into physical nature to which all races have contributed—would apparently have come into existence if those races had been left to themselves. To one small people, covering in its original seat no more than a hand's-breadth of territory, it was given to create the principle of Progress, of movement onwards and not backwards or downwards, of destruction tending to construction. That people was the Greek. Except the blind forces of Nature, nothing moves in this world which is not Greek in its origin. A ferment spreading from that source has vitalised all the great progressive races of mankind, penetrating from one to another, and producing results accordant with its hidden and latent genius, and results of course often far greater than any exhibited in Greece itself."

It may be difficult to form an accurate notion of what the eloquent lecturer meant by Progress: it may be easy to object that the secret of progressive growth in politics at least was not possessed by the Greeks themselves, and that Christianity, which has certainly moved far more efficiently than any other spiritual force whatever in this world, was as certainly neither one of the blind forces of Nature, nor yet Hellenic in its origin. Still, there is a truth in this passage which remains unimpaired. It expresses largely, and without due reservation, perhaps, what the students of the Greeks in relation to the universal history of civilisation must feel to be a sweeping truth. The advance of the human intellect is measured by successive points of contact with the Greek spirit—in Rome before the birth of Christ, in Islam during the exhaustion of the Roman Empire, in the schools of Paris

and Seville during the Middle Ages, when Averrhoes and Aristotle kept alive the lamp of science, in Italy at the period of the Renaissance, when Greek philosophy and poetry and art restored life to the senses, confidence to the reason, and freedom to the soul of man. All civilised nations, in all that concerns the activity of the intellect, are colonies of Hellas. The flame that lives within our Prytaneia was first kindled on Athene's hearth in Attica; and should it burn dim or be extinguished, we must needs travel back to the sacred home of the virgin goddess for fresh fire. This we are continually doing. It is this which has made Greek indispensable in modern education. And at the present moment we may return with profit to the moralists of Greece.

At this point I feel that my former critics will exclaim against me: "This is the very same offence repeated—ignoring the moral inferiority of the Greeks, he holds them up as an example to nations improved by Christianity." I reply that I am far from forgetting the substantial advance made by the world in morality during the last eighteen centuries. The divine life and the precepts of Christ are as luminous as ever; and I, for one, have no desire to replant pseudo-paganism on the modern soil. I know full well that, in addition to its being undesirable, this is utterly impossible. I know, moreover, that new virtues, unrecognised by the Greeks, have been revealed to the world by Christianity, and that a new cogency and new sanctions have been given by it to that portion of ethics which it had in common with Greek philosophy. It is not the morality, but the moral attitude, of the Greeks that seems to my mind worthy of our imitation. In order to make this distinction clear, and to save myself, if that may be, from seeming to advocate a retrograde movement, through sentimental sympathy with impossible anachronisms, or through blind hostility to all that makes our modern life most beautiful, I must be permitted to embark upon a somewhat lengthy exposition of my meaning. With no desire to be aggressive or polemical, I want to show what, in my judgment, even Christians have still to learn from Greeks.

The morality of the Greeks was inferior to that of modern races in several points connected with slavery and the social position of women. An apologist might, indeed, argue that slavery, as recognised by the Athenians, was superior to many forms of the same evil till lately tolerated by the Christian nations. Mediæval villeinage and Russian serfdom, the Spanish enslavement of Peruvians and Mexicans, and the American slave-trade flourished in spite of the theoretical opposition of Christianity, and have only succumbed to the advance of rational humanity. The same advocate could show, as Mr. Mahaffy has already done, that in Greece there existed a high ideal of womanhood. All students of history will, however, admit that in relation to the three important points above mentioned, the Greeks were comparatively barbarous. At the same time it cannot be contended that these defects were the necessary and immediate outcome of the Hellenic philosophy of life. It is rather proper to regard them as

crudities and immaturities belonging to an early period of civilisation. During the last two thousand years the world has advanced in growth, and its moral improvement has been due to Christian influences. Still, the higher standing-ground we have attained, our matured and purified humanity, all that elevates us ethically above the Jews and Greeks, can be ascribed to Christianity without the implication that it is inextricably bound up with Christian theology, or that it could not survive the dissolution of the orthodox fabric. The question before us at the present moment is, Whether, admitting the comparatively rude ethics of the ancient Greeks, and fully recognising the moral amelioration effected for the human race by Christianity, we, without ceasing to be Christians in all essential points of conduct, may not profitably borrow from the Greeks the spirit which enabled them to live and do their duty in a world whose laws are yet but imperfectly ascertained? Was there not something permanently valuable in their view of the ethical problem which historical Christianity, especially in its more ascetic phases, tends to overlook, but which approves itself to the reason of men who have been influenced by the rapidly advancing mutations of religious thought during the last three centuries? The real point to ascertain, with regard to ourselves and to them, is the basis upon which the conceptions of morality in either period have rested. Modern morality has hitherto been theological: it has implied the will of a divine governor. Greek morality was radically scientific: the faith on which it eventually leaned was a belief in *φύσις*, in the order of the universe, wherein gods, human societies, and individual human beings had their proper places. The conception of morality as the law for man, regarded as a social being forming part and parcel of the cosmos, was implicit in the whole Greek view of life. It received poetical expression from the tragedians; it transpired in the conversations of Socrates, in the speculations of Plato, and in the more organised system of Aristotle. *Ζῆν κατὰ φύσιν* (to live according to nature) could be written for a motto on the title-page of a collected corpus of Greek moralists. It may be objected that "to live according to nature" is a vague command, and also that it is easier said than done; or, again, that the conception of nature does not essentially differ from that of God who made nature.¹ All that is true; but the ethics whereof that maxim is the sum have this advantage, that they do not place between us and the world in which we have to live and die the will of a hypothetical ruler, to whom we may ascribe our passions and our fancies, enslaving ourselves to the delusions of our own soul. Nor, again, do they involve the monstrous paradox of all ascetic systems, which assert that human nature is radically evil,

