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# Greek Poetry

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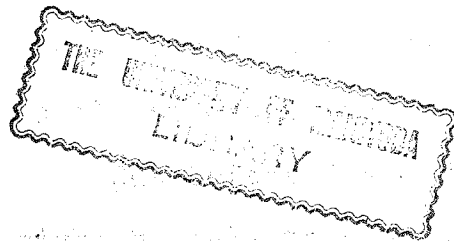
G R E E K P O E T R Y .

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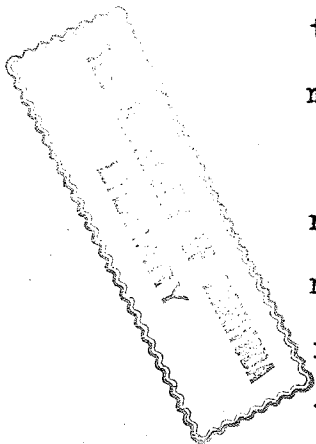
## G R E E K P O E T R Y

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"As civilization advances poetry declines." Whatever can be said for and against this dictum of Macaulay's is quite outside the present subject but if the history of nations be reviewed, poetry will be found to be the first mode of literary expression. So with the Greeks, when prose had not been dreamed of or was still in a very crude form, poetry was and had been brought to the very ideal of perfection.

The Greeks of the Heroic age were passionately fond of poetry and the first attempts at poetical composition were simple narrations of the exploits of favorite heroes. Early Greek history is completely enveloped in the clouds of mythology and legends which themselves form the subject matter of some of the best models of Greek poetry.

But before discussing Greek Poetry proper, it might be well to consider for a brief moment the Greek mind and the novel force which it exercised when it first appeared over the historical horizon. About the tenth century before Christ, Epic poetry, of which the



Iliad and the Odyssey are examples, had already come to a mature state, and a brief look at the surrounding civilization of the world at this period will afford some idea of the relation which the Greek intellect bore to its contemporary rivals.

In speaking of civilization we naturally turn to Egypt. Her civilization then dated back about three thousand years. Its chief characteristics - for the mystery of the pyramids have long since proved an open book to modern research - were, firstly, a king who was considered to be a descendant of the national God Ra, and, secondly, a religion which gave itself up entirely to the care of the dead. The future existence after death was its greatest concern. Wherever such a deep-rooted belief in immortality exists and is most definite, there will be found the greatest reverence for and obedience to religion and the priesthood. So the Egyptian priesthood, the dispenser of sacred wisdom, held complete sway over the superstition of the people and religion became the chief factor in the affairs of state. But not only did the priesthood dispense all the sacred or moral wisdom, but they, as keepers of the temples and as the only people who had access to the writings or tablets and papyri, were the only really



educated class. With all the knowledge, therefore, both sacred and secular, in the hands of the priesthood, is it any wonder that intellectual barrenness so far as literature is concerned was the result? "The life of the State and the individual had been crushed by the weight of sacerdotal tradition".

And if we turn to Babylon and Assyria, while we do not meet with quite the same causes, the results do not materially differ. Babylon, the elder of the two, had been the teacher of her younger sister; the great doctrine of her religion consisted in the existence of evil demons. This teaching held that the world was full of such beings who ever lay in wait for unwary man. These evil spirits or demons, under a distorted and morbid imagination, assumed all manner of fearful shapes. The human form was mingled with that of the animal and they in turn with one another. But however great the belief in evil beings was, it never obtained the influence of the Egyptian conception. The Babylonian had some vague notions of a place of torment for the wicked and a place of happiness for the good, but beyond these vague and filmy notions he did not go. The Egyptian, on the other hand, with his very future life marked out,

with his stern belief in a relentless future, and with his one idea concentrated in obtaining happiness in the life to come, rendered implicit obedience to his priest. The Babylonian held no such definite ideas, and as a natural result the religion of both Babylon and Assyria never became such a factor in the national growth. The temples, as in the case of Egypt, were the great libraries or storehouses of knowledge and writing was entirely in the hands of the priests, but all the vast collection of bricks and papyri which has been unearthed from time to time only goes to prove how utterly devoid of any intellectual and literary merit these people were. Beyond the narrations of their victories, their cruelties, and this with tedious bombast and tiresome repetition, we find nothing denoted except the degraded existence of the masses under the sway of despotism.

In Phoenicia, however, a different state of affairs exists. The free spirit of the trader had thrown off the yoke of the despot and an adventurous commercial spirit had carried him beyond the limits of such superstitious influences. The underlying spirit of the nation was commercial - the acquisition of gain.

And after Phoenicia we at last come to Greece. The early history of the Greeks, or Hellenes, with their nu-

merous and confusing migrations, we will not inquire into, but let us take a look at them when, to some extent, their barbarous tribes had begun to recognize a certain kinship.

The ties of kinship were a community of language and religion. Of the former, every Greek considered himself to be sprung from the common parent Hellen and to him each member of every other nationality was included in the term "Barbarian" - the Gentiles beyond the pale; of the latter, the Greeks seem to have always worshipped the same gods and, as a result, national festivals or games, such as the Olympic and Pythian, were a strong factor in welding together their disjointed tribes into one nation.

To return, therefore, to our subject, after this brief review of Egypt, Babylon, Assyria and Phoenicia, we are now in a position to inquire into the peculiar characteristics of the Greek mind and to realize how great and how novel a force it exercised over its contemporaries.

The keynote of its message has been beautifully expressed by Keats when he said: "Beauty is Truth, and Truth is Beauty". Their creed was a natural harmony with the laws of nature. Their religion, instead of

being a worship, horrible with grotesque and distorted shapes, cruel and barbarous with human sacrifices, was one of sunshine, of gods and goddesses who were noble and beautiful, who were, in reality, idealized men and women, and who were swayed to and fro by the varying breezes of human emotions. When these gods had to be appeased, they were propitiated, not by cruel and heartrending sacrifices of human beings, but by libations, litanies and other religious rites. Theirs was a religion of nature, of sunny skies, of joy. Then again the climate - a very important factor in the development of the artistic soul of a nation - was one of the grandest in the world. Famous for its mildness and its cloudless skies, is it any wonder that these children of nature, under the "azure vaults of heaven", leading an outdoor life, where all bloomed in perfect health of being - is it any wonder, I say, that they should have first originated the "poetry of joy"?

Greek Poetry can be classified under three general heads: epic, lyric and dramatic. Epic poetry, of which Homer's Iliad and Odyssey are the best known examples, was the first which attained what might be called a finished form. It was always recited, while lyric poetry was always sung to an accompaniment of music. Dramatic



poetry, on the other hand, was peculiarly one of narration. The three chief characteristics of Epic poetry were: firstly, a grand and inspiring theme which usually consisted of some heroic legend and this, too, was unfolded in a most elaborate plot; secondly, a diction, widely removed from the ordinary trammels of everyday discourse; thirdly, a metre peculiar to itself, the oldest epics being hexameter. It is, perhaps, significant, in passing, to remark that the same word is applied to both poetry and the oracles, or "utterances" from Delphi. Epic poetry, of course, is not confined alone to Greece; one might mention other splendid examples, such as Milton's Paradise Lost, Virgil's Aeneid and Dante's Commedia. While the Aeneid alone, of these three, is written in the same metre, the dactylic hexameter, still they all bear the imprint of the influence, in both style and thought, of the divine master who has been so well styled "the first Artist in European Poetry".

There has in modern days, arisen a keen discussion concerning the authorship of the Homeric poems. In the poems themselves no references to the author personally are to be found and although the poet's name has become a household word, nothing absolutely definite is known of his personality. There are no less than seven cities

which claim the honor of his birthplace and there are also several biographies of his life, but these latter cannot be more seriously regarded than as interesting legends. As to the origin and history of these poems, they undoubtedly came from the Ionian coast and the islands of the AEgean Sea. Both the dialect and the many references of locality to be found in them, would corroborate this. There are several explanations of their transmission to Greece. Lycurgus is said to have introduced them into Sparta, where they were used as models for the Lacedaemonian soldiery. Pisistratus, that hated tyrant of Athens, undoubtedly did more to give Homer the position he holds among the Greeks than any other one man. He, as the first patron of literature, collected the first library and further threw its doors open to the public.

Originally these were a collection of poems which were sung or recited by wandering minstrels or Rhapsodists. The word "epos" is equally applicable to singing and reciting; in all probability it was accompanied with the lyre. This was gradually changed to an intonation or monotone and finally it became purely dramatic. At first these wandering minstrels were very popular, and deservedly so, for they were usually both artistic

and original, but as time went on they became sensational, clothed themselves in gorgeous apparel, wept and laughed as the passage demanded and, in fine, they so overdid their parts that to people of refinement they became exceedingly offensive.

But there is another great epic or collection of songs which, while not so well known, is still well worthy of mention; we refer to Hesiod's. Only three of his works are extant: "Works and Days", "Theogony" and the "Shield of Hercules". His personality, too, is uncertain, and there are also disputes over the authenticity of his poems. For instance, there seems to be strong ground for believing that the "Shield of Hercules" was not his work and some critics maintain that "Works and Days" is the only genuine Hesiodic poem extant. The great difference between Homer and Hesiod lies in the subject matter and that they are both epic poets is, perhaps, the only real similarity. Hesiod seems to have used the epic only because no other form was available; he and his school used it for any and all themes. In the "Works and Days" ,for example, he lays down a number of social and moral maxims, while in the Theogony he deals with heroes, but purely from a genealogical standpoint. Nor has his diction the grandeur

and dignity of Homer; his language is quite plain and his thoughts too, are commonplace; he is openly and directly didactic. Hesiod is a teacher first and a poet afterwards; he prides himself on his knowledge of the moral and the technical; his great boast is to "re-late true things", not to know how to tell fables that seem like realities", and this gives us the real reason why Homer stands for all that is ideal and representa-tive in the Greek Epic; in the Iliad and the Odyssey he has given us ideal models of the Epic, poems which rank with, yes and even surpass, those of the greatest masters the world has ever seen.

The character of these two poems -the Iliad and the Odyssey - is essentially different. The Iliad is a poem of war, of the camp and the battkefield; the Odyssey is one of domestic life, of travel and adventures abroad. The keynote of the Iliad is "glory"; that of the Odyssey "rest". The situations and descriptions , rather than the plot, are the points towards which the main interest centres. The poet does not for an instant hesitate to disclose his catastrophe beforehand. While the inter-vention of supernatural agents may perhaps mar the poems for the taste of a modenn, still the pictures of men and women, drawn from actual life, are sketched so vivid-ly and with such freshness that even we, in the nineteenth



century, seem to live back through the long ages between.

What the influence of a great epic may be upon the religious beliefs of a nation, we can see by examining the effect of Paradise Lost in our own times, whence we can trace many of our popular ideas of theology. But it is indeed very hard for us, when thinking of these poems from a purely literary standpoint, to form an adequate idea of all that they stood for among the Greeks. They do not, like our Bible, profess to rest on any divine inspiration, nor again are they didactic in so far as they might lay down any formal rules of conduct, but they contain passages which abound in the noblest descriptions of the power and majesty of the ancient gods and eloquent narrations of all the virtues of the heroic age. No education was considered complete without an accurate knowledge of Homer; in fact both his poems were often memorized in full by the boys at school and every well educated Greek could quote from them at length. Homer, to the Greeks, occupied a position far superior, in point of both prominence and influence, to that which Shakespeare holds to the English speaking world. To say that the Iliad and the Odyssey occupied, among the Greeks, the position which our Bible does amongst us, would be by no means an exaggeration -they comprised the

Greek Bible. These were the standards of appeal for everything -moral, religious, legal, historical, and otherwise.

We might mention other later examples of epic, such as the works of Pisander, of Cameirus, of Panyasis, and of Antimachus, but their poems are too obscure to be worthy of much more than mention and too inferior and tedious to ever be permanent and enjoyable.

Up to the close of the eighth century there existed no form of poetry save the Epic and this, from the natural relation which tradition and usage had placed between form and subject matter, had gradually fallen into disuse. This was largely due to the fact that there were no longer masters who could in any way equal the old models and the resulting anti-climax was, of course, not appreciated. Then again, up to this time the necessity or need of expression to clothe everyday incidents had not been felt; men listened in rapture to the recitation of the Iliad and the Odyssey -they lived backward, as it were, in the charming chivalry of the shadowy past, -the days of their "knighthood". But this was all soon to change; Greek colonies were being founded; commerce was expanding; the spirit of travel and

adventure was abroad in the land; in the colonies, in Ionia, as was to be expected, with their environment amid savage hordes, men were the first to be drawn together into closer social communion, in the consciousness of a great wall separating them from their neighbors -the "barbarians". Here, then, lyric poetry, as being essentially a personal expression, had its birth. This characteristic, one must always remember, that it is the expression of the poet's own feelings and has always the vivid charm of personality. We are invited to share in the love, hate, joy or grief of a human being like ourselves and the doors of our heart are insensibly thrown wide. With all these factors, and still remembering that the epic had been indissolubly linked with hero worship, it is not difficult to imagine why the need for a less dignified metrical form of expression sprang into being, a form with which tradition and custom had not associated, for countless years beyond the memory of man, heroes and gods, and with the divine Homer.

The dactylic hexameter had proved itself an old tried friend with possibilities as to range of thought and feeling, so that nothing was more natural than that this form should be retained; the elegiac verse is noth-

ing more than the common hexameter with the pentameter added, the second line having the third and sixth theses suppressed. Probably the expansion of music at this time was also a factor in the creation of new metrical forms. Writing was practically unknown and with only the ear and voice as means of communication, musical accompaniments on the lyre were resorted to. We now begin to hear of the fame of the Lesbian harper Terpander, of the flute player Olympus, and the Boeotian Klonas; Terpander seems to have developed the musical capacity of the lyre by increasing the strings from four to seven, and there seems to have been a like development in other instruments.

After these improvements in music we find such names as Archilochus, Kallinus and Tyrtaeus, all employing the elegaic metre and to a variety of subjects, from military marches to funeral dirges. Another form of metre was also used - the iambic. This latter more closely resembled in action the flow of ordinary conversation but was technically more difficult than the elegaic. The elegaic and the iambic are the two chief metres but there is also to be found a variety of others, the trochaic, the anapestic and combinations of the two, or of all four.



Archilochus, the Swift of Greek Literature, employed the iambic with terrible success in his satires. Of his history we know that he was poor and the son of a slave mother; further, that he was exiled to a foreign and far distant colony. These circumstances all added to the gall of bitterness and gave his satires and lampoons the fierceness and the personality of a disappointed pessimist. He is said to have caused Lykambes, who was the father of his fiancée, Neobule, who subsequently jilted him, to slay himself. His lampoons were noted for their intense personality and coarseness. But it is well that history can, in addition, relate of this clever man, that his genius also found outlet in some more lofty and noble themes, such as his song to Herakles, which we find sung even in the days of Pindar, two centuries later.

Kallinus, another of the earliest elegaic poets, is probably the originator of this form of verse. He employed it with eminent success in martial songs and patriotic marches but only fragments of these have come down to us. Tyrtaeus, too, the poet of Sparta, wrote war songs which naturally found greater favor among his warlike audience than any of his contemporaries. He

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flourished during the period of the second Messenian War (615-665 B.C.) and tradition has it, that the Spartans, when hard pressed by their foes, consulted the oracle. The reply was that they should seek a leader from the Athenians. This they did, but the Athenians, in derisive sport, sent them a schoolmaster and a lame one, too. The Lacedaemonians received this rather doubtful gift with their usual childlike faith and it was soon found that their trust was not misplaced. Their new leader proved a great genius, especially as a poet. He quelled, by his songs in praise of their constitution, discontent at home and inspired to victory by his martial odes the soldiers in the field. The didactic, or rather philosophic, was introduced into lyrics by Solon, one of the seven wise men, and such maxims as "Know thyself" and "Nothing too much" herein find their origin. Simonides, too, and Theogines also, used the elegaic as a cloak for public advice. All of these poets belong to the personal class of pure ballad writers. We have already observed how, before their time, epic poetry having already exhausted the genius of the nation, Hesiod still struggling to modify the grandiloquent epic to meet the requirements of domestic commonplace, it remained for an Archilochus to break the bounds of pre-

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cedent and tradition and write in every form of metre, -  
elegaic, iambic, trochaic, for almost every form of  
theme.

But these poets, remember, were purely personal;  
they were ballad writers. We now come to the lyric  
poets proper, whose songs necessitated a musical ac-  
companiment. The metre now tends more and more to the  
complex and without the presence of the musical orches-  
tration and the dancing choruses, appears to modern  
eyes to be nothing more than blank verse. In other  
words, the success of these poets depends largely on  
the harmonizing of their poems with the dancing and  
attendant orchestral parts. Our German friends have  
styleed them the "Melic Poets", to distinguish them from  
the other personal class. This definition arises from  
the constant relation between poetry and its accompani-  
ment of music and dancing. A modern parallel can be  
drawn in the relation of the libretto and the music  
in Grand Opera. It consisted of two classes, the simple  
song or ballad belonging to the Aeolic school, and the  
Choral of the public lyrists; the former was sung by one  
singer, was always simple, and was essentially per-  
sonal; the latter was, as the name would suggest, per-  
formed by a chorus, very complicated and universally

public. Of this latter there are various kinds, such as choruses of victory, of praise, of mourning; some sung by men and boys, others by maidens only. We have already referred to Terpander, as having expanded the scope of the lyre, but he also seems to have made further innovations and to have been the first melic poet who used an accompaniment throughout the poem. Unfortunately, only a very few fragments of his poems remain with us. But there are still two representatives of the Aeolic school whom we have not as yet mentioned, they are Alcaeus and Sappho.

Of Alcaeus' personal history very little is known; his native town was Mitylene and he began to flourish about 611 B.C. His party, which belonged to the nobility, being defeated in the civil war, he was exiled and, unable to regain his country, he travelled in various lands. The Alcaic metre, named after him, is said to have been his invention. It consists of a common syllable in the first three lines, followed by a trochee and a spondee; then two dactyls, or a dactyl and a spondee; this is the metre of the first two lines only and the first half of the third line; the latter half contains a trochee and a spondee; the fourth line consists of two dactyls, a trochee and



a spondee or another trochee. The imitations of Horace give us a far better and deeper insight into the real character of his poems than the fragments extant. Some extol the delights of love and wine, others lament the troubles of the State and the tribulations of himself.

In the same way, Sappho is little known to us, other than from our familiarity with Horace. She was also a native of Lesbos and probably born at Mitylene, where she spent her life. Her father's name, according to the best authority, was Scamandronymus; her mother's probably Cleis and her husband's Cercolas. Two brothers and a daughter are mentioned in her poems. On the Parian marbles there is a reference to her flight from Mitylene to Sicily; further, we know practically nothing; we do not even know the date of her death but passages in her poems and the unanimous voice of antiquity tell us that she must have lived to a great age. From her song of the unrequited love of Phaon sprang the legend of her leap from the Leucadian rock, the farthest end of the world, but this is without doubt a late invention. She is famous for her poems of love and passion, the grace and tenderness of which have

never been excelled. History also credits her with the invention of several forms of metre. The one best known to us is that imitated in the odes of Horace. She also presided over a school of poetry and art for women at Mitylene. The position of influence and independence which "woman" occupied at Mitylene was entirely different to that of any other state in Greece, save Sparta, and therefore not understood; this accounts for the reason why Sappho has received at the hands of the comic poets such severe handling, but these charges are without any true foundation.

With Sappho the last string on the Aeolian harp was broken but its echoes we can still hear. Anacreon, in his themes of revelry and love, takes them up, but alas! they are only echoes. Living, as he did, a life of pleasure, its cares were to him of the moment, life was but a passing show and only "poor, infirm, weak and despised old age" worried him. His poems are the intellectual, graceful and artistic productions of an accomplished courtier, of a man whose one all and end all is "pleasure". The real passion, in all its intensity and fervour, of Alcaeus and Sappho, is gone, and in its place we have the shallow sentimentalities of a "Graecian Horace".

It is a curious fact, and one well worthy of more than a passing interest, that lyric poetry, originated as it was by Kallinus and Archilochus, did not come to its climax of perfection for nearly two centuries, until the days of Simonides and Pindar, "the proud and high-crested bards". The pages of history are now so brilliantly emblazoned with the names of fame and so closely does genius follow upon genius, that after the long period of literary stagnation, it is a difficult task to separate the cause from the effect. One of the great causes, however, seems to be the existence of such brilliant courts as those of Syracuse, Athens and Samos. At these places we find tyrants, at the height of their glory, who prided themselves on being patrons of literature and art. Hither naturally the men of genius of the day, poets and musicians, would flock where they would be certain of finding an audience appreciative of their talents and remuneration commensurate with their skill. Then again, these were stirring times, times of revolt and strife between aristocracy and democracy, and this struggle between rival parties of the same race was bound to intensify the emotions. These are always the periods "the strenuous days" which bring forth and rear men of force "whether in action or in art", the

"men of the hour".

Simonides was born at Iulis, in Ceos, and from early youth was carefully educated in poetry and music with a view to following these arts as a profession. At the invitation of Hipparchus he went to Athens, where lived his contemporary rival, Anacreon, but after the tyrant's expulsion he probably retired to Thessaly. He returned about the time of the Persian invasions and it was during this period that he wrote so many of his elegies and epigrams. That he was a greater favorite in his own lifetime than Pindar is entirely due to his politics, in which he became the spokesman of the nation in their struggle with Persia, while Pindar, being a Theban, was opposed to Greece. Simonides afterwards left Athens and went to the Court of Hiero at Syracuse, where he died at a ripe old age. He is credited with completing the Greek alphabet by the addition of the long vowels and with the invention of the mnemonic art. The morality of his works is high, although he is accused by Pindar, with perhaps some justice, of avarice. His poems excelled in sweetness (whence his name "Melicertes") combined with the most tender pathos, rare conception and harmony of expression. This is well illustrated by his elegy on the heroes of Thermopylae which, as a

prominent critic says "no prose version can ever suggest":

"Glorious was the fortune of those who died at Thermopylae and fair is their fate; their tomb is an altar. Others are bewailed but they are remembered; others are pitied but they are praised. Such a monument shall never moulder, nor shall it be defaced by all conquering time. This sepulchre of bravemen has taken the glory of Hellas to dwell with it; be Leonidas the witness, Sparta's king, who has left behind him the great beauty of prowess and an immortal name."

Pindar, the contemporary of Simonides, stands like a Janus in the literary doorway of his period, looking backward over the rise and development of lyric poetry during two centuries of growth, being himself the culminating point in its perfection, and looking forward out into the future of the drama, which was just appearing over the horizon. With the majority of our Greek poets, almost nothing is known of his life. Of a few meagre facts, that he was a Theban, belonging to the aristocratic family of the Aegidae, is certain. This is an important one, for all through his life Pindar shewed himself to be an aristocrat to the very heart; he believed in the superiority of noble blood, in all the

advantages of ancestry and, further, he believed himself to be divinely inspired, assuming the title of the Eagle in reference to other poets of his time. His popularity, or rather the appreciation in which his poems were held, was not, perhaps, as great during his lifetime as that of Simonides. The chief reason for this, as we have already mentioned, is to be found in the fact that Pindar's Theban citizenship and the shameful part which Thebes played in the Persian Wars, when an oligarchial cabal within her walls drew her into an unholy alliance with the barbarian invader, prevented him from any national outbursts of joy, but, nevertheless, later critics have been unanimous in their verdict that he was the "greatest lyric poet of Greece. He was educated at Athens under Lasos of Hermione and shewed his genius at the early age of twenty -the 10th Pythian Ode being written then. While he composed other poems, only his odes to victory are extant. No doubt, in addition to the obscurity of his thought and his rapid and abrupt transitions, the monotony of the subjects of these extant odes is largely the cause of his poetry finding so few readers. To appreciate his poetry an accurate knowledge of mythology and history is absolutely necessary, but to enter into their real spirit, a knowledge

of Greek life and thought and, above all, the social conditions of his time, would be imperative. These songs consist of commemorations usually of some athletic champion in the yearly games which the Greeks held at Olympia, Delphi and elsewhere. The family of the victor, his country, some incident of his past, are all made to suggest some legend, thus linking the present and the past. To us it will probably seem strange that a poem written on the winning of a foot race or a wrestling match or even the triumph of a king in a chariot race - a victory, as it were, of the hour - should win any permanent notice except to the few immediately engaged and then but for a short time; but we must always bear in mind that these festivals were national events, that the whole nation attended them and that it was considered the greatest honor to receive the laurel wreath of victory. Nor did the honor last only for a short time, but for the balance of the victor's life; it was a passport anywhere at any time into the best society and always entitled its owner to respect and honor. It will readily be seen, therefore, in commemorating these events, how important a place Pindar would occupy at these functions. His was the duty to give to these festivals immortality and hand them down to posterity;



to describe the splendour of the religious rites, the beauty of the scene, the athletes in all their development of physique and gracefulness of form; to picture the magnificence of the chariots, the joy and applause of the surging crowds - in short, he was the artist of the occasion.

It is hard to speak adequately and at the same time briefly of his genius. To speak of his force, of his vividness, of his lofty style, of his mastery of rhythm and metre, is to mention but a few of his characteristics. In his moral view of life he sees evil only in the shape of falsehood, envy, or the like, the objects of a good man's scorn. In bringing the glorious past, whose pages are illumined with the names of the heroic age, up to and contemporaneous with the present victory, he never misses an opportunity for counsel and admonition; the athlete must remember "that his raiment is worn on mortal limbs" and that "the earth shall be his vesture at the last". We must not forget to add that a conscientious belief in the national religion is also a strong characteristic of the poet.

The ode written in commemoration of the victory of Hieron perhaps owes its prominence to Aristophanes, who considered it his best and most finished work. A

brief survey of this would perhaps illustrate some of the characteristics which we have mentioned and afford us some idea of the resource with which he built up the varying forms of these songs. He begins: "Best is water of all, and gold as a flaming fire in the night shineth amid lordly wealth; but if of prizes in the games thou art fain, O my soul, to tell, then, as for no bright star more quickening than the sun must thou search in the void firmament by day, so neither shall we find any games greater than the Olympic whereof to raise our voice". After this stately and picturesque introduction of the theme -the Olympian Games - he relates briefly the victory of Hieron and then from a reference to the "fame in Lydian Pelops' colony" he proceeds to unfold the legend of Pelops and of his victory by the help of Poseidon's "glorious gift of a golden car and winged untiring steeds"; "so he overcame Oinomaos and won the maiden for his bride." After thus swiftly closing the legend the poet goes on to tell of his six sons and his "frequented tomb whereto many strangers resort". Then with a reference to his beholding the Olympian Games afar off, "where is striving of swift feet and of strong bodies brave to labour" he closes the ode with a comparison of Hieron and himself: "Of many

"kinds is the greatness of men; but the highest is to be achieved by kings. Look not thou for more than this. May it be thine to walk loftily all thy life and mine to be the friend of winners in the games winning honor for my art among Hellenes everywhere."

In these odes to victory the poet aimed at making the celebration a public one; the introduction of the mythical hero was only the background against which the hero of the present stood out the more prominently in Rembrandt relief. His poetry throbs with action and in this way lends a new impetus to the epic which culminated in the Attic Drama.

The Alexandrine School, who revelled in myths and in legendary genealogy, esteemed Pindar very highly; so also, in later times, did the Romans, and we find repeated references to him in Horace and Plutarch. The exactness and complexity of his scheme of metrical composition, however, was lost to them and we learn of Cicero reading the Odes as prose. Horace, too, recognized the impossibility of their imitation and wisely confined himself to the easier metres of Alcaeus and Sappho.

The true effect of these odes is somewhat hard to

realize on account of the absence of the musical accompaniment which the poet set thereto. The Oratorio is the nearest modern parallel, but while its music is more flexible in transitions from mood to mood, our language does not in the smallest degree admit of the sudden changes, of the swiftness of lightning itself, the rapidity of which is like the eagle's flight, and renders adequate translation impossible.

Like Burns, the greatest of modern lyricists, he was ever ready to lend himself to all that was pure, true and generous; he never swerved from the divine function of the poet. Gifts could not mar nor could rewards emasculate his transcendent powers; he abounds in wonderful conceptions and brilliant metaphors. Horace compares him to a mountain stream, swollen with rains, which overflowing its banks rushes down a "roaring torrent", and Arnold refers to him as the "poet of style".

In conclusion, one could not sum up with more brevity and precision than in the words of Professor Jebb. He says: "Pindar, the greatest of the Greek lyricists, -the most wonderful perhaps in lofty power that the lyric poetry of any age can show, -holds his title to immortality by the absolute quality of his work, but for the history of Greek literature he has also the

relative interest of showing the epic heroes under a new light, -neither that far-off, though clear, light, as of a fair sunset, which the lay of the minstrel shed around them in the palace of Alcinous, nor yet that searching sunshine of noontide, which fell upon them in the theatre of Dionysus."

To understand the drama of the Greeks, it is very necessary for us to lay aside the associations which our ideas of a modern theatre will attach to it, for these ancient plays are so dissimilar to ours that their few points of similarity will prove rather an obstacle than a stepping stone to their intelligent comprehension.

In the first place the Athenian theatre was a national institution while ours is only a private speculation; the ancient theatre was the temple of the God, in whose honor there was always an altar on the stage itself; our modern playhouse is purely a place of amusement. The Greek theatre was thrown open to the public twice a year only, but the chief occasion was on the Greek Dionysia, or festival in honor of the Thracian god Dionysus, more familiarly known to us as Bacchus. Our theatres, as we know full well, run continuously, night after night, throughout the

year. Furthermore our successful plays run for months but the best of the Greek dramas, however much admired, were never repeated within the same year, and scarcely ever at all. That the Greek theatre was only open on the great festivals, that it was both national and religious in its scope, was naturally followed by the attendances of great crowds and we read of audiences numbering thirty thousand. The size of the ruins of these theatres bear witness to this statement and the largest theatre of the present day would be but a miniature alongside of one of the great theatres of antiquity.

Their theatre may be divided into three divisions: the koilon, assigned to the audience, the orchestra, or dancing place, given up to the chorus, and the logeum, or stage proper. The seats of the koilon were arranged in tiers of concentric arcs. Only a few seats were reserved; for example, there were certain sections set aside for the senators, and for visitors who frequently came from Sparta and other neighboring states. The different divisions of the house were called after the classes of spectators to whom they were apportioned.

The orchestra was a semi-circular platform between the stage and the audience. It was the place assigned

to the chorus, where all the dancing took place. This platform was twelve feet lower than the front seats of the koilon, by which it was bounded, and the stage was six feet higher than this.

The stage proper was rectangular in form. It was very broad, extending from side to side of the theatre, but at the same time it had very little depth in comparison with its great breadth. The principle of the scenery arrangement was just the opposite to ours. The Greeks aimed at placing the chief object in the background with the openings into the distance on either side. By a fixed rule the city, with the temple or other central object, was placed on the left; the open country, mountains, etc., on the right. As a rule the scenes were architectural, but sometimes they were landscape paintings. Somewhere under the seats of the spectators was a flight of stairs, known as Charon's Stairs, by which the ghosts from Hades had access to the stage. The side scenes were triangular prisms with different scenes on each face, so that they had only to be revolved to effect a change; the back scene, however, had to be removed entirely. When a change had to be made, which was of rare occurrence, in tragedy, the operation was concealed by a curtain, drawn



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up through a slit between the stage and the scene, and not, like ours, allowed to drop from above.

The theatre was well supplied with machinery to produce wierd and startling effects. They had not only a contrivance by which they could introduce a sea god, but also a large platform surrounded by clouds, which was let down from above, and from which the gods conversed with men. They had also a contrivance for imitating thunder, which consisted of bladders full of pebbles rolled over sheets of copper.

The narrowness of the platform and distance of the stage from the audience made grouping impossible. The arrangement of the performers was that of a bas-relief. Their movements were very slow, and they spoke in a loud, deep-drawn, sing-song monotone.

The distance from the spectators made "by-play" and "making points" impracticable, as the audience would never catch those low tones which have made the fortunes of many a modern actor. The mask, too, prevented effective facial expressions but to the Graecian mind nothing could be more progane than that an actor, whose features, at least, bore the stamp of individuality, should represent an Appollo or a Hercules. This indelible mask of personality always detracts from the

expression of pure passion, since all passion is colored by character.

In choosing a site for their theatres the Greeks always selected the slope of a hill, which enabled them most easily to arrange the seats in tiers? In considering the structure of these ancient buildings we must remember that they were not covered in. To us it would seem very uncomfortable to sit under the blazing sun, but the Greeks were not effeminate in their habits and suffered even the inconvenience of having their performance stopped by some passing shower. It has been alleged that their plays are faulty and admit of many improbabilities because the scenes had to be laid out of doors, but the Greek life was to a very great extent lived in the open air, owing to the mildness of the climate.

The Greek drama is composed of two distinct parts, the "chorus" and the "dialogue". The chorus takes its origin in the early thanksgiving and vintage feasts, in which the farmers joined in singing hymns and merry-making. These choral hymns were, at first, necessarily very simple in their form and music, but the naturally artistic temperament of the nation gradually developed them to a high state of perfection. The dramatic

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chorus, however, belongs to the peculiar species of choral lyrics known as the Dithryamb. The Dithryamb seems to have been a convivial song which had its divine afflatus in the revels of the wine cup. From a convivial drinking song in honor of the God Dionysus, Arion, about 625 B?C. raised it to a merited place in art. He not only made the Dithryam Choral, but made his chorus "satyrs". This chorus was called the "tragicus chorus". The word "tragos" ,a goat, and "satyr" are used synonymously by Aeschylus. Whether it was called tragic from the fact that the members of it were arrayed in goatskins, or because a goat was the prize, has been a matter of dispute. In 534 B.C. Thespis introduced a new element in the Dithryambic chorus, by bringing forward a reciter who addressed the "goat" or "satyr" chorus. This innovation did not create the drama because it only enabled action to be narrated but not represented before the eyes of the spectators, but lastly Aeschylus became the founder of the drama by adding another reciter who was also separate from the chorus. Thus, while the goat song or tragedy of Thespis was essentially lyric, Aeschylus made it properly dramatic by the addition of this second actor. Dialogue and, therefore, the representation of action, was at last possible. This, of course, subordinated the

chorus in the actual drama, but lessened in no degree its lyric importance. In fact the chorus became the spectator idealized. Sophocles, the great contemporary of Aeschylus, added a third actor, which "made it possible to exhibit the interaction of human motives with greater subtlety and fullness."

We have already mentioned that the representation of these plays took place at the feast of Dionysus only. At these feasts this performance was in reality a contest between the playwrights for the prize, which was awarded by the judges to the best drama. On an average about three plays could be heard in a day, so that the contest lasted sometimes for several days. The plots were taken from the national mythology in which the nation was exceedingly well versed, and this alone made it possible for the actors to hold the attention of their audience for so unusually long a time. A modern playwright has only to consider the approbation or disapprobation of his audience, and perhaps also of a few critics; the Greek dramatist had to have his play approved of by a committee appointed for that purpose. Having gained their approval, he then gave notice to the chief archon that he intended to "put on" his play at the forthcoming feast of Dionysus. The archon

immediately assigned to him his chorus and three actors, chosen by lot. These were trained independently by the author, and his chief aim was a combination of the best taught actors with the most sumptuously dressed and most diligently exercised chorus. Of course the excellence of the staging had a great influence with the five judges and very often accounted for the failure of many great plays.

When we consider that this performance went on continuously from sunrise to sunset; one play seldom occupying more than one hour and a half but often comprised in sets of three known as a "trilogy", connected in a way somewhat similar to the historical plays of Shakespeare; when, I say, we consider this, we cannot but stop to wonder at the mental culture of these people. We know that Shakespeare's tragedies are found to be a strain even to the educated; the concentration necessary is too great; the beauties too subtle; the plot too simple. But Shakespeare's dramas are to the Greek plays what a picture is to a statue. We can all enjoy a picture but it takes an artist to appreciate a statue. Now Aeschylus' plays are more severe than Shakespeare's; still these Greeks could not

only enjoy and appreciate these plays and that, too, on their "first night", but what is still more wonderful, sit through an all day siege of three or four. Why have we lost this power of enjoyment? Probably the answer to this question is to be found in the complexity of life at the present day. In comparison with olden days we have too much every-day excitement to enjoy such simplicity in our amusements. The most of us are too much occupied in business and in the pursuit of wealth to take the necessary leisure to obtain the culture of this ancient race. Each successive generation, in the daily grind of mechanical routine, becomes more a machine than the last; its tendency being always towards specialization. In days of yore, the only two serious occupations were war and commerce, or perhaps piracy, but these were more objects of excitement than anxiety. Again, we must remember, that these audiences consisted of free men only and they were in the minority; with a numerous retinue of slaves to do their every bidding, is it any wonder that they found time for such culture? Again, they had no newspapers to spoil the natural simplicity of their taste, no inferior books; in short, their models were few and good.

With this brief introduction to the drama, let us pass on to the first great dramatist, Aeschylus, the

soldier poet. He was born about the year 525 B.C. at Eleusis, near Athens, and from his early youth seems to have revelled in the mysterious and awful. Perhaps in his boyhood the sight of the great crowds which thronged his native town in connection with the worship of the goddess Eleusis, Demeter, or Mother Earth, had some influence on him. Eleusis was one of the chief seats of worship and thence originated in the Eleusinian mysteries a kind of freemasonry which was widespread among the various tribes. We have no means of knowing what the precepts of the secret organization were but there seem to have existed various degrees of seniority and the qualifications of initiation demanded were greater in proportion as a member became deeper versed in these secrets. Some have surmised that a few remnants of the true faith, such as the immortality of the soul and the unity of God, were the fundamental principles of their creed, but this is mere conjecture. In any case, we can easily understand how the early impressions of the poet's childhood would be influenced by the sight of these ceremonies, with their constant surging crowds, with their wondering awe-struck men - we can easily imagine how all this would overcast with



mystery and awe the light-heartedness of youth.

His versatility is especially worthy of note, in days when haste and pressure of business make division of labor a necessity. Why? if a man is found to be qualified to perform all duties equally well he would not be trusted and, in any case, the fact would not be found out, for as soon as he is found to excel in one line, there routine binds him and holds him fast. In Athens no such pressure existed and any attempts at performing a variety of work would not be considered mere hobbies, and therefore unworthy of special attention. To Aeschylus himself, he was a soldier first and a poet afterwards; his epitaph,

"This tomb the dust of Aeschylus doth hide  
Euphorion's son and fruitful Gelas' pride  
How tried his valor Marathon may tell,

And long-haired Medes who know it all too well."  
written by himself, shows that above all he wished to be remembered by a grateful posterity as a warrior, but to his own comrades, he was both, poet and warrior.

Aeschylus, along with his two brothers, fought at Marathon and received the prize for pre-eminent bravery; this surely was a distinction worth living for.

For, at this battle of Marathon, more than a mere conflict for supremacy between two mighty foes, took place; here civilization and art and culture fought against barbarism and wealth and numbers; here freedom contended with despotism; here Europe was pitted against Asia; The Greeks advanced to that battle with uneasiness and anxiety; these were untried conditions; the overwhelming odds, the luxurious equipment of the Persians, were unheard of; but, after the rout, with victory, this anxiety was turned into a great joy and Aeschylus, as the hero of such a battle, ranked among the greatest men of the day.

It was within the ten years between the battles of Marathon and Salamis, that several of his best plays were written. Shortly after Salamis he wrote the "Persians," in which he describes the defeat of Xerxes and his tragic end; a defeat which he ascribes to his over-weening pride and arrogance. This is characteristic of Aeschylus, to voice, either directly or indirectly, his political opinions; dramas such as "The Seven against Thebes and the Eumenides" are fitting illustrations; he believed in a conservative policy which should not, through violence, forward the aggrandisement of the State. Alas! he was compelled to witness

many changes, to see the prestige of nobility lowered and "new men" man the ship of state, but his love of moderation and due proportion, as represented in the old proverb, "nothing too much, his hatred of all vulgar excess, ever kept him under self-control. His was the type of Athenian citizenship, of sturdy manhood, which was passing away, and with it the glory of Athens. During these brilliant years, all was progress and revolutionary in thought and government. Discouraged, perhaps, by these innovations, piqued by the success of his younger rivals, especially Sophocles, annoyed by a charge of sacrilege which he was supposed to have incurred by revealing on the stage some secrets belonging to the Eleusinian mysteries, in his old age the grand old hero left Athens, his fatherland, on behalf of which he had fought so bravely, never to return. Hiero's court received him with open arms and then in that brilliant literary circle which embraced such men as Pindar and Simonides, he lived and died. There is a story of his death which relates that an eagle dropped a tortoise shell on his bald head, having mistaken it for a stone. Thus the prophecy was fulfilled that he should meet his death by a blow from heaven. He

probably wrote his greatest play, the story of Orestes, at Syracuse. After his death his memory was held in great reverence at Athens.

Of his character the testimony of Aristophanes, a contemporary, corroborates the opinion which one would gather from a study of his works. While he is caricatured, it is but with respect, and this, when we consider how scurrilous the personalities of comedy were, is no doubt a compliment. In the "Frogs" he is represented as being proud and intolerant but brave and noble; a man who was fond of big words and long-sounding expressions, but not at all empty or vain.

Of his style we will take occasion to speak in discussing the Prometheus.

The part which Aeschylus played as a soldier and as a representative citizen has, as we have already remarked, placed him among the foremost men of his country; this position, after the Battle of Salamis and the rout of the Persians, is further extended to make him one of the great men of the world. His views of life, therefore, as representative of his times, are of more than usual interest. Modern criticism has abstracted these and arranged them into a logical

system but there is always a danger of carrying such deductions too far. His characters were to him real and personal and he made them speak and act in harmony with his conception of them, but with the final end in view, not of propounding his own personal ideas of philosophy and religion, or of advocating any one truth, but solely to produce the greatest effect on his audience, still preserving with all, the dramatic unity of the play. However, such speculations are always interesting and must necessarily be close to the mark.

Religion, to the Greek, consists in a love of the beautiful. To him, above all "Beauty is Truth and Truth is Beauty"; every stream and tree, every cloud that sails in the blue sky, is the temple of a deity. What to us is mere beautiful imagery is to him a living reality; the silvery laughter of the nymphs speaks to him in the murmuring stream; mighty Zeus reveals himself in the rumbling thunderstorm. Living, then, in the midst of these deities which he worships, reared on the sunny hill where flourish the olive and the vine, cheerfulness is the great characteristic of himself and his race. He loved the light and he lived in it. But, as Ruskin says, unfortunately there is not

enough light in the world for man's needs and from this unsatisfied want comes sadness; the convex must also contain the concave; the inquirer is baffled at every turn and from the very brightness which he loves he finds the darkness of the inner secret meanings in the mystery of existence, in the inscrutable ways of Providence, all the more impenetrable. The doctrine of the hereditary curse, the belief in the Eumenides, the avenging furies, is a dominant idea in Aeschylus. Atë, pursuing the prosperous man, for some crime of his ancestors, some stain on the family honor, sends Persuasion to compel him to admit Insolence, thence his downfall. But there are also the gods of the sunshine, Apollo clad with sunny youth, Venus with fair beauty, Minerva, famed for wisdom; in fine, we see, even in his religion, the delicate sense of proportion with which these artistic people are endowed; on one side of his shield the Greek has written "Sunshine", on the other "Shade"; one cannot exist without the other, sunshine and shade, joy and sorrow; perhaps Aeschylus was inclined to dwell too much in the shadow. Over these two worlds of sunshine and shade there was to Aeschylus one omnipotent ruler; he constantly mentions him as a deity, sometimes identified with Zeus, but oftener thought of as an unknown God who was above all and in

all, who was supreme, whose decrees are Eternal.

What then is Aeschylus' message, the message of the Greeks to all ages? The brightness of nature and the goodness of the world, "sermons in stones and good in everything". This is their first great message; secondly the expiation of sin and the possibility of restoration to purity. These two are the lessons which we should look for in reading Aeschylus. Let us not, in turn, dwelling in the shade, look at the falseness and misery of his creed under the scrutinizing searchlight of christianity, but flitting in the sunlight among these fair flowers of art, let us gather the honey, the good of their inherent truths.

Aeschylus is credited with writing about seventy plays but we have only seven in our possession. Of these "Prometheus Bound" is a splendid example of Puritan simplicity and statuesque grandeur. To illustrate this, we cannot do better than outline the play; but to clearly explain the predicament of Prometheus it is necessary to narrate his connection with Greek mythology. Zeus had obtained his throne in heaven by violence and impiety, in that he overthrew his father Saturn, but Saturn, in turn, had herein paid the penalty



of his sin, when he revolted against his father Uranus. Zeus, of course, was upheld in his reign by the gods who had helped him in his struggle and Prometheus had been at first among these; but the policy of Zeus was to oppress man and Prometheus, who had supported him in the hope that he would befriend him, is at once at variance with such a course. To aid man, he brought down from heaven in a stalk of fennel, fire; this was to enable men to learn the arts and thus raise themselves from their sad state of ignorance. By this act Prometheus at once gained the enmity of Zeus and his coterie; they regarded him as a dangerous foe to themselves and condemned him to suffer the penalty, the execution of which Aeschylus has dramatized in this play. Prometheus, who, of course, is at once the central figure and the hero throughout, is led in by two beings of tremendous strength, "Might" and "Force", who are the servants of Zeus and have been ordered to carry out the sentence. Might, in the opening lines of Professor Blackie's translation, thus explains his mission:

"At length the utmost bound of Earth we've reached,  
This Scythian soil, this wild untrodden waste.  
Hephaestus, now Jove's high behests demand

Thy care; to these steep cliffy rocks bind down  
With close-linked chains of durium adamant  
This daring wretch. For he the bright-rayed fire,  
Mother of Arts, flower of thy potency,  
Filched from the gods, and gave to mortals. Here,  
Just guerdon of his sin shall find him; here  
Let his pride learn to bow to Jove supreme,  
And love men well, but love them not too much."

Hephaestus, the lame god, accompanies them as the god of fire, to forge the bolts and chains with which to bind the criminal. He replies that he understands only too well that his duties must now be performed but "I, my heart shrinks back from the harsh task to nail a kindred god to this storm-battered crag". He then goes on to express his sympathy with the unfortunate one and during all this time Prometheus, in the presence of his foes, with calm resignation utters not a word.

"Yet dare I must.

Where Jove commands, whose neglects rebels,  
And pays the traitor's fine. High counselled son  
Of right-decreeing Themis, I force myself  
No less than thee, when to this friendless rock  
With iron bonds I chain thee, where nor shape  
Nor voice of wandering mortal shall relieve  
Thy lonely watch; but the fierce-burning sun  
Shall parch and bleach thy fresh complexion. Thou,

WITH CLOSE-FITTING CURVES OF GENTLE SMOOTHNESS  
IN A CASE! TO THESE SPEEDY STEPS LOCKS PRUDently

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When motley-mantled Night hath hid the day,  
Shalt greet the darkness, with how short a joy!  
For the morn's sun, the nightly dew shall scatter,  
And thou be pierced again with the same pricks  
Of endless woe -and saviour shall be none.  
Such fruits thy forward love to men hath wrought  
thee.

Thyself a god, the wrath of gods to thee  
Seemed little, and to men thou didst dispense  
Forbidden gifts. For this thou shalt keep watch  
On this delightless rock, fixed and erect,  
With lid unsleeping, and with knee unbent.  
Alas! what groans and wails shalt thou put forth,  
Fruitless. Jove is not weak that he should bend;  
For young authority must ever be  
Harsh and severe."

Here Might interferes and urges Hephaestus to perform his  
task, especially as "his impious larceny did chiefly  
injure" him, but Hephaestus heeds him not and exclaims:

"O thrice-cursed trade, that e'er my hand should  
use it! "

Then there follows the ringing sound of the hammer as he  
bends to his work, incessantly urged on by Might.

"Strike! Strike!

With ring , and clamp, and wedge make sure the

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He hath a subtle wit, will find itself  
A way where way is none."

Hephaestus.

"This arm is fast.

Might.

"Now take this adamantine bolt; and force  
Its point resistless through his rebel breast..

Hephaestus.

"Alas! alas! Prometheus, but I pity thee!

Might.

"Doth lag again, and for Jove's enemies weep  
Fond tears? Beware thou have no cause to weep  
Tears for thyself."

So the work goes on until the cruel task is at last completed but Might still remains behind to taunt his victim:

"There lie, and feed thy pride on this bare rock,  
Filching gods' gifts for mortal men. What man  
Shall free thee from these woes? Thou hast been  
called

In vain the Provident: had thy soul possessed  
The virtue of thy name, thou hadst foreseen  
These cunning toils, and hadst unwound thee from  
them."

Prometheus is now alone; the lonely silence is all the more impressive following upon the harsh sound of the anvil and the noisy tread of his departing torturer. While confronted by his enemies he has never uttered even a groan, but now in his lonesome solitude he breaks out in an appeal, the grandeur of which is not to be expressed in any translation:

"O divine ether, and swift-winged winds,  
And river-fountains, and of ocean waves  
The multitudinous laughter, and thou Earth,  
Boon mother of us all, and thou bright round  
Of the all-seeing Sun, you I invoke!  
Behold what ignominy of causeless wrongs  
I suffer from the gods, myself a god.

See what piercing pains shall goad me  
Through long ages myriad-numbered!  
With such wrongful chains hath bound me  
This new leader of the gods."

Then suddenly he catches the whirring wings of the chorus and stops to listen:

"Ah me! what rustling sounds  
Hear I, of birds not far?  
With the light whirr of wings  
The air re-echoeth:

"All that now draws near to me is cause of fear."

The chorus of nymphs now enter and tell Prometheus that their mission is one of friendship and sympathy; they too, are indignant with Zeus and venture the hope that at some future time his power will be overthrown:

" But he doth nurse  
Strong wrath within his stubborn breast  
And holds all Heaven in awe.  
Nor will he cease till his hot rage is glutted,  
Or some new venture shakes his stable throne."

Prometheus foretells that this time will indeed come and that then Zeus will to him come in his hour of need, beseeching him to unveil the plot. This, at the request of the chorus, is followed by a recitation in detail of his offence, which concludes thus:

" but, ah! for wretched man!  
To him nor part nor portion fell: Jove vowed  
To blot his memory from the Earth, and mould  
The race anew. I only of the gods  
Thwarted his will; and, but for my strong aid,  
Hades had whelmed, and hopeless ruin swamped  
Akl men that breathe. Such were my crimes: these  
pains  
Grievous to suffer, pitiful to behold,

Were purchased thus; and Mercy's now denied  
To him whose crime was mercy to mankind ;  
And here I lie, in cunning torment stretched  
A spectacle, inglorious to Jove."

Oceanus, in a car drawn by a winged griffon, now comes upon the scene. He was the father of the nymphs who form the chorus and a relative of Prometheus; he has come with sympathy to offer his assistance to his relative in his trouble and, like a friend, his advice, but he is too much of a Job's comforter, too often reminds Prometheus that it is his own fault and, in a word, does not "understand the folly of Prometheus". The latter, in words full of scorn and sarcasm, greets him:

"How now, Old Ocean? thou too come to view  
My dire disasters? - how shouldst thou have dared,  
Leaving the billowy stream whose name thou bearest,  
Thy rock-roofed halls, and self-built palaces,  
To visit this Scythian land, stern mother of iron,  
To know my sorrows, and to grieve with me?  
Look on this sight - thy friend, the friend of Jove,  
Who helped him to the sway which now he bears,  
Crushed by the self-same god, himself exalted."

Oceanus hastens to reply with words of advice:

"I see, Prometheus; and I come to speak  
A wise word to the wise; receive it wisely.

Know what thou art, and make thy manners new  
For a new king doth rule the subject gods.  
Compose thy speech, nor cast such whetted words  
'Gainst Jove, who, tho' he sits apart, sublime,  
Hath ears and with new pains may smite his victim,  
To which his present wrath shall seem a toy. "

Prometheus, refuses these proffers of friendship and seems to suspect his friend's sincerity. But Oceanus persists and avers his influence with Zeus to obtain pardon for him, still he does not discontinue to mingle with all this reproaches and advice. Prometheus, rejecting these, in bitter irony dismisses him and proceeds to describe in a most picturesque passage the toils of his brother Atlas: 9

"Thou art kind;

And for thy kind intent and friendly feeling  
Have my best thanks. But do not, I beseech thee,  
Waste labour upon me. If thou wilt labour,  
Seek a more hopeful subject. Thou wert wiser,  
Being safe, to keep thee safe. I, when I suffer,  
Wish not that all my friends should suffer with me.  
Enough my brother Atlas' miseries grieve me.  
Who in the extreme West stands, stoutly bearing  
The pillars of Heaven and Earth upon his shoulders,  
No lightsome burden. Him too, I bewail,



That made his home in dark Cilician caverns,  
The hostile portent, Earth-born, hundred-headed  
Impetuous Typhon, quelled by force, who stood  
Alone, against the embattled host of gods,  
Hissing out murder from his monstrous jaws;  
And from his eyes there flashed a Gorgon glare,  
As he would smite the tyranny of great Jove  
Clean down; but he, with sleepless thunder watching,  
Hurl'd headlong a flame-breathing bolt, and laid  
The big-mouthed vaunter low. Struck to the heart  
With blasted strength, and shrunk to ashes, there  
A huge and helpless hulk, outstretched he lies,  
Beside the salt sea's strait, pressed down beneath  
The roots of AEtna, on whose peaks Hephaestus  
Sits hammering the hot metal. Thence, one day,  
Shall streams of liquid fire, swift passage forcing,  
With savage jaws the wide-spread plains devour  
Of the fair-fruited Sicily. Such hot shafts,  
From the flame-breathing ferment of the deep,  
Shall Typhon cast with sateless wrath, though now  
All scorched and cindered by the Thunderer's stroke,  
Moveless he lies. But why should I teach thee?  
Thou art a wise man, thine own wisdom use  
To save thyself. For me, I'll even endure  
These pains, till Jove shall please to slack his ire!

Oceanus, with such a warning ringing in his ears, is glad to give up his task of persuasion and departs for home leaving Prometheus again alone with the Chorus. Then, in a beautiful ode, full of sympathy, overflowing with tears, they bewail the sovereignty of Zeus; the neighboring tribes of Asia weep for him, and Colchis and far Scythia, the wandering warriors of the Caucasus, all, all sympathize in universal indignation. Prometheus is particularly galled by the fact that he himself had assisted in making this new god powerful. This is what makes him so indignant. Then, in what is probably the finest passage in the play for sublimity of thought and beauty of diction, he describes the woes of men, the spirit which Shelley has caught:

"Prometheus saw, and waked the legioned hopes  
 Which sleep within folded Elysian flowers,  
 Nepenthe, Moly, Amaranth, fadeless blooms,  
 That they might hide with thin and rainbow wings  
 The shape of Death; and Love he sent to bind  
 The disunited tendrils of that vine  
 Which bears the wine of life, the human heart;  
 And he tamed fire, which, like some beast of prey,  
 Most terrible but lovely, played beneath  
 The frown of man; and tortured to his will  
 Iron and gold, the slaves and signs of power,  
 And gems and poisons, and all subtlest forms  
 Hidden beneath the mountains and the waves.

He gave man speech, and speech created thought,  
Which is the measure of the universe;  
And Science struck the thrones of earth and heaven,  
Which shook, but fell not; and the harmonious mind  
Poured itself forth in all-prophetic song;  
And music lifted up the listening spirit  
Until it walked, exempt from mortal care,  
Godlike, o'er the clear billows of sweet sound;  
And human hands first mimicked, and then mocked  
With moulded limbs more lovely than its own  
The human form, till marble grew divine,  
And mothers, gazing, drunk the love men see  
Reflected in their race, behold and perish.  
He told the hidden power of herbs and springs  
And Disease drank and slept. Death grew like sleep.  
He taught the implicated orbits woven  
Of the wide-wandering stars, and how the sun  
Changes his lair, and by what secret spell  
The pale moon is transformed, when her broad eye  
Gazes not on the interlunar sea.  
He taught to rule, as life directs the limbs,  
The tempest-winged chariots of the ocean,  
And the Celt knew the Indian. Cities then  
Were built, and through their snow-like columns flowed  
The warm winds, and the azure aether shone,

THE PROMETHEUS UNBOUND OF AESCHYLUS  
AND THE  
PROMETHEUS UNBOUND OF THE ROMANS!  
THE PROMETHEUS UNBOUND OF THE ROMANS!

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"And the blue sea and shadowy hills were seen.  
Such, the alleviations of his state,  
Prometheus gave to man, for which he hangs  
Withering in destined pain".

--Prometheus Unbound.

For the sake of comparison I append below a translation  
of the original speech in order that the severe sim-  
plicity of Aeschylus' style may be seen against the  
golden background of the wonderful richness and  
voluptuous splendour of his imitator.

"Of human kind,

My great offence in aiding them, in teaching  
The babe to speak, and rousing torpid mind  
To take the grasp of itself-of this I'll talk;  
Meaning to mortal men no blame, but only  
The true recital of mine own deserts.  
For, soothly, having eyes to see they saw not,  
And hearing heard not; but, like dreamy phantoms,  
A random life they led from year to year,  
All blindly floundering on. No craft they knew  
With woven brick or jointed beam to pile  
The sunward porch; but in the dark Earth burrowed  
And housed, like tiny ants in sunless caves.  
No signs they knew to mark the wintry year;  
The flower-strewn Spring, and the fruit-laden Summer,

Uncalendared, unregistered, returned -  
 Till I the difficult art of the stars revealed,  
 Their risings and their settings. Numbers, too,  
 I taught them (a most choice device) and how  
 By marshalled signs to fix their shifting thoughts,  
 That Memory, mother of Muses, might achieve  
 Her wondrous works. I first slaved to the yoke  
 Both ox and ass. I, the rein-loving steeds  
 (Of wealth's gay-flaunting pomp the chiefest pride)  
 Joined to the car; and bade them ease the toils  
 of laboring men vicarious. I the first  
 Upon the lint-winged car of mariner  
 Was launched, sea-wandering. Such wise arts I found  
 To soothe the ills of man's ephemeral life;  
 But for myself, plunged in this depth of woe,  
 No prop I find."

The chorus now take up the strain of woe in a most path-  
 etic lyric. They express their fear of Zeus and bewail  
 man's Lot:-

"For what is man? Behold!  
 Can he requite thy love-child of a day  
 Or help thy extreme need? Hast thou not seen  
 The blind and aimless strivings,  
 The barren blank endeavor,  
 The pithless deeds, of the fleeting dreamlike race.  
 Never, O nevermore

"May mortal wit Jove's ordered plan deceive."

As the chorus ends, the maiden Io enters, transformed into a heifer, although her face is a woman's. Thus, stung by the gadfly she is driven about the world, all for the sake of the love of Zeus and Hera's jealousy. She is at first distracted and lamenting her lot, prays to die. Prometheus recognizes her and at her request foretells her future wanderings and the end, until of her seed shall spring Hercules who shall slay the vulture and set Prometheus free. Scarcely has Prometheus finished his recitation when Io, stung to frenzy by the gadfly's bite, rushes off the stage to begin again her wanderings. The chorus take up again their song and moralize on the fate of Io, expressing the hope that they may never be sought by a god in marriage for "Tis a wise saying that wedlock in one's own degree is best".

We have so far been leading up step by step to the climax. At first the obedience of Hephaetus, then the admonition of Oceanus, now we see the mad despair of Io - this has gradually increased our dread of the power of Zeus and its hopeless resistance. Prometheus' fortitude is all the more accentuated through all these events, and now he boldly defies Zeus and prophesies his downfall, gloating over it in anticipation. Hermes, the messenger of Zeus, immediately appears and demands that Prometheus disclose

these hidden events which are to accomplish his ruin. Prometheus, undaunted, defies him to do his worst:-

"Have I not seen

Two Monarchs ousted from that throne? the third  
I yet shall see precipitate hurled from Heaven  
With baser, speedier, ruin. Do I seem

To quail before this new-forged dynasty?

Fear is my farthest thought. I pray thee go

Turn up the dust again upon the road

Thou can'st. Reply from me thou shalt have none".

and taunts the messenger with his menial duties:-

"And were my woe tenfold what now it is,

I would not barter it for thy sweet chains;

For liefer would I lackey this bare rock

Than trip the messages of Father Jove.

The insolent thus with insolence I repay."

We are now surely and swiftly coming to the disclosure of the catastrophe; Hermes with a word of warning to the chorus to take care of themselves, leaves the stage; already the rumbling thunder is heard in the distance, but the nymphs heroically decide not to desert him in his hour of need; they go down with him amid the wild tumult of the elements:

"Now his threats walk forth in action,

And the firm Earth quakes indeed.

Deep and loud the ambient thunder

Bellows, and the flaring Lightning  
Wreathes his fiery curls around me,  
And the Whilwind rolls his dust;  
And the Winds from rival regions  
Rush in elemental strife,  
And the Ocean's storm-vexed billows  
Mingle with the startled stars!  
Doubtless now the tyrant gathers  
All his hoarded wrath to whelm me .  
Mighty Mother, worshipped Themis,  
Circling Ether that diffusest  
Light, a common joy to all,  
Thou beholdest these my wrongs? "

And so the drama closes. Very dimly we have illustrated the play, with these meagre extracts; the beauty of colouring, the grandeur of the music and the sympathy of the assembled listeners, all have to us been lost. Our sympathy, perhaps, has gone out to Prometheus, nailed to the rock, and refusing, even under torture, to surrender, but is not this largely due to the fact that we do not believe in Zeus? Is it a right feeling to cherish? This fortitude of our hero, Aeschylus called arrogance, and this, to the pious Greek, was a dark crime. With Aeschylus and his hearers, we ought to feel that Prometheus, in his arrogant rebellion against the powers that be, has obtained no more



than his just reward. It has been suggested that the other two units of the trilogy, of which this is the second, were first, one portraying the theft of the fire, and secondly, one exhibiting his pardon and restoration -Prometheus Freed. Probably if the other two plays were in our possession we could also more readily agree with the Greek conception of justice .

Here, too, is to be found the reason why this play, has, above all other Greek dramas, received so much attention at the hands of modern literature; because in Prometheus, a god suffering for the sake of humanity, we see the prototype of Christianity. Both Shelley and Goethe have endeavored to write the same story, harmonizing it with their own creeds, but there is that insurmountable difficulty, to avoid being blasphemous, for so long as we believe in a God who is true and just, so long is it impossible to represent a rebel against Him, as an object of sympathy. The only real modern parallel is Satan in "Paradise Lost". Milton has there given us in Satan, with all his indomitable fortitude, with his undaunted courage, resisting, even under torture, to the last, the exact counterpart of Prometheus.

A very interesting comparison might also be drawn between the poem and the book of Job. The cry of Job is the cry of Prometheus, the cry of suffering humanity

AT NSA DEAN ANSERTED FIRST FIVE CAPES  
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vainly protesting the presence of pain and sorrow. Here this eternal interrogation finds its answer and we see suffering, not in direct opposition and in conflict with God, but in submission to His will. We see Job and Prometheus and with them humanity immerse again, after the darkness and pain, into the brightness and the sunshine of restoration, nobler and better for their trial.

"Aeschylus does what is right, but without knowing it". These are the words with which the Artist criticizes the Genius. How true it is that Art who knows the why and the wherefore is always reluctant to render her just merits to Genius, who intuitively creates without knowing how. Aeschylus, the founder of the drama, the Genius, who created it in all its colossal beauty, is succeeded by Sophocles, the finished Artist, and the above is his estimate of his famous predecessor. Art is thus ever ready to tread the hitherto unknown path in the grim forest through which Genius, with flaring torch, has blazed the way, and then indignantly turn on her guide with the reproach that she did not know how or why she had made the rough trail. The words of Sophocles may be true but they are unjust.

Sophocles, according to the ancient ideas of good-fortune, was the recipient of all the blessings the gods could bestow. He was born at Colonus, a mile north of Athens, in 495.B.C. His parents were wealthy and respected; from early youth he received the best education which money could afford;

at sixteen years of age, already famous for his physical beauty, he was selected to lead the dance in the Paean, which was sung by the youths of Athens around the trophy raised in honor of Salamis. As one writer remarks, after giving his beauty of body and mind, health and wealth, and a large circle of friends, the gods seemed to have wished him immortality and when this was impossible, loosened the coils of life so slowly and imperceptibly, that he seemed but to exchange one immortality, a long life, for the other, an eternal memory. His first appearance as a dramatist in the struggle for the ivy wreath of tragedy, occurred under exceptional circumstances; the Archon, Eponymus, selected Cimon and his nine confederate generals, who had just returned from Scyros, to act as judges. They, in spite of the fact that Aeschylus was contending, awarded the decision to Sophocles; this was the first shock the Aeschylean drama had received, and perhaps a brief inquiry into the reason would enlighten us concerning the relationship of these two masters.

Aeschylus had laid down the great law of Retribution, that suffering is the penalty of sin; further, the sins of the fathers descend upon the children, from generation to generation, until the crime is at last expiated. Aeschylus believes in the omnipotence of Zeus and regards the record of passing events simply as the execution of one fore-ordained plan. Sophocles, also, believed in Zeus and in the "wages

of sin", but he takes a more human and sympathetic point of view; his characters, as a general rule, suffer for their own acts instead of some ancestral crime; he believes in the hereditary curse but tenderly keeps it in the background. The misery and suffering of the world appeal to his finer sensibilities but he leaves their mystery unsolved, save that he continually points out that the trials of sorrow and misfortune often purify and ennoble the human character, being, in this light, blessings in disguise. It was, then, the novelty of his treatment, the fresh tenderness of human interest, imbued throughout his drama, which earned for him his first victory over such an odd and oft-tried veteran as Aeschylus; his Titans become men, Nemesis is transformed into retribution, fantastic imagery into skilfully woven plot and swift analysis of the human mind. The same strong piety had quickened the hand of Phidias and is strangely blended with pity for mortals' blindness. Here stands another milestone in the progress of Athenian thought, which in prose corresponds to the distance separating Theucydides from Heroditus, and this same characteristic enthroned Sophocles in the hearts of his people as king of the drama for more than sixty years.

The great technical improvement which he inaugurated consists in the addition of a third actor; this is attended with far-reaching results; the dialogue in its dramatic function now became more important, and the chorus in this

respect correspondingly subordinated; the latter now occupied the position of an impartial listener, yet in its lyric function still played as important a part as heretofore. This additional actor, as we have already stated, enabled the poet to exhibit "the interaction of human motives with more subtlety and fullness". His plays, as compared with those of Aeschylus, are more complicated in plot and more finished in diction; undoubtedly this smoothness belonging to the plays composed during the latter years of his life, was the result of the keen competition of Euripides; perhaps, too, the popularity of prose and the political "stump speaking" which at this time had just become widely practised, had also a marked influence. In boldness of conception, in sublime flights of poetic imagery, it would be impossible for him to surpass Aeschylus, but his very knowledge of his own limitations betrays the judgment of a skilful artist and prevents him from venturing beyond the bounds of his ability. Again this additional actor dealt a death blow to the trilogy, inasmuch as the chorus, which had formerly been the support of the dominating idea throughout the three successive plays, was now weakened and thus each play became independent; true, the trilogy was still employed, but the close connection of the plots is gone and probably the only reason for its survival is to be found on the ground of fair play in the contests. He is also credited with further mechanical modifications; his

chorus was reduced in number from fifteen to twelve and richer "properties" in presenting more appropriate costumes, with better scenic effects, were introduced.

For the wisdom exhibited in the Antigone the poet was appointed one of the generals along with Pericles and Thucydides in the expedition against Samos, but he does not appear to have been much of a success in his new role. Unlike Aeschylus, Pindar and Simonides, he loved Athens and his people too dearly to forsake them for the splendour of any foreign court although his invitations abroad were not few. But on the other hand we are surprised to find this same author of Antigone and the friend of Pericles within a few brief years not only abetting in the overthrow of the constitution but himself one of the conspirators; he was elected one of the commissioners to inquire into the failure and defeat of the disastrous expedition against Syracuse and shortly afterwards accepted a position on the Council of the Four Hundred.

There is a story of his old age which illustrates the effect of his works on a Greek audience and shows what a mighty influence he must have wielded; Ariston, a son by his second wife, was a great favorite with the old gentleman, and Iophon, his first-born, in a fit of jealousy, had his aged father summoned before the judges to be examined as to his sanity. The story goes on to relate that Sophocles in answer to this charge, read a passage from the

Aedipus Colonus, a play which he had just finished, whereupon the judges were so affected that they dismissed him forthwith and he was escorted to his house in triumph by his friends.

Unfortunately for us, out of the one hundred and thirty plays which Sophocles is supposed to have written, only seven have come down to us; Antigone, Electra, Trachiniae, Aedipus Rex, Aedipus Colonus, Ajax, and Philoctetes. From its mellowness of thought and superb finish it has been surmised that the Aedipus was written in old age. The Ajax, in addition to the chief interest being based on the religious rites concerned with the burial of the dead, is of peculiar attraction to us because, in so far as the catastrophe occurs so early in the drama, it is strikingly similar to another great modern tragedy. The story is a familiar one; the arms of Achilles have been adjudged to Odysseus as the prize of merit. Ajax, the embodiment of physical force, has been set aside for Odysseus, the personification of craft; the hero broods over the insult for many days until at length, frenzied with passion, he rushes forth from his tent at midnight, with the avowed purpose of avenging himself on his unjust judges; Athena, however, intervenes and rescues her favorites by casting over him a spell of insanity; he turns aside into the meadow and slaughters the cattle belonging to the common herd, all the while imagining them to

be his foes. The play opens the morning following his misfortune and Ajax is seen amidst the butchered sheep, slowly recovering from his madness ; for a moment we catch a glimpse of his frenzy and all our pity is stirred to its very depths; he recognises his plight and his reckless spirit is full of resentment against the gods; but he knows that he cannot outlive his honor and this arises from no mere cowardice; the delirium is gone, and with the return of reason he sees his ruin; his career had been so far a brilliant one and after such a disgraceful act, after the affront which had been put upon him by Agamemnon nothing is left but to be faithful to his motto "Gloriously to live or gloriously to die".

In the tenderness which the rough, impetuous hero displays when he fondles his infant son and in the abrupt way in which, with but one word of kindness, he dismisses his wife Tecmessa from the hut when she commences to weep, we see the fine artistic insight into human character, Sophocles' great charm. Ajax at last, having contended between injured pride on the one hand and love of home on the other, and having won the victory over himself, comes forth to die; in his hand a glittering sword, the gift of Hector; he has said farewell to his beloved wife and has taken a last look on his babe; he is now resolved in quiet solitude to carry out his mad intention; 'tis thus he reasons: he knows he has done wrong but cannot bear to face his brother chieftains



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nor the disgrace of bowing down in humble apology to his foes, and there is but one escape from them into the great beyond. With a few words the real meaning of which is not understood by either his comrades in the chorus or by Tecmessa, he departs:- "For now I come to see that a foe should have such hate from us as one who yet will be a friend; and towards my friend such help and service shall I chose to show as though he will not always stay my friend. For most men find that the haven of fellowship is no safe port but touching this it shall be well. Go thou within ,woman, and pray the gods that all thy heart's desire may find a perfect end. And you,my comrades, pay the selfsame heed to these my hests as she shall; and tell Teucer -so he come -to care for me and show good-will with al to you. For lo! I go, where go I must; but do my bidding, ye; and so, e'er long, may be, in spite of these my woes, ye shall hear that I am safe." Scarcely is his back turned when a message is received from Teucer, bearing the warning of Calchas,the seer, to keep Ajax within his tent for that day. The dramatist has here introduced three exceptions: the absence of the chorus, a change in scene, and the death of the hero on the stage. With consummate art, he has chosen a lonely spot in the desert sands far from the sight of human eye an, in order to portray the deliberateness of the act, in order to show how calmly Ajax had planned his end, in order that none of all ths should be lost to his audience, the last

scene takes place before their eyes.

Ajax, with one last farewell look around him at the sun and the earth which he loved so well; with one last appeal for vengeance to the Furies:- "Come, swift Erinyes, vengeful friends, make prey of all the host and spare them not! And thou who racest in thy car o'er Heaven's heights, O sun god, stay awhile thy golden rein, what time thou lookest on my native land, and tell thy my aged sire and her who nursed me, hapless mother, the tale of my infatuate deeds and of my death. She, I trow, unhappy wretch, will make the whole town ring with her loud cry of woe, on hearing this story told. But 'tis idle to lament these things without avail; nay, I must to the deed with all the speed I may.

O Death, Death, come now, look on me; and yet with thee I shall hold converse in yon world also, face to face. But on thee I call, O light of day now brightly shed, and on the sun god in his car, for this time of all and nevermore henceforth. O right! O sacred soil of my own land of Salamis, whereon my father's hearth stands firm! Glorious Athens, with thy kindred race! Ye springs and rivers flowing yonder! and you, ye plains of Troy! to all I say, "Farewell"! O ye that nursed my life! Hark! 'tis his latest word ye now hear Ajax utter; henceforth shall I speak with the dead in Hades' halls."

Falls on his sword.

To the Greek idea,

"Nothing is here for tears, nothing to wail  
Or knock the breast, nothing but well and fair,  
And what may quiet us in a death so noble."

In his last moments his mind seems conscious of the smallest circumstance going on around him and we are reminded of the lines of Tennyson:-

"When he lay dying there  
I noticed one of his many rings ... and thought  
It is his mother's hair."

The messenger from Teucer, bearing the prophecy of Calchas, is but a step leading up to the dramatic climax, when the body of Ajax is discovered by Tecmessa and the chorus. Scarcely has this taken place when Menelaus enters and forbids the burial but Odysseus, acknowledging the nobility of his fallen foe, teaches the lesson of moderation and that enmity must not be pushed beyond the grave; he resolutely overrules his brother general and offers his assistance in the last sad rites; after declining these Teucer turns to Tecmessa and the chorus:-

"And thou, my child, with whatso strength thou hast, take hold upon thy sire with loving touch and with me lift his body; for still the veins are warm, still spouting up the strong black tide. Come, each one here who claims to be his friend, haste, haste away, and serve this man, the

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peerless dead, than whom a better never was,- better than Ajax none, I say, in the days when he was with us."

The unity of the play has been attacked because the suspension of action comes so near the close. The death of Ajax and the death of Julius Caesar, in their respective plays, occupy a corresponding position; in both cases their power is most felt after death and we can exclaim of Ajax "O Julius Caesar, thou art mighty yet!" Probably the climax of excitement was reached for the Athenian audience when Teucer, hurling back insult for insult, and obliquely for obliquely, declares: "If anywhere ye cast him forth, there must ye cast us three to lie along with him." And in this light the unity of the play does not in the least suffer; its great lesson is the restraint of passion under the firm hand of moderation; it was the lack of this virtue which brought upon Ajax all his woes and this is the lesson which Athena teaches him and, through him, Odysseus.

Sophocles is, on the whole, too finished a Greek artist to be fully appreciated in these modern days except by one who is fully acquainted with Greek life and thought; Thus it has been aptly expressed: "Sophocles is the summit of Greek art; but one must have scaled many a steep before one can estimate his height; it is because of his classical perfection that he has generally been the least admired of the great ancient poets; for little of his beauty is per-

ceptible to a mind that is not thoroughly principled and imbued with the spirit of antiquity."

Even to the end the gods of his youth did not forsake happy, cheerful Sophocles, and took him away before misfortune came upon his native city. Calmness was the major chord, the dominant seventh, as it were, of his existence; to him his mind was a kingdom, such perfect joy did he find in it. "He lived, as it were, in the stronghold of his own unruffled mind and, unmoved, heard the pattering storm without."

With Euripides we come to the latest in order and the least in fame of the three great tragic poets; in him we see already the signs of its decay and degeneration. As to his personal history, he was born at Salamis on the eve of the battle itself and his parents seem to have held both rank and wealth; he was given the best education possible and at first turned his attention to painting but soon threw this aside for the drama; he wrote his first tragedy, we find, the Peliades, at the early age of twenty-five, but only received the third prize. His attachment to the new philosophy and to the sophistry of the times, drew upon him the splendid slanders of Aristophanes; this enmity was largely increased by his friendship with Alcibiades, in whom Aristophanes, with keen political

foresight, recognized the agent of his country's downfall; this suspicion subsequent history confirmed to the letter. After the defeat of the Sicilian expedition, he and Alcibiades were compelled to flee the country on account of the violence of the Athenian demagogues; he sought refuge at the Court of Archelaus, the king of Macedonia, where he lived for many years and died at the advanced age of seventy-five. There is a story which relates that he was torn to pieces by the royal hounds which two poets of local fame had, in a fit of jealousy, let loose.

There has never, in all probability, existed a poet whose works bear to such a degree the testimony of both his brilliance and mediocrity; perhaps if a greater number of the plays of Aeschylus and Sophocles had come down to us there might have been more ground for their adverse criticism, but in the eighteen plays of Euripides extant there seems to be represented both his best and worst efforts. In the words of Macaulay, "the sure sign of the general decay of an art, is the frequent occurrence not of deformity, but of misplaced beauty." In general tragedy is corrupted by eloquence and comedy by wit; the rhetorical subtleties and eloquence in which Euripides delights, in lieu of the chaste simplicity belonging to the old tragedy, sadly confirms this. The prologue became the

disclosure of the whole plot; the lyrics of the chorus lost their identity with the dialogue; the ideal characters of Aeschylus and Sophocles were reduced to the common level of every-day life. But this fault, from the point of view of the ancients, is in reality the true cause of modern appreciation; Mrs. Browning has applied the epithet "human" in recognition of "his touches of things common, till they rise to touch the spheres". Sophocles represented me as they ought to be; Euripides as they really were. Thus, from the supernatural in Aeschylus, and the heroic in Sophocles, the drama passes, in Euripides, to the romance of every-day life, the unexaggerated pictures of the human heart. With him we come to the end of tragedy for when it had risen to its high tide so swiftly did it ebb, that the names which it leaves on the sands are not even worthy of mention.

But no history of Greek poetry, however brief, would be complete without the name of Aristophanes. His writings are, as we well know, nothing more than allegorical caricature. Following in the footsteps of Archilochus, he is the satirist of his times and that it should be possible for him, in these side-splitting buffooneries and fierce lampoons, to caricature his fellow men in both their politics and religion, is no mean index to the true

condition of society. For to quote the words of a modern essayist, "Satirists generally appear in the dotage of opinions and institutions, when the State has become an embodied falsehood and the Church a name; when society has dwindled into a smooth lie and routine has become religion; when appearance has taken the place of reality and wickedness has settled down into weakness." This was especially true of the age of Aristophanes. He stands with sword of vengeance unsheathed in the times of the decay of all that had given Greece her proud position. This is true of all times and if we read the writings of Voltaire, Pope and Swift, we will see in them the clear reflections of the social conditions of their own troubled periods. So far, however, did Aristophanes carry his invective that certain limitations were imposed on the comic stage under the "law of Syracosius". To give an example of the lawlessness of his invective and its scurrilious personality, here is a short quotation from the chorus of the Knights in which the demagogue Cleon is attacked. The translation is due to Mr. Frere:-

"Close around him, and confound him,  
the confounder of us all,

Pelt him, pummel him, and maul him, rummage,  
ransack, overhaul him;



"Overbear him, and outbawl him; bear him down  
and bring him under,

Bellow like a burst of thunder, Robber! harpy!  
soul of plunder!

Rogue and villian ! Rogue and cheat! Rogue  
and villian , I repeat !

Oftener than I can repeat it, has the rogue  
and villian cheated.

Close around him, left and right; spit upon  
him, spurn and smite;

Spit upon him as you see, spurn and  
spit at him like me.

But beware, of he'll evade ye, for he knows  
the private track

Where Eucrates was seen escaptng with  
his mill dust on his back."

But Aristophanes at times shows himself to possess  
all the elements of a true poet, a lofty imagination  
and a fine creative fancy, counterbalanced with a true

perception of ideal beauty, which caused Plato to exclaim that the Graces had taken the bosom of Aristophanes as a temple to dwell in."

Aristophanes is the last of the Greek poets who, ever toiling up the arduous path, successfully scaled the frowning cliff where Fame's proud temple shines afar; the Alexandrian age may have produced those who were sometimes as brilliant in elegance of diction and expression but they are always artificial; in truth, their works are but imitations, without the breath of life.

These old masters of Greek song which in these pages we have been so hurriedly reviewing, have lent their greatest influence to modern poetry, not in the value of the works resulting from their immediate imitation - for this, in the light of the many futile attempts, would seem impossible - but in their permanent inspiration, an inspiration whose quickening breath arises from the depths of their intense love that "beauty should go beautifully."

As perfect models of style, as splendid examples of purity of thought, as radiant illustrations of that rare combination, the wine of style with the water of expression, this legacy of ancient Greece should ever be cherished as a priceless gem, the unity of art and nature is their constant theme:-

"Yet nature is made better by no mean  
But nature makes that mean: so, over that art  
Which you say adds to nature, is an art  
That nature makes. You see, sweet maid, we marry  
A gentler scion to the wildest stock  
And make conceive a bark of baser kind  
By bud of nobler race: this is an art  
Which does mend nature, change it rather, but  
The art itself is nature."