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Art. I.—Sophokles.

1. *Sophokles, erklärt von* F. W. Schneidewin. *Sechste Auflage, besorgt von* A. Nauck. Berlin. 1871.
2. *The Tragedies of Sophocles, with a Biographical Essay.* By E. H. Plumptre, M.A. London. 1867.
3. *Die Religösen und Sittlichen Vorstellungen des Aeschylos und Sophokles.* Von Gustav Dronke. Leipzig. 1861.
4. *Sophokles und seine Tragödien.* Von O. Ribbeck. *Heft 83 in der Sammlung gemeinverständlicher wissenschaftlicher Vorträge.* Berlin. 1869.

ENGLISH scholarship has not done much for the better understanding of Sophokles. He is not a poet who has taken close hold of the English mind. His works are studied of course in the general university curriculum ; but he has not become a poet often read and oftener quoted as have some of the classic writers. Those who really find in him a source of intellectual delight read his works in a German edition. But of what classical writer may not this be said ? It is very seldom that an English editor has the patience to make a complete presentation of a classical author—to do for him what Professor Munro has done for Lucretius—with that loving study and exhaustive research which characterize the labours of the German editor. So far the case of Sophokles is not single. But perhaps there is no instance of an author of such renown as Sophokles, with so general a *consensus* of people willing to admit his claims, who has made so little impression upon the majority of cultivated minds. The

reason is that the majority of cultivated people never bring themselves under his influence. The English scholar is for the most part satisfied with a textual or critical knowledge: the whole field of classical literature must be hurried through rather than any part explored. And the result of this is scholarship rather than knowledge.

Now with many authors this may be sufficient; it cannot be so with all. Homer, for instance, will give up his beauties in broad and easily taken bands of continuous narrative. Apart from the necessities of philological studies, which are beside the present question, Homer, like Chaucer, is easy reading. Those that run may read the *alto rilievo* of the Iliad or Odyssey. But before a group of statuary you must *stand.* And the difficulty is that the intellectual life of the present day does not admit of long standing. The progress of science and the march of new ideas are continually urging on the student mind. And to almost all the doubt must occasionally present itself, Is it worth while to spend this time before these works of ancient art? Now, whatever the answer to this question may be, it is certain that the secret of Sophokles cannot be won without loving and leisurely study. For in his works exists the highest form of one species of art; and that an art which will yield its essence to no hurried student. It is a significant circumstance that few English translations of the works of Sophokles have been attempted. The version of Mr. Plumptre is the fourth of its kind. Those that have preceded it are of little importance. It is true that no author suffers more from translation than Sophokles: but that is the least element in the unpopularity of his dramas amongst English readers. The reader unacquainted with the Greek language may yet be fascinated by the "tale of Troy divine" in the musical and monotonous lines of Pope, or the inadequate interpretations of Cowper and Lord Derby: he may even, if he be a Keats, find his vision dazzled by the misty prospect which he catches of the vast Homeric continent; but he is not at all likely to be charmed with Sophokles. To understand Sophokles one must place oneself in the intellectual position of an average Athenian of the time of Perikles. Mr. Galton says*: "The average ability of the Athenian race is, on the lowest possible estimate, very nearly two grades higher than our own—that is, about as much as our race is above that of the African negro." The average English reader, therefore, whose knowledge of Sophokles is derived from Mr. Plumptre's very creditable version, will probably lay down the book without any extraordinary interest in the subject. He will miss the plaintive clink and

* "Hereditary Genius," p. 342.

jingle of subjective sentimentality which he has been accustomed to associate with poetry, and he will probably wonder at the renown of the poet. But the earnest student of Sophokles will find in the original enough to reward him. His mind will be strengthened by the contemplation of perfect types of character, bold, severe, and beautiful. He will pass into a gallery of statuary where he will see sights that can never leave his inner eye. Serene faces, familiar, yet unusual in their lofty humanity, will look down upon him; voices, more divine than human, though rising from the depths of the human heart, will speak to him, and his ears will be filled with a holy and awful music.

The best guides to the higher knowledge of Sophokles are the German works whose titles are given at the head of the present paper.* Schneidewin's edition is known to students of Sophokles; so ought also to be the essay by G. Dronke, snatched from his friends and from literature by an all too early death. Dr. Ribbeck's paper, though short, is a concise estimate of the extant dramas, and is written in a genial and scholarly style. The present essay is an attempt to connect the works of Sophokles with the periods of the poet's life, and to point out the chief dramatic characteristics of the several plays.

It was in the year 469 before our era, at the spring festival of the greater Dionysia, that Athens saw the first trilogy of Sophokles. The city was then full of new life; it was the charmed period when future greatness lay in bud, and not yet in blossom. The terror of the Persian had been changed into an immortal memory, and Athens was winning for herself the hegemony of more than the Grecian race. This spring festival had drawn many strangers to the city. The islands had not yet learned to dread her power or doubt her justice, and sent their loyal visitors to join in her rejoicing.