¹ I have tried, lower down, to explain in what way the Greeks interpreted the precept, "Live according to nature." It did not make them, nor assuredly ought it to make us, neglect the social virtues or encourage the sensual and selfish instincts at the expense of what is spiritual and altruistic in humanity. Man, as a social being, is part of nature. His happiness, the more we understand his true being, will be found to depend on all that is honourable, comely temperate, regardful of the interests and rights of his associates.

and that only that is good in us which contradicts our natural appetites and instincts. Evil and sin are recognised, just as fevers and serpents are recognised; but while the latter are not referred to a vindictive Creator, so the former are not ascribed to the wilful wickedness of his creatures. In so far as we gain any knowledge of nature, that knowledge is something solid: the whole bearing of a man who feels that his highest duty consists in conforming himself to laws he may gradually but surely ascertain, is certainly different from that of one who obeys the formulæ invented by dead or living priests and prophets to describe the nature of a God whom no man has either seen or heard. It makes no difference that the highest religious systems are concordant with the best-established principles of natural science, that the Mosaic ordinances, for example, are excellently calculated to maintain the physical health and to secure the propagation of a tribe. That the perceptive instincts of the great Nomothetæ should be verified is both intelligible and, *à priori*, highly probable. The superiority of scientific over theological morality consists meanwhile in its indestructibility.

The ethics of man, regarded as a member of the universe and answerable only to its order for his conduct, though they underlay the whole thought of the Greeks on moral subjects, did not receive their final exposition till the age of the Roman Stoics. The *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius have, therefore, a peculiar retrospective value, owing to the light they cast upon the ethical perception of the Greek race, while at the same time they illustrate that which is unalterable and indestructible in the spirit of Greek morality. What Marcus Aurelius enunciated as an intuition, is what must daily become more binding upon us in proportion as we advance in scientific knowledge. It will not, therefore, be out of place to sketch the main points of his system in a separate paragraph, keeping always in mind that this system was the final outgrowth of Greek speculation after prolonged contact with the Romans. Marcus Aurelius forces to the very utmost a view of human life and duty which could have been but unconsciously implicit in the minds of men of the Periclean age. Yet this view was but the theory logically abstracted from the conduct and the perceptions of a race which started with refined nature-worship, which recognised the duty to the State as paramount, and which put to philosophy the question, What is the End of man?

The central notion of Marcus Aurelius is Nature. He regards the universe as a ζῶον, or living creature, animated by a principle of life to which he sometimes gives the title of θεός, or the deity. It is a body with a λόγος, or reason, attaining to consciousness in human beings. Every man participates in the κοινὸς λόγος, or common reason of the cosmos, a portion of whose wisdom forms his intellect. In other words, our consciousness reflects the order of the universe, and enables us to become more than automatically partakers in its movement. To obey this reason is the end of all philosophy, the fulfilment of the purpose for which man exists. By doing so we are in

harmony with the world, and take our proper place in the scale of beings. Nothing can happen to us independent of this order; and therefore nothing, rightly understood, can happen to our hurt. If disease and affliction fall upon us, we must remember that we are the limbs and organs of the whole, and that our suffering is necessary for its well-being. We are thus the citizens of a vast State, members of the universal economy. What affects the whole for good is good for us, and even when it seems to be evil, we must hold fast to the faith that it is good beyond our ken. Our selfishness is swallowed up in the complete and total interest. Our virtues are social and not personal. Our happiness is relative to the general welfare, not contained in any private pleasure or indulgence of an individual caprice.

The motto of this large philosophy is Goethe's often-quoted distich:—

“ Im Ganzen, Guten, Schönen
Resolut zu leben.”

If we seek a motto for the *Imitatio Christi*, which may be accepted here as the Christian encheiridion, we find it in the text: “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” The author of that manual of conduct regarded the universe not as a coherent whole, good and sound in all its parts, to live in harmony with the laws whereof is the duty of man, but as a machine created out of nothing by the will of God, made fair at first, but changed to foul by sin, wherein men live an evil life, to escape from which brings happiness, to confound the existing laws of which is virtue, and a remedy against the anarchy and tyranny of which can only be found in the cross and death of Christ. To the Stoicism of Marcus Aurelius, man was not merely a citizen of the dear city of God, but a member, not merely a μέρος (or part), but a μέλος (or limb) of the divine life of the universe. To the Christianity of the *Imitatio*, man was an exile from his home, a wanderer and out of place. It is not my present purpose to push to their ultimate and logical conclusions the divergences between the Stoicism of the *Meditations* and the Christianity of the *Imitatio*, but rather to recall attention to the philosophy developed by Marcus Aurelius from his conception of man's place in nature, and to show that the ethics resulting from it are specially adapted to an age in which the scientific habit of mind is the strongest. When the whole mass of new knowledge we are continually accumulating forces upon our consciousness the conviction that humanity is a part of the universal whole, it is impossible to cling to dogmas that start from the assumption of original sin and creation vitiated at the very moment of its commencement. So much of the Christian programme, whatever else is left as indestructible, must be abandoned. Nature, with all its imperfections in the physical and moral orders, both of them to be as far as can be conquered and eradicated, must be accepted as it is, as that which was intended so to be. Nor need we adopt the obsolete tactics of the French Deists, or depreciate the essence of Christianity because a great part of its

mythology and metaphysic seems untenable. On the contrary, we may reasonably hold that the most perfect man would live the life of Christ in obedience to the maxims of the Roman Emperor, and that Christianity provides us with precisely what was wanting in the Aurelian system. Faith, love, purity, obedience, subordination of self, benevolence—all these are Christian virtues, raised to the height of passionate enthusiasm by their exemplification in the life of Christ. Stoicism stood in need of a criterion. What is reason? what is the true character of truth and goodness? Christianity appears with a criterion which approves itself to our intuitive apprehension. The life of Christ is the perfect life. Learn that, and follow that, and you will reach the height of human nature. To live in harmony with the universe is to live as Christ lived. It is the wrong done in the name of Christ, the figments falsely stamped with Christ's superscription, the follies of Bibliolatry and dogmatic orthodoxy, that must be abjured; and I maintain that in our present mood the best hope of not casting away the wheat together with the chaff, of retaining what is fit for human use in Christianity, consists in first assuming the scientific standpoint of Aurelius.

From this digression on the Aurelian system, regarded as the final word of Græco-Roman morality, I pass to a consideration of those urgent needs of modern thought which have to be met in the spirit and with the courage of Mark Antonine. Not his theism, nor his metaphysic, nor his detailed maxims for conduct, but his attitude and temper have to be adopted. And here it must be said once more, by way of preface, that however human progress is ruled by thesis and antithesis, by antagonism and repulsion in its several moments, still nothing can be lost that has been clearly gained. Each synthesis, though itself destined to apparent contradiction, combines the indestructible, the natural and truly human, elements of the momenta which preceded it, excluding only that in them which was the accident of time and place and circumstance. Thus the Greek conception of life was posed; the Christian conception was counterposed; the synthesis, crudely attempted in the age of the Renaissance, awaits mature accomplishment in the immediate future. The very ground-thought of science is to treat man as part of the natural order—not, assuredly, on that account excluding from its calculation the most eminent portion of man, his reason and his moral being—and to return from the study of nature with profit to the study of man. It does not annihilate or neutralise what man has gained from Christianity; on the contrary, the new points of morality developed by the Christian discipline are of necessity accepted as data by the scientific mind. Our object is to combine both the Hellenic and the Christian conceptions in a third, which shall be more solid and more rational than any previous manifestation of either, superior to the Hellenic as it is no longer a mere intuition, superior to the ecclesiastical inasmuch as it relies on no mythology, but seeks to ascertain the law.

The positive knowledge about the world possessed at any period by the human race, cannot fail to modify both theology and metaphysic. Theology, while philosophising the immediate data of faith, professes to embrace and account for all known facts in a comprehensive system, which includes the hypotheses of revelation; while popular religion rests upon opinions and figurative conceptions formed concerning the First Cause of the phenomena observed around us and within us. The systems of theology and the opinions of popular religion must, therefore, from time to time in the world's history, vary according as more or less is actually known, and according as the mind has greater or lesser power of analysing and co-ordinating its stores of knowledge. Metaphysic is the critical examination and construction into a connected scheme of the results obtained by experience—mental, moral, and physical—subjected to reflection, and regarded in their most abstract form as thoughts. It follows of necessity that any revolution in the method of observation and analysis, like that which has been going on during the last three centuries, whereby our conception of the world as a whole is altered, must supply metaphysic with new subject-matter and new methods, and force it to the reconsideration of important problems. Meanwhile, the faculty of thought itself undergoes no essential transformation; our mental and moral nature remains substantially the same. What has always happened, and what alone can happen, is that fresh pabulum is offered to the thinking being, which has to be assimilated to its organism and digested for its nourishment. Consequently we cannot expect to have a sudden and illuminating revolution in psychology and ethics. But, while we learn fresh facts about the universe, our notions concerning the nature of the First Cause and the relation of man to his environments, whether expressed in systems by theology and philosophy, or in opinions by popular religion, must of necessity be exposed to alteration. To adjust ourselves to this change without sacrificing what is vitally important in religion as the basis of morality is our difficulty.

Physical science, to begin with, has destroyed that old conception of the universe which made this globe central, and of paramount importance. The discoveries of Kepler, Galileo, Newton, first led to a right theory of the planetary movements. The chemists of the last hundred years have substituted an accurate analysis of primitive substances for rough guesses at the four elements. The establishment of the law of the conservation of force has demonstrated the unity of all cosmical operations from the most gigantic to the most minute. Geology, together with the speculations of comparative anatomists and naturalists, has altered all our notions with regard to the age of the world, and to the antecedents and early history of the human race. The results gathered during the last three centuries in these and other fields of investigation render it certain that mankind has occupied but a brief moment in the long life of our globe, and tend to prove that our duration here will, at an enormously, but not incalculably, distant

period, be rendered impossible by the action of those very forces which called us into being. The years of humanity are therefore "a scape in oblivion." Man, for whom, according to the author of Genesis, the sun and moon and stars were made, is shown to be among the less important products of the cosmical system. We are no permanent owners, but the brief tenants of our tiny globe. Nor need this terrify or startle us. Each man expects the certainty of his own dissolution. The race must learn that it also is ephemeral. For this our religions have already prepared us. But what is new in the prospect revealed by science is that, not by a sudden tempest of vindictive fire from heaven, but in the tranquil course of the long life of nature, such euthanasia is prepared for men. As the universe subsisted countless æons before our birth, so will it survive our loss, and scarcely keep a trace of our existence.

At the same time the spiritual conditions of humanity remain unaltered. Men we are; men we must be: to find out what is truly human, essential to the highest type and utmost happiness of man, is still our most absorbing interest. Nor need we abandon that noblest of all formulas: "To fear God and to keep His commands is the whole duty of man;" provided we are careful to accept the word God as the name of a hitherto unapprehended energy, the symbol of that which is the life and thought and motion of the universe whereof we are a part, the ideal toward which we are for ever struggling on the toilsome path of spiritual evolution, the unknown within us and without us which is the one vital irremovable reality. Science, which consists in the determination of laws,¹ compels us to believe that, as in the physical world invariable sequences are observed, so also in the moral nature of man must comprehensive rules and explanations of phenomena be observable. It is but the refusal to apply to moral problems the scientific method with unflinching logic which leads certain otherwise positive thinkers to recognise "the freedom of human volition" as an incalculable element, and thus to withdraw human conduct from the sphere of exact investigation. To know God in the physical order is to know what has been, and what is, and what will be in the economy of primæval forces. To know God in the moral order is to know what has been, and what is, and what will be within the region of the human consciousness. To obey God in the physical order is to control those forces for our own use as far as our constitution will permit; for thus we energise in harmony with the universe. To obey God in the moral order is to act in accordance with those hitherto discovered laws which have carried the race onward from barbarism to self-knowledge and self-control, and with all our might and main to strive for further precision in their determination. But even here is the debatable ground; here is the point at issue; here confessedly is the region that has never yet been subjected to science.

¹ "General conceptions in which a series of similarly recurring natural processes may be embraced."—HELMHOLTZ.

The analogy of scientific discovery forces us to look no longer for the actual fiat of a divine voice on Sinai, but to expect that by interrogating humanity itself we shall ultimately demonstrate those unchangeable decrees by conforming to which our race may pass from strength to strength. We must cease to be clairvoyants and become analysts, verifying our intuitions by positive investigation. For the old term Commandment, which implies the will of a sovereign, our present condition of knowledge leads us to substitute the new term Law as defined above.¹ This, although the subject-matter and even the practical result remain unchanged, is no slight alteration. It implies a new notion, both popular and scientific, of the divine in nature, a new criterion of what is right and wrong, and in the last resort a new metaphysic.

But with a view to this end we have to introduce a more stringent and painstaking method into ethics. We must be content to abandon dogmatism upon insoluble questions, however fascinating and imperious; we must above all things quit delusions, however sanctioned by ancient reverence. And here both faith and courage are needed. To believe that the moral laws are within us, requiring to be disentangled, without the aid of an authentic revelation, from the mass of phenomena, in the same way as physical laws have been abstracted from facts by scientific reasoning, demands a virile and firm confidence in the order of the universe and in the intellectual faculty of man.

Hitherto in ethics we have proceeded on the *à priori* road; we have assumed certain hypotheses, or supposed fixed starting-points, concerning the origin and the destiny of mankind, about both of which things we know absolutely nothing for sure. Starting with a theological system, which accounted for the creation of man and the nature of evil in close connection with a definite but delusive cosmogony, taking a future state of happiness or misery for granted, we have brought our dreams to bear upon the springs of conduct. It is precisely at this point that science, partly by the revolution effected in cosmical theory, partly by the exhibition of the true method of analysis, helps to free us from what is fanciful, and to indicate the right way for the future. It has proved in one realm of knowledge that an advance toward truth must not be expected from systems professing to set forth the causes of phenomena, but from a gradual and patient exploration of the phenomena themselves. Not matter, but the qualities of what we call matter as subject to our senses, are the object of physical science. Not God, but human conduct, must be the object of moral science, albeit the ideal that guides human conduct will continue to be worshipped as our God. Nor will it here avail to demur that the human will is essentially free, and therefore not subject to law in the strictly scientific sense. Each step we make in the investigation of heredity, and all the other conditions to which man is subject, forces us more and more plainly to the conclusion that the very seat of our

¹ P. 585, note.

supposed liberty, our desires and personal peculiarities, distinctive tastes and special predilections, are determined for us by circumstances beyond our own control. The force of these circumstances separately and in combination could be estimated if we possessed but the complete data for forming such a calculation; nor does this certainty destroy the fact that each new personality introduces a new element into the sequence. It narrows the field wherein volition can move, but leaves the soul still capable of being shaped. What is really incalculable is not the sphere of action for the individual, but the source of energy in the universe, in vital connection with which we live both physically and mentally. We are what we are, each of us, by no freak of chance, by no act of arbitrary spontaneity; and our prayers must take the form dictated by Cleanthes:—

“Lead Thou me, God, Law, Reason, Motion, Life!
All names alike for Thee are vain and hollow.
Lead me; for I will follow without strife;
Or if I strive, still must I blindly follow.”

For many centuries physical science itself suffered from the dead weight of abstract notions accepted as data, and was inert for want of a true method. Its recent successes are an index to the advance which moral science might make if it could adopt the right way of investigation, comparison, and reflective reasoning. At the same time it must be confessed that for moral science this method has not as yet been made either easy of application or fruitful of results. Our subject-matter is so complex, and so apparently distinct from sensible existence, as to seem intangible. Both thought and language are the heritage of countless generations, wherein a medley of guesses and confused conceptions are stored. Of general laws in ethics we have as yet but instinctive, and as it were æsthetic, perceptions, fortified and enforced by theological beliefs, or converted into intellectual notions by philosophy. Still, this need not disturb us, when we reflect how long it was before the true method of scientific discovery in the analysis of matter was brought to light, and what a continuous progress from one determination to another followed upon the single law established in explanation of terrestrial gravity. The scientific solution of one ethical problem, whether that be ultimately effected through physiology by the establishment of correspondences between the physical and moral functions of humanity, or through comparative history and the study of evolution, may prove as fruitful for ethics as the discovery of Galileo was for physics. It is impossible to utter dogmatic predictions at this point of our knowledge. Yet we may indulge in hopes that are of the nature of dreams. Can we not in this way venture to anticipate that the men of the future may obtain demonstrated certainty with regard to Man considered as an integral portion of the universe—that they may understand the conditions of his conduct as clearly as we now apprehend the behaviour of certain

gases—and that their problem will be, not how to check healthy normal appetites, but how to multiply and fortify faculties? Can we not dream that morality will be one branch of the study of the world as a whole, a department of τὰ φυσικά (or natural science), when φύσις (or nature), regarded as a total unity, that suffers no crude radical distinction of mind and body, has absorbed our scientific attention?

We need not fear that either the new notion of Deity forced upon us by the extension of our knowledge, even should this destroy the last vestige of anthropomorphism, or the involved application of a positive method to ethics, will lead to what is dreaded as materialism. If materialism be not a mere name, it is feared because it is thought to imply egotism, immersion in sensuality, and indifference to ideas. But what is the prospect unrolled before us by science? ¹ What is, in effect, the new intellectual atmosphere to which we must acclimatise our moral and religious sensibilities? Surely the most sublime, the most ideally imaginative, which it has ever been given to man to contemplate. The spectacle of the infinitely great and the infinitely small, alike of the mental and the physical, the natural and the super-sensible, subordinated to unchangeable laws, and permeated by one single energy, revealed to us by science, contains nothing that need drive us to a stolid atheism, but rather such considerations as give the value of positive certainty to Christ's words about the sparrow. We know now that the whole past history of the universe is involved in the blood-beats of the smallest animalcule discernible by the microscope, that the farthest fixed star to which our telescopes have any access obeys the laws that determine the action of our muscles, that our thought holds in solution the experience of all preceding ages. If the religion of the future is to be founded on scientific bases of this nature, there is surely here less room for the extravagance of egoism and sensuality than there was in the Catholic system, from which emerged a Sixtus IV. and an Alexander VI. What St. Paul conceived but dimly, the physicist declares to us: we are all parts and members of the divine whole. It is the business of science not to make God nowhere in the universe, but everywhere, and to prove, what previous moralists have guessed, that the happiness and the freedom of man consists in his self-subordination to the laws of the world, whereof he is an essential, though an insignificant part. Against the decrees of God conceived as a sovereign subject to like fluctuations of emotion with ourselves, it was possible to offend again and again without losing the hope that at some facile moment, some *mollia tempora fandi*, He might be propitiated. The laws of the world are inexorable; they alone enforce with absolute equity the maxim τῷ δράσαντι παθεῖν (the man who did the deed must suffer).

¹ By science here and elsewhere, when used without a qualifying epithet, I mean to include what is also known as philosophy. In science, thus understood, thought embraces the whole field of knowledge in a survey that has less in common with the metaphysics of the schoolmen than with the analytic method of the natural sciences.

Instead of materialism it might be more reasonable, perhaps, to dread fatalism; but fatalism is a rock on which all systems, philosophical and religious, when carried to abstract conclusions, have tended to drift. Science cannot be more fatalistic than Calvinism; yet the instinctive belief in the liberty of the individual has survived all logic, and is likely still to do so till such time as the prevailing intuition shall be positively proved. And even were the conviction that we are not free agents in the old sense of the phrase to be forced upon us, the sting of fatalism would be extracted together with the belief in an omnipotent personality, framing men of set purpose for honour and dishonour. It was the clash of the human and the divine wills, both equally finite, though the latter was isolated by abstraction and ticketed with the epithet of infinity—in other words, the fiction of a despot ruling over slaves—that gave its terror to necessity.

Before the latest discoveries of physical science, as before the highest philosophical analysis, the cruder distinctions of soul and body, spirit and matter, tend to disappear. The nature of the universe is proved too subtle for this dichotomy. Only a coarse intelligence will, therefore, run to the conclusion that so-called matter, with its supposed finality, is absolute; or that so-called thought, with its supposed infinity, is universal. The finer intelligence, convinced of the correlation between these apparently antagonistic moments, must pause to contemplate the everlasting sequences of time past extended into time to come, and in the end must feel persuaded of its own indissoluble connection with that, whatever it may be, which is permanent in the universe. The moment Now is a potential eternity. That we are, is a sufficient proof that we have been, and that we shall be. Each act, as it has had immeasurable and necessary antecedents, will be fruitful of immeasurable and necessary consequents; for the web of the world is ever weaving, and to drop a thread in it is utterly impossible. That we are such or such is, again, the proof that our qualities have in them something significant, both for that which has been, and for that which will be for everlasting. We have been, we are, we shall be, a part of the eternal complex. Not therefore are we at liberty to assume definite propositions concerning what is called the immortality of the soul. To do so in the present state of knowledge would be as much a begging of the question as to dogmatise upon the so-called personality of God. Suspension of judgment is as imperatively required of us by science as faith in the unintelligible was demanded by the Catholic Church. As then trial of the faith wrought patience, so now wise abstinence from dogmatism is the attitude of faith.

Following this course of thought into particulars, we have no reason to apprehend that personal licence should result from a system of purely positive ethics based upon that conception of our relation to the universe which science is revealing. On the contrary, we may expect from the establishment of such a system a code of conduct more stringent in all that can concern the well-being of the individual

than any that has yet been conceived. In the future, sensual excess will surely be reckoned a form of madness, and what we now dignify by the name of vice will be relegated, shorn of Satanic lustre, to the lazar-house. Nor need we fear that purely mental problems should lose their value or become less interesting. No amount of demonstration that the mind is dependent on the brain can so confuse the reason of a lucid thinker as to make him conclude that therefore there is no mind. Reduce all our emotions, our habits, our thoughts, to modes of cell-existence—prove that thinking and feeling are functions of nerve-centres—the mystery has only shifted its centre of gravity; we are still ourselves for better or for worse; thought and feeling are still the essential part of us; man remains, in spite of all, the only known being to whom the command *γνώθι σεαυτὸν* (know thyself) has been given, together with the faculty of obeying this command. Physical science does not exclude her elder sisters philosophy and religion, though she may compel religion to abandon mythology, and supply philosophy with new worlds for analysis. What she does is to substitute solid, if slowly-discovered, knowledge for guesses, and a patient but progressive method for the systems which ontologist after ontologist has built and pulled to pieces. Will not the men of the future look back with wonder on the ages in which religion, philosophy, and the science of nature were supposed to be at war, instead of being, as they will be then, one system?

APPENDIX

SAPPHO'S HYMN TO APHRODITE

See Chapter on the Lyrists

“ GLITTERING-THRONED, undying Aphrodite,
Wile-weaving daughter of high Zeus, I pray thee,
Tame not my soul with heavy woe, dread mistress,
Nay, nor with anguish !
But hither come, if ever erst of old time
Thou didst incline, and listenedst to my crying,
And from thy father's palace down descending,
Camest with golden
Chariot yoked : thee fair swift-flying sparrows
Over dark earth with multitudinous fluttering,
Pinion on pinion, thorough middle ether
Down from heaven hurried.
Quickly they came like light, and thou, blest lady,
Smiling with clear undying eyes didst ask me
What was the woe that troubled me, and wherefore
I had cried to thee :
What thing I longed for to appease my frantic
Soul ; and whom now must I persuade, thou askedst,
Whom must entangle to thy love, and who now,
Sappho, hath wronged thee ?
Yea, for if now he shun, he soon shall chase thee ;
Yea, if he take not gifts, he soon shall give them ;
Yea, if he love not, soon shall he begin to
Love thee, unwilling.
Come to me now too, and from tyrannous sorrow
Free me, and all things that my soul desires to
Have done, do for me, queen, and let thyself too
Be my great ally ! ”

DESDEMONA'S DEATH

IN the first edition of this book I had printed the words in the text, p. 403, thus : *dying by her husband's knife*. I have now altered the phrase because the manner of Desdemona's death is uncertain. Othello intended to put

an end to her by smothering ; and he had certainly begun to execute this purpose with the pillow, when her struggles proved too terrible, and at the same time a knocking was heard at the door. He then exclaimed :—

“ I that am cruel am yet merciful ;
I would not have thee linger in thy pain :—
So, so ! ”

At this point there is no new stage-direction to indicate that he used any other means to kill her but suffocation. Yet the fact that she afterwards regained sufficient breath to cry out,

“ O falsely, falsely murdered ! ”

seems to show that, if Shakespeare vividly conceived her death-scene, he meant Othello at the words *So, so!* to draw the dagger, with which he afterwards stabs himself, and to plunge it into Desdemona's breast ; since it is impossible that a woman, not otherwise injured, should so far recover from being stifled as to speak several lines articulately, and then die without further violence. The editors of the Variorum Shakespeare (1803, vol. xix. p. 500) call attention to this point, and quote the *Sic, sic* of Virgil's *Dido* : and it may be added that Retzsch, in the *Illustrations of Shakespeare*, represents Othello as stabbing Desdemona at the moment when the knocking is heard at the door. It is probable that he had seen it thus upon the stage : for it was the custom till lately so to play the last act of *Othello*. Against the theory here advanced, it may be urged that Othello's settled intention was to stifle, not to stab ; that his exclamation after the murder, Act V, Scene 2, line 205, accords with stifling better than stabbing ; and finally, that the impossibility of Desdemona's recovering her voice after stifling is no argument, seeing that to expect accuracy in such details, even from a poet so vivid in imagination as Shakespeare, is uncritical. I have thought the subject of sufficient interest to justify this lengthy and somewhat irrelevant note.

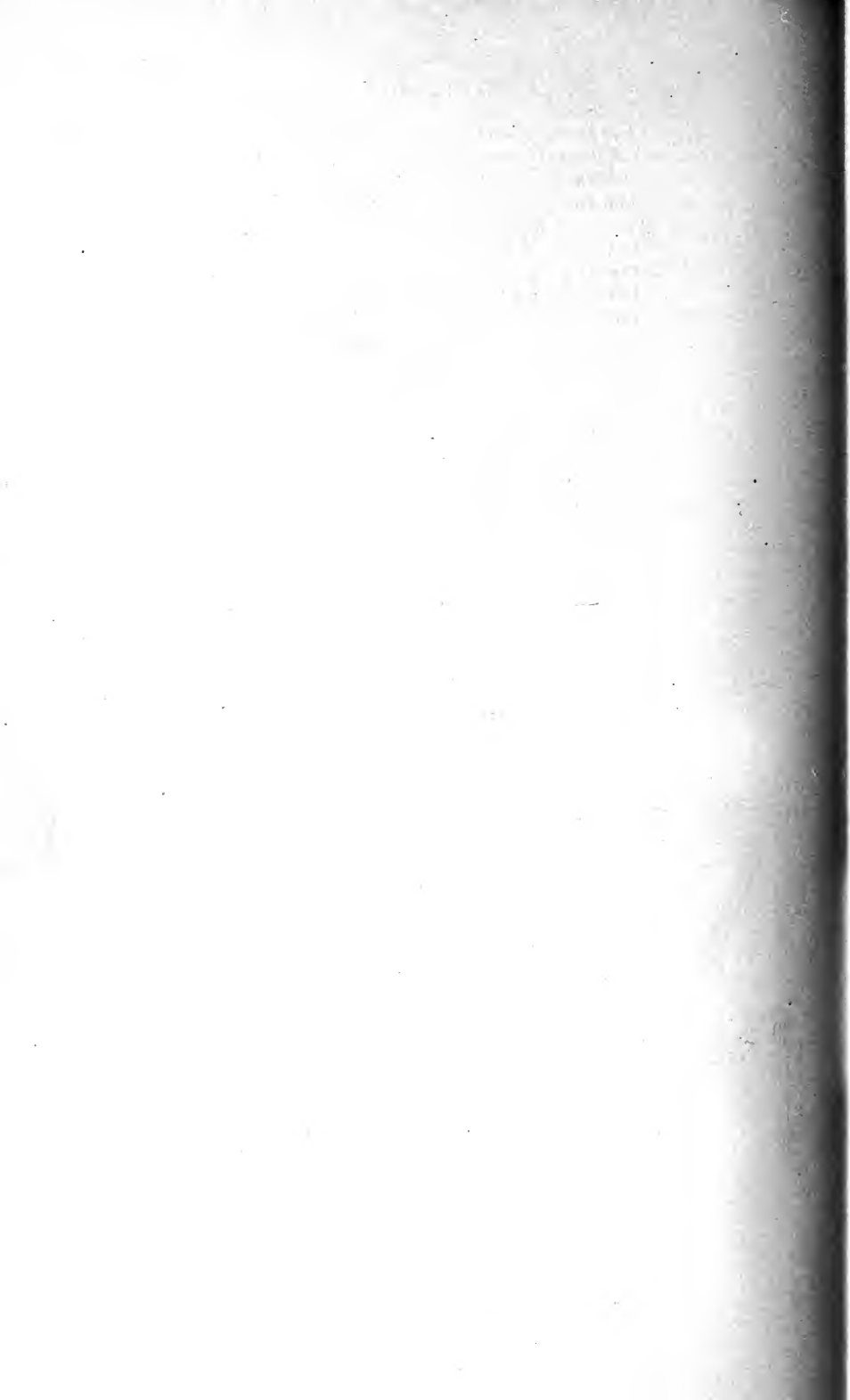
THEOCRITUS : IDYLL XXIX

See Chapter on the Idyllists

“ WINE, my boy, and truth—so runs the proverb :
Therefore in our cups we must be truthful ;
And what lies within my soul, I'll tell you.
Not with all your little heart you love me ;
Well I know, for half my life is hidden
In the thought of you, the rest is ruined.
When you smile, the days are bright above me
Like a god's ; you frown, and all is darkness.
Is it right your lover thus to torture ?
Listen to my words, for I am older ;
Heed, and you shall profit much, and praise me.
Make one nest upon one sheltering tree-top,
Where no savage beast may come and harm you :
Now upon this bough to-day you settle,

And next day on that, for ever flitting ;
Let but some one see and praise your beauty,
Straight you treat him to a three years' friendship,
And your old love is a friend of three days.
Yea, your haughtiness is more than human !
But I bid you seek the same man always ;
For if thus you live, you shall be revered
In the city ; yea, and Love shall bless you,
Love who tames the heart of whom it likes him,
Love who turned my steely soul to softness.
By this little mouth I kiss, I warn you
'Twas but yesterday you were a baby ;
And old age o'ertakes us in a twinkling,
Wrinkled age : yet no man may recapture
Youth, for youth hath wings upon his shoulder,
And our feet are slow to catch the flying.
This I bid you mind, and be more gentle,
And your lover recompense with loving ;
That, when manhood shades your cheek, together
We may live like Achilleian comrades.
But if to the winds you cast my warning,
Murmur in your heart—why will you plague me ?
Though this hour I'd fetch for you the golden
Apples, or drag Cerberus from Hades,
Then I'd let you call, nor stir to meet you
At the doorstep ; cured of tyrannous longing."

THE END



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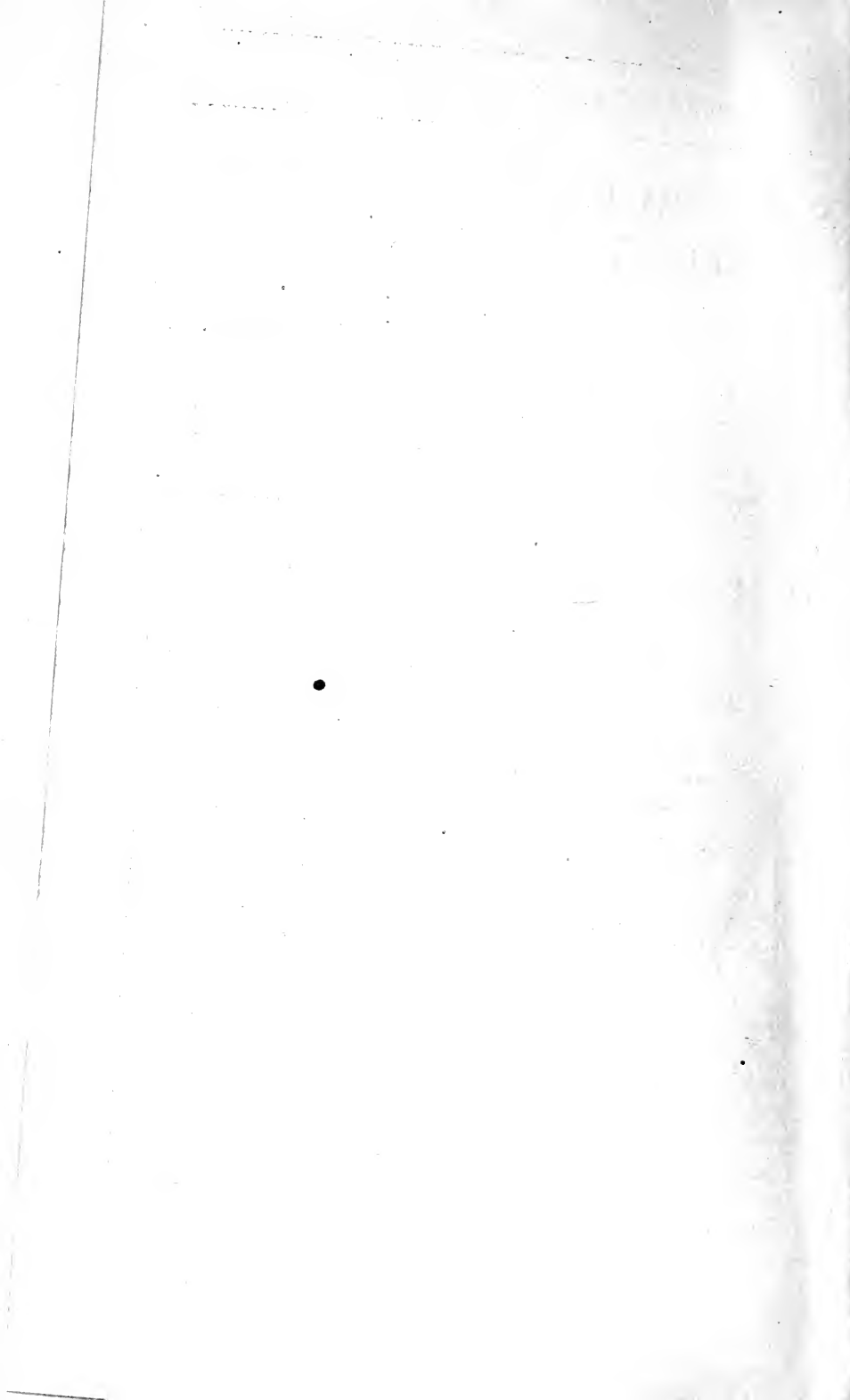
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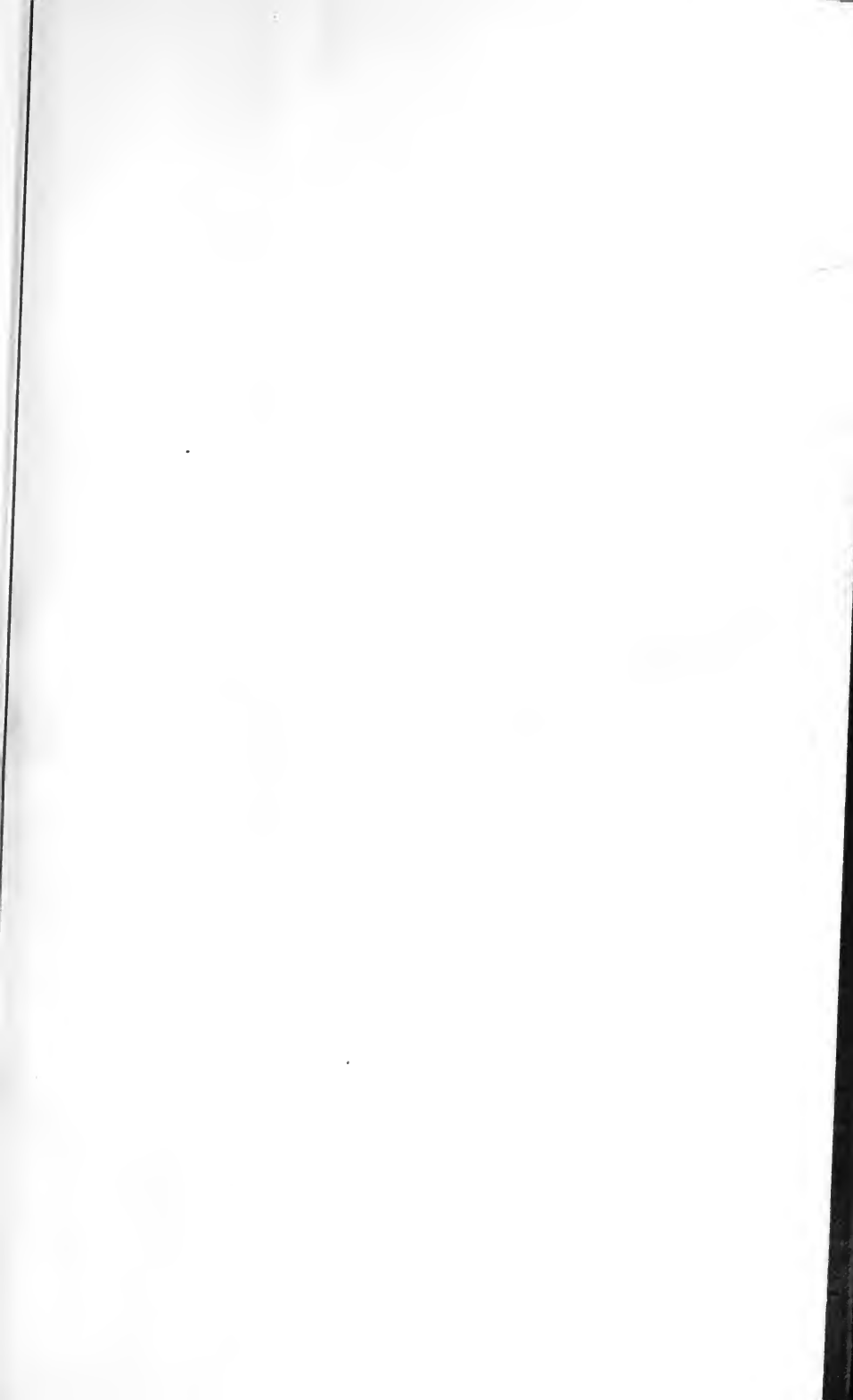
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