Two days of the festival had already passed, and a trilogy or rather tetralogy had been presented each day. One was the work of Æschylus, for fourteen years the master of the Athenian stage. Upon the third day a trilogy by a new poet was presented. What this work really was is uncertain; it has, however, been inferred from a passage in Pliny, that one drama was the *Triptolemus*. It was a subject that had never before been chosen for the stage, but it was well adapted to win favour at Athens at the present time. Already the city had conceived the design of

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* No writer upon the life of Sophokles can forget the obligation which he is under to Gotthold Ephraim Lessing—Mr. Plumptre most unaccountably (p. xxii.) calls him Gottfried Lessing—whose splendid fragment of a "Life of Sophokles" remains to show later writers what the great German critic might have done in this direction.

uniting under a central power the scattered members of the Ionian race, and the confederacy of Delos was in part a realization of her desire. In the subject which he chose, Sophokles would have an opportunity of idealizing the national aspiration.

Triptolemus was the youthful hero of Eleusis, the herald of agriculture and peace, the friend and host of Demeter. He was a traveller too, and where he lighted from his winged car, he left a blessing of corn and wheat behind him. Thus Sophokles was enabled to depict, as we know from Pliny he did depict, far lands and foreign places, gladdened by the gifts that came from Attica.

Whether he fully indicated such a mission for the new Attica we cannot know; he was certainly too wise to miss the opportunity altogether. It may well be that this power of representing the national feeling, formed the distinctive characteristic of the first trilogy of Sophokles; it is at least easier to believe this, than that he surpassed the veteran Æschylus in technical excellence. There was, however, a large section of the audience, who preferred the Æschylean trilogy. Never, perhaps, in such a cause, had party-feeling run so high. Æschylus was himself from Eleusis; the new writer had won the suffrages of the elder poet's own townsmen. But the victory was not to be adjudged by popular acclamation. The custom was that ten judges should be elected by lot, one from each tribe. Why the ordinary mode of decision was not retained, it is not easy to ascertain. At any rate the presiding archon Aphepsion did not venture, in the excited state of popular feeling, to follow the ordinary practice, and this accident inaugurated a change in the method of electing the tragic judges.

Kimon and his nine colleagues representing the Attic tribes were at this moment the popular heroes. They had but newly returned from their victorious contest with the Persians at Eurymedon, and they had brought back from Skyros the bones of Theseus to be laid in Attic soil. Moreover, they had been absent during the preparation of the competing choruses, and, if any, they were free from bias and prejudice. Whatever their decision might be, it would be accepted by the Athenians. With happy tact, Aphepsion chose them as judges, and they were at once sworn into the office. Their verdict was for Sophokles. From the fact that henceforth only those who had seen service were allowed to adjudge the tragic prizes, we may infer that the decision was both memorable and satisfactory. Such at least seems to be the sentiment with which Plutarch speaks of it: "ἔθεντο δ' εἰς μνήμην αὐτοῦ καὶ τὴν τῶν τραγῳδῶν κρίσιν ὀνομαστὴν γενομένην."

Whether it was the subject, the poetical handling, or the grace and beauty of the principal actor, Sophokles himself, that turned

the scale in favour of the *Triptolemus*, we miss the play with regret. The result of the decision was that for many years Sophokles became the favourite actor of the Athenian stage. There is greater importance to be attached to this fact than at first sight appears. It means not only that the successful dramatist was able to present his views of art and ethics to the Athenian people; but that he was able to mould and perfect the form of presentation. Nor must we forget the rival interests of the several tribes as an element of success. The Choragus who had assisted in the production of a successful trilogy was rewarded even more than the author. The actors were chosen for the same places in the representations of the ensuing year, and we know that Sophokles not only established a society of the best actors, but also wrote his plays with special reference to their powers and capacities. One success, therefore, was earnest of farther renown, and a stepping-stone to it. The Choragus naturally granted to his successful author more liberty than would be conceded to an untried competitor, and it was this feeling of confidence in the poet, which enabled Sophokles, as it had already enabled Æschylus, to achieve his ideal of dramatic art upon the stage. But before we pass on to relate the gradual growth of the drama in the hands of Sophokles, it will be well to speak of the young poet in his personal relations to the Athenian people, who had just crowned him with the ivy-chaplet.

If tradition is to be believed, he was not unknown to them. He was not born of low or ignoble parents, for in this case the comic stage would have rung with jesting allusions to his parentage. His father, Sophillus, was undoubtedly a man of respectable rank, a knight it may be. Plutarch speaks of Sophokles as a person of good birth, and other writers attribute to him an excellent and complete education. Probably with truth, for it is undoubted that he possessed in a high degree those elegant personal accomplishments which were deemed necessary accessories to an Athenian gentleman. As the promising son of a well-known citizen, he would be a youth who claimed attention; and the story of Athenæus, which speaks of his surpassing beauty, is a record of the influence of his boyish grace upon his contemporaries. It declares that he of all the Athenian youths, was chosen to lead the choir of boys who danced round the trophies in Salamis, after the defeat of the Persians. Aftertimes gladly recalled the happy coincidence which linked the three great names of Attic tragedy around the memorable victory of Salamis, for Æschylus fought in the battle, Sophokles led the pæan, and Euripides was born on the day of victory, within the fortunate isle. The years which immediately followed the victory formed a bright era in the history of the Athenians. They feared no more

for the barbarian invader, nor, by the prudence of Themistokles, for the treachery of the selfish Spartans. At home there was room in every sphere for the development of genius, and genius was not absent. Under the hands of Æschylus the drama was growing towards perfection, and the people built the great stone theatre of Dionysus. A tradition says that Æschylus was the teacher of Sophokles in the dramatic art: it is most likely he was his teacher only as he was the teacher of every Athenian who had the right to hear his dramas. In this sense, each one of his audience was his pupil, and not with regard to art alone. It was his province to bring the minds of men from the dim religious darkness of old theogonies into a fuller light, though a light by no means so full as it was hereafter to be. Great questions had been asked, and there was none to answer them; men's minds were troubled with the inconsequence of virtue and sorrow, and the polytheistic heaven of Homer was dark and silent above them. The leading ideas of the tragedies of Æschylus were the supremacy of Zeus, and the moral order of the Universe. By chains, not always of gold, the world is bound about the throne of Zeus. Vice leads to punishment in this generation, and the next, and the third. Yet no voluntarily pure man can come to ruin:

> *ἑκὼν δ' ἀνάγκας ἄτερ*
> *δίκαιος ὢν ουκ ἄνολβος ἔσται.* *Ευμ.* 550.

The contest of Destiny and Free-will is a mystery which finds its solution only in this moral order. *Σωφροσύνη* or moderation is a conscious voluntary submission to the moral order. Any transgression of the line between Right and Wrong is *ὕβρις*, and leads to ruin. It is a disorder of the mind, a disease, a distemper, without expiation and without cure. Æschylus does not represent the gods as leading man into the commission of guilt. In the choice between good and evil, man is free. A good deed must be, as an evil one is, *ἀνάγκας ἄτερ*. No one is punished by the Divine hand without fault of his own. But sin once committed is followed by a judicial blindness which leads to other and greater guilt. This dangerous downfall is accelerated by means of a divine power known simply as "Daimon," or as "Alastor," or sometimes "Ate," whose influence may extend to a whole race. This brings us to the subject of "family guilt," which is frequently a motive in the Greek dramas. The idea that guilt was hereditary sprang from the notion that it was inexpiable. Hence a house fell from one crime to another, until the anger of the gods swept it away root and branch. It is an extension of the primitive "*lex talionis*;" murder brings murder, *τύμμα τύμματι τίσαι*, and guilt gives birth to guilt. And

what Ate or Alastor is to the individual, that Erinnys is to the family, working it madness and blindness, and involving it deeper and deeper in the slough of crime.

> *βοᾷ γὰρ λοιγὸς Ερινὺν*
> *παρὰ τῶν πρότερον φθιμένων ἄτην*
> *ἑτέραν ἐπάγουσαν ἐπ' ἄτῃ.*—Cho. 402.

Yet the individual is free. If he belongs to a doomed race, then it is true there is in him an hereditary tendency which shall lead him to guilt and ruin, but the decision rests with himself. He is not given over to Ate until he has himself been guilty of sin (ὕβρις). In much of this ethical system Æschylus has taken and arranged prevailing popular beliefs. By his monotheism, which made Zeus supreme, he attained to the idea of order in the universe. His conception of sin is one which is not alien from some forms of modern thought, and his belief in free-will and individual responsibility, exercised considerable influence upon later philosophy.

Sophokles did not remain unaffected by the teaching of his contemporary, though his nature was essentially different. His works are to the works of Æschylus, as the clear light succeeding to a thunderstorm. He took the gain and added to it. We shall see in what way.

Whatever had been the progress made by Æschylus, Sophokles at once perceived that the mechanical and technical appliances of the art, of which he now held supreme command, were by no means perfect. It would be strange if they had been, while the art itself was so young. The old monologue with the chorus as interlocutor, gave place to the drama, when the earlier poet introduced a second actor, and made dialogue possible. But this, it is clear, left room for farther changes. Sophokles availed himself of the opportunity. His first change was the separation of the functions of author and actor. It is said that he took this course for a personal reason, the weakness of his own voice, which could not fill the vast space occupied by his audience. But there was probably another reason also, the feeling namely, that each character would more readily attain to its adequate excellence if separated from the other. He himself did not take any leading character after the appearance of the *Triptolemus*, but the care with which he trained his actors, testifies to the importance which he attached to this branch of the art. A more significant change was the introduction of a third actor upon the stage. That this improvement was made by Sophokles we have the testimony of Aristotle. It is possible that even earlier, Æschylus may have used three actors, and it is difficult to understand how some of the scenes of his earlier plays

could have been represented by two actors only, but the adoption of this number as a permanent feature of each play, is due to Sophokles. Besides these greater changes, no matter of detail escaped him; we learn from the same source that he carefully directed the arrangement of the scenery and the stage. The palace of Æschylus, with doors central, right and left, gave place to a more elaborate stage, and much art must have been required in fitting the theatre for the scenery of the *Œdipus at Kolonus.* Yet the greatest innovation was the mode which Sophokles adopted in treating a subject itself. Æschylus wrote his dramas, and treated the subject in the form of a trilogy. When Sophokles abandoned this form of composition, and chose to develop his subject in a single play, it is certain he risked much. But his artistic sense could not err. What the poetical material lost in breadth and depth, it gained in concentration and intensity. It followed, that in the plays of Sophokles first was seen the real spirit of Greek dramatic art, the perfect statuesque poise of form and expression which we have learnt to look upon as the chief characteristic of the Athenian drama.

We return to the year of the first victory of Sophokles, from which these improvements have led us. It was a year marked by an event of more importance for mankind than the supremacy of Sophokles, the birth of Sokrates. Herodotus was then a boy of sixteen years, Thukydides an infant of three, and Euripides a child of twelve. Seven years later Perikles rose to the height of his power, and Athens of her glory. This is the date of the appearance of the Oresteian trilogy, a trilogy worthy of Æschylus and of Athens, and the only one we possess. But it unquestionably exhibits marks of the influence of Sophokles. A third actor appears in every play. Three years later Æschylus died in Sicily, and for the next fifteen years we know nothing of the personal history of Sophokles. History has not much to say even about the silent growth and development of the city under the governing hands of Perikles, nor is it necessary that much should be said when the memorials are imperishable. At the end of this period, by some caprice of popular taste Euripides was allowed to gain the first prize.

The next year Sophokles exhibited his *Antigone.*

It is almost as fatal to an author's reputation to write too much as it is to write too little. We learn that Sophokles had written one-and-thirty dramas before he composed the *Antigone*; yet if any of these lost dramas approached at all in majesty or power the thirty-second, which remains to us, we may well lament the irreparable theft of time. Perhaps they, as well as the *Antigone,* aided in securing the election of Sophokles to a general's rank. The time at which it was exhibited has not

been fully illustrated by the luminous pen of Thukydides, but some rays of historical light allow us to see the internal political activity of the city. The establishment of a complete democracy by Perikles and Ephialtes was not accomplished without much resistance, and it was difficult to keep aloof from party strife. The conservative or stationary faction, under the leadership of Kimon, drew around them the wealthy Athenians, who saw their oligarchical power passing away with the old order of things. The centre of their union was the Council of the Areopagus, and any change in that institution appeared to them as sacrilege and profanity. But the victorious cause was with their opponents. The Areopagites were stripped of their time-hallowed privileges, which were certainly not in accordance with the spirit of a pure democracy. Æschylus had been a vigorous partisan of the conservative party, and took occasion in his Oresteian trilogy to inculcate popular respect for that court and the other decaying institutions whose power Perikles and Ephialtes sought to banish or curtail. And the artistic effect of the poem is lessened by the zeal of the partisan. Müller says with truth, that Æschylus seems almost to forget Orestes in the establishment of the Areopagus and the religion of the Erinnys. Sophokles never forgot that his first duty was to his art. And so far is the *Antigone* above the atmosphere of controversy and dispute which blurred the *Eumenides* of Æschylus, that it was actually claimed by both parties as a witness to their views, and was received by both with unmixed applause. We cannot wonder at it. No play of Sophokles seizes with such over-mastering power the human heart, no play is so full of noble thought, and in no play is the lyric element so harmoniously blended with the march of events, accompanying it as with the sound of serene and divine music.

The plot is as follows:—Eteokles and Polyneikes have fallen at the gates of Thebes in contest: Eteokles fighting for the Thebans, Polyneikes, with seven great princes, against them. Both brothers perish, and Kreon is made king in the place of Eteokles. At once he issues a decree that Eteokles shall be buried with due honours, and that the body of Polyneikes shall be left unburied and exposed. When the drama opens, Antigone has just heard of the proclamation of the decree. She therefore suggests to her sister, Ismene, that they should bury the body of their brother. Ismene shrinks from the attempt, and is met by the full scorn of Antigone, who goes forth, daring "a holy crime." Shortly the news is brought to Kreon that his authority has been defied, and that rites of sepulture have been performed upon the body. As yet the offender is unknown. But this is soon revealed, and Antigone appears, led in by the guard. A

great scene follows, when Antigone appeals to the divine unwritten laws against human ordinances. Kreon pronounces her doom; she is to be buried in a living sepulchre—a bloodless but horrible fate, not unknown of old. The action is, however, delayed by the entrance of Hæmon, Kreon's son and Antigone's affianced husband, who pleads for her. Yet it is not to Kreon's paternal affection that he appeals, but to the principle which the new king has set before himself—the safety and unanimity of the state. There are already murmurs, indistinct but deep, heard in the city against the severity of the king's decree. Kreon's passion and blindness grow more intense as he listens to his son, and before the king's fiery words Hæmon is driven away, crying that his father shall see his face no more. From the depths of this darkness the audience are lifted by the strains of the Chorus, who sing, "*Love, ever victor in war;*" and as their music dies away, Antigone is led across the stage to her lingering doom. Again the Chorus waken to music, but it is music in the minor key, and can no longer lighten or delay the growing terror. Teiresias, the blind but infallible prophet, appears, and describes the imminence of the divine anger for Kreon's crime. His prophetic utterances terrify the king, who hurries to undo the wrong he has committed. In vain. Upon reaching the tomb of Antigone, he finds her hanging dead by her girdle to the vaulted roof, and is in time only to receive the passionate curse of his son, and to witness his self-inflicted death. When Kreon reaches home, bearing the corpse of Hæmon, he finds that Rumour, swifter than his laden steps, has already told all to the ears of his wife, and that she has slain herself in anguish and despair. So all the fountains of feeling, young love and parental affection, which can never be long pent up, have broken loose, and are all the more terrible for the unholy obstructions which they have swept away.

The character of the chief person, Antigone, stands forth in just and magnificent proportions. All that is beautiful in womanly nature—nay, rather in human nature—shine forth from that supreme ideal, a mind that sees the right, and a soul that dares to do it in the face of death. Never had love and strength been so combined upon the Athenian stage, and the Athenian spectators must have experienced the same feeling in gazing upon that representation as pilgrims did when they were ushered into the presence of the Olympian Zeus of Phidias. We have lost the one, we can still be taught by the other. The heart of man has not ceased to be shaken by the contest which is waged between temporary expediency and selfish interests on the one side, and on the other the unchanging laws of higher duty, for these laws "are not of to-day, nor of

yesterday, but they live always, and their footsteps are not known."

The secondary characters throw the figure of Antigone into bolder relief. Ismene, who knows what is right, follows the way which leads to personal security. The grandeur of Antigone dwarfs even the natural nobility of her sister when she seeks to share the death she has not earned. Kreon errs through insolence. He is wanting in the vision which has made the path of Antigone clear; he has forgotten the rights of the gods, and his own way leads to ruin. Only when this ruin is full in view does he perceive that he has gone astray, and discover that there is something higher than love to the state and to his country—loyalty to the great unwritten laws. Nor does the character of Hæmon, noble as it is, disturb the unity of the impression which we receive from Antigone. She stands the central commanding figure of the group. And as she thus stands alone, so in her the one prominent feature is her heroic allegiance to duty. Other traits there are, but they serve to bring out this one characteristic. She is no unwomanly person, portrayed in rough masculine lines. Her language to Ismene, if it seems harsh, is forgotten when she says to Kreon:

ὄυ τοι συνέχθειν ἀλλὰ συμφιλεῖν ἔφυν,

for we know that these words come from the depth of her nature. Then, when the work which she has set herself has been accomplished, when the expression of her natural feelings can no longer mar or render equivocal her devotion to the dead, she breaks into lamentations like those of the Hebrew daughter, which show how tender and womanly a life is about to be sacrificed. Once only before has she shown any indication of the mental struggle through which she has passed, and that is when strung by Kreon's unconcern she breathes forth the sighing complaint, "O dearest Hæmon, how thy sire dishonours thee!"* The delicacy with which Sophokles has treated the ove of Hæmon and Antigone secures still farther the predominant effect. It is hard to imagine such restraint in modern art.

The Chorus, of whose surpassing melody mention has already been made, had certain peculiarities in this play. It did not, like most choruses, consist of persons of the same age and sex as the principal actor, but of Theban elders. Nor did it at once take part with Antigone. Even here she is left alone. But by its submission to Kreon it serves to deepen the impression of the

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* The MSS. gives this line (572) to Ismene. Schneidewin has rightly, and for unanswerable reasons, assigned it to Antigone. Dindorf and Ribbeck agree with him.

monarch's irresistible power; and by not participating at once in the action, it is enabled to rise to a higher atmosphere of wisdom, which culminates in the choric song,

πολλὰ τὰ δεινὰ κ.τ.λ.

So, too, in its last songs, the painful instances of suffering which are recalled added to the darkness of Antigone's fate.

The effect of this perfect drama upon the Athenians was great, and as has been said, universal. Although Sophokles had hitherto taken only that share in public life which was the duty of every Athenian citizen, they now elected him as one of the college of generals, at whose head was Perikles. It happened to be the time of the war with Samos, which had revolted from Athens, and the ten generals with sixty triremes sailed for that island. Sophokles took sixteen of these ships and proceeded to Chios and Lesbos, to procure a further contingent. At the former island we hear of him through Athenæus, who records the opinion of Ion, that he was not able nor energetic in political affairs, but behaved as any other virtuous Athenian might have done. (Ath. xiii. 81.) This assertion probably had its origin in the playful self-depreciation with which Sophokles spoke of his own strategic power; and it is quite possible that Perikles treated his poet-colleague with a good-humoured irony, which he accepted in the same spirit. This view is borne out by the story which Athenæus tells of Sophokles: that, having snatched a kiss from a fair face at Chios, he exclaimed amidst the laughter of the company, "Perikles says that I know how to compose poetry, but have no strategic power; now, my friends, did not my stratagem succeed?" It is certain, however, that, whatever his power as a general, he did not lose the confidence and affection of his fellow citizens; for, five years later, he was treasurer of the common fund of the Greek Confederacy. Afterwards for nearly thirty years we do not hear of his taking any part in public life. But it was no time to him of intellectual inactivity. During this period he wrote eighty-one plays, which is almost at the rate of a trilogy a year. If we remember all that this includes—the composition and the instruction of actors for so many and so frequently successful dramas—we shall cease to wonder that Sophokles did not seek to meddle with statesmanship. And once more we shall regret that so little has come down to us of that abundant intellectual wealth.

The commencement of the Peloponnesian war, and the death of Perikles, turned one page of Athenian history; but Sophokles to the end of his long life continued to live in the spirit of the Periklean age. Ten year after the appearance of the *Antigone* he published the *Œdipus Rex*. The general outlines of the story are easily told. Laius, King of Thebes, and Jokasta

his wife, were told by the God at Delphi, that should they have a son, Laius would be slain by his hand, and Jokasta would become his wife. Therefore, when their son Œdipus was born, they determined to destroy him, and gave him to a herdsman that he might be cast out upon Mount Kithœron. This herdsman, however, smitten with pity, gave the child to a comrade shepherd, who carried him to Corinth, where the boy was adopted as son by the king of that city. Many years afterwards, Œdipus at Corinth heard the oracle which had been delivered concerning him ; but he was still in ignorance as to his parentage. Thinking, however, that he was the son of the king of Corinth, he left Corinth lest the oracle should come true, and travelled towards Thebes. Upon his way he met his real father, and a quarrel having arisen, a contest ensued in which his father fell and all those who accompanied him save one. Œdipus then arrived at the kingless city of Thebes, which was ravaged by the murderous Sphinx. He freed the city from the Sphinx and accepted the proffered throne, and with it the hand of the widowed queen, little dreaming that she was his own mother. For years the city was prosperous, and four children were born to him. Then a plague fell upon the people. All this was before the action of the play begins. An oracle now declares that the pestilence is sent because Laius has been forgotten. His murderer must be ejected. Œdipus pronounces a curse upon the unknown assassin, and sends for Teiresias the blind seer, if peradventure he may be able to declare the man. Teiresias, enlightened by his art, scarce dares to tell what he knows, and is evilly treated by Œdipus. Then Jokasta complicates the confusion. She openly asserts her disbelief in oracles ; for her own son had been destined by these lying witnesses to marry her ; whereas he was slain, and she was wedded to Œdipus. Yet out of this security

"Surgit amari aliquid,"

Laius was slain at a "triple way;" terrible words that set sounding a sullen chord in the breast of Œdipus, for long ago *he* slew a man upon a triple way. One witness there was, and he is now summoned. Meanwhile a messenger arrives to say that the king of Thebes, the reputed father of Œdipus, is dead. This is a gleam of light upon the eyes of Œdipus, for the oracle has been proved false. The messenger has still farther comfort. Œdipus need not dread the fulfilment of the oracle at all, since he is not the son of the king and queen of Corinth, a fact dimly hinted before, but now for the first time clearly told. Then whose son is he ? A new passion seizes the king, and he is determined to unravel the mystery of his birth. The messenger is able to aid him in this, for he received the king as a foundling at the hands of a servant of

Laius. All is now ready for the catastrophe, which Jokasta, more quickwitted than her son, at once foresees. The witness of his murder of Laius, who at this moment comes up, is no other than the herdsman who had given him as an infant to the Corinthians. The electric circle is completed, the spark shatters the divine edifice of royal prosperity and the hearts of the audience, and the oracles of the gods are evidently true. Jokasta has already ended her existence; and Œdipus, unable to endure the sight of his own misery and that of his family, puts out his eyes.

There are several reasons why this drama should be assigned to this period, notwithstanding the absence of authoritative data. The vivid description of a pestilence was probably written by one who had witnessed the virulence of the Athenian scourge. Some commentators have believed the chorus *ἔι μοι ξυνέιη κ.τ.λ.* to have reference to the mutilation of the Hermæ. If this be true, the play must necessarily be of later date than that supposed above. It probably refers to the reckless spirit of licence which exhibited itself in Athens as a reaction against the popular superstitions of the earlier period, and which eventually led to the profanation. The drama is in fact a protest against the disregard of religion, and a magnificent exhibition of the vanity of human attempts to cross the decrees of fate. In this respect it stands alone amongst the plays of Sophokles. It depicts the contest of an honourable and noble character with a foregone destiny. To add to the interest of the picture, the man who is unable to solve the riddle of his own history, is the one who alone was able to unravel the enigma of human life proposed by the Sphinx, and it is only when the eyes of his corporal vision are darkened for ever that the organs of his spiritual sight are unclosed. At first his house is the only one spared in the pestilence, and all eyes are directed to him as the saviour of the state; yet it is his house which is the cause of the plague. Then his own blind eagerness to discover the regicide, the curse which he unwittingly imprecates upon himself, the gradual lifting of the curtain fold by fold till he breaks into the exclamation,

ἰοὺ, ἰοὺ, τὰ πάντ' ἂν ἐξήκοι σαφῆ,

are terrible instances of the irony which Sophokles is accustomed to ascribe to destiny, but nowhere so powerfully as in this play. Surely but slowly the end approaches. Now the progress of events is delayed by some joyous choric song like the *ἔιπερ ἐγὼ μάντις ἐἰμὶ, κ.τ.λ.*; now there falls upon the play some beam of hope which makes us believe that the gathering thunderstorm will be dispersed or break up into sunny tears and the dewy delight of averted calamity. But the vain hopes and the vanishing glory serve only as preludes to the complete darkness of the catastrophe, which, at last, suddenly envelopes the whole heaven.

It is not only modern admiration which the play has won. Aristotle has taken it as the model of a drama, and its effect upon contemporary minds must have been great. It is equally admirable as a whole and in single passages. The choruses are generally like the atmosphere of the play, of a lurid and broken colour, so that we know not whether light or darkness will prevail. The earlier choruses approach in thought and expression to the language of Milton, or of modern poetry. Thus the description of the rapid deaths in time of pestilence, so different as it is from the picture given by Homer (Il. 1) has that touch about it which belonged later to Dante.

> ἄλλον δ' ἂν ἄλλῳ προσίδοις ἅπερ
> εὔπτερον ὄρνιν,
> κρεῖσσον ἀμαιμακέτου πυρὸς ὅρμενον
> ἀκτὰν πρὸς ἑσπέρου θεοῦ.

"And one soul after another might be discerned flitting like strong-winged bird with greater force than invincible fire, to the shore of the Western God."

It recalls, too, the half-mediæval, wholly beautiful lines of Mr. Rossetti in his poem of the "Blessed Damozel."

> "Heard hardly, some of her new friends
> Amid their loving games
> Spake evermore among themselves
> Their virginal chaste names;
> *And the souls mounting up to God,*
> *Went by her like thin flames.*"

Another passage (lines 476 *et seq.*) is more Hebrew than Greek in its description of the Cain-like homicide.

> φοιτᾷ γὰρ ὑπ' ἀγρίαν
> ὕλαν, ἀνά τ' ἄντρα καὶ
> πέτρας ἅτε ταῦρος,
> μέλεος μελέῳ ποδὶ χηρεύων,
> τὰ μεσόμφαλα γᾶς ἀπονοσφίζων
> μαντεῖα· τὰ δ' ἀεὶ
> ζῶντα περιποτᾶται.

"For sullenly turning his sullen step, he wanders moodily under the wildwood, or amid caves and rocks, like a bull, and avoids the divine voices that rise from the central oracle of the land. *But they live, and are whispered around him.*"

Yet this incomparable poem won only the second prize; the first was gained by the work of Philokles. Time, in preserving this alone, has reversed the decision of the judges. The reason of that decision may lie in the nature of the play itself. To the Athenians, who after the taking of Miletus could not endure

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the scenic shadow of their loss, the unsoftened representation of their sufferings in the Theban plague, and the direct promulgation of the doctrine of irresistible destiny may have seemed unwelcome and ill-timed. And the conclusion of the play is less relieved than that of any other. It is not broken up into those short cries and natural lamentations, with which many tragedies close, but solemnly and sadly to the beat of throbbing trochaics the figures pass from the stage like the muffled pomp of a funeral procession, and the curtain rises upon a silent and awe-struck audience.

It is far otherwise with the *Œdipus at Kolonus.* Like the *Philoktetes,* it has a plot which depends upon divine intervention, and one in which the sequence of the episodes is not absolutely perfect in connexion, though each episode is perfect in its own characteristic beauty. After the events depicted in *Œdipus Rex,* the blind king with his daughters remained at Thebes, until he and Antigone were thrust forth by Kreon. For many long months they wandered through Greece, whilst Eteokles, the younger son of Œdipus, drove out from Thebes Polyneikes the elder, who betook himself to Argos and gathered an army to make him king again. At last Œdipus and Antigone came to the plain of Kolonus, near Athens. Here, beneath the shade of an olive-grove, the aged king sits down to rest, and here an inward confidence tells him that he is approaching the term of his sufferings. This olive-grove is sacred to the Furies, and it is sacrilege for ordinary men to approach it. The news reaches Theseus that a stranger has set foot within the holy precincts, and he hastens to the place. Before his arrival Ismene comes in haste to tell her father of the fratricidal war upon which her brothers have entered, and that Kreon is hurrying to carry back Œdipus, since an oracle has declared that his presence will bring victory on either side. Œdipus pronounces a curse upon his son, and reveals his intention of blessing Athens by remaining within her territory. Theseus now arrives, and not ignorant of the responsibility he is incurring, assures Œdipus of a courteous and secure hospitality. Œdipus in return acquaints him with the benefits which his presence will confer upon Athens, and the calamity which will ensue to Thebes. Theseus accepts with confidence the divine privilege which Œdipus offers, and once more assures him of his protection. If ever a situation made a supreme demand upon an Athenian chorus, it is the present. We have come to the middle point between the beginning and the end of the action. The Acropolis of Athens, though as yet unblessed by the works of Phidias, rises within sight of the beholder. Kephissus draws her silvery threads through the foreground, and the hero-prince of Athens, in accepting the charge of Œdipus, unites the new and

the old, and links historic to heroic times. The music which shall not mar the harmonious suspense of this situation must be subtle indeed. But the music of Sophokles is never of a negative kind. It increases and enhances the dramatic feeling. Accordingly it is here that we find the greatest choric ode of the Greek drama. The undying chords of the poem which follows raise the mind of the hearer to a level with the exaltation of Œdipus himself.

Εὐίππου, ξένε, τᾶσδε χώρας.

"Guest, thou art come to the noblest spot
Of all this chivalrous land."

But this lofty tranquillity is broken by the entrance of Kreon, who endeavours to persuade Œdipus to return to Thebes. Upon his refusal, Kreon has recourse to violence, and carries off Antigone, Ismene having been previously secured. Theseus however restores his daughters to the blind king. The next scene brings upon the stage Polyneikes, who seeks reconciliation with his father. This he does not succeed in obtaining, and he leaves the stage begging for the kind offices of Antigone in his burial. The play now draws to a close. The euthanasia of Œdipus is all that remains. The hour of destiny has come, and the Passing of Œdipus—no man knows where or whither—completes the purpose of the gods.

A question so debated as the date of this play can scarcely be answered satisfactorily here. Critics both ancient and modern have connected it with the latest period of the author's life; but there are portions of the drama which seem to belong to an earlier date, and to have reference to that period of reactionary licence which was marked by the mutilation of the Hermæ. By its subject it is closely connected with the *Œdipus Rex*, and there is nothing improbable in the supposition that even if it were first produced after the author's death, it was begun whilst the subject of Œdipus was fresh in his mind. And if any parallelism is to be drawn between Sophokles and the great German poet, this work may well be compared with the "Faust," from which the *summa manus* was so long withheld. The allusions in the poem itself do not fix it to any definite date. All that can be said with certainty is that it is subsequent to the *Antigone;* for while both plays that have Œdipus for their subject contain references to the *Antigone,* that drama has not a single allusion to the action of the other two. Whether, however, we are to credit it with an earlier or later origin, we should be doing an injustice to the spirit of Sophoklean poetry if we were to suppose that political allusions brought down the drama into a realistic atmosphere. It is idle to attempt to connect the Theban and Athenian

struggle which the poet mentions, with any special date.* It is more profitable to win the freedom of that ideal land in which are brought together the blind old king and the hero of Athens.

In some respects the *Œdipus at Kolonus* differs from the other dramas. There is in it a perplexing mixture of manner which suggests both a return to the style of Æschylus and a concession to the growing influence of Euripides. The self-completion and perfection of outline, which marked the *Antigone* and the *Œdipus Rex* are wanting here. The drama is the fragment of a trilogy of Æschylean breadth; it is rhetorical and lyric in the style of Euripides. The real Sophoklean characteristics are not, however, absent, sweetness and power of expression, lofty and graceful sentiment, and a perfection of rhythm and vivid delineation. But it is a series of linked scenes rather than a drama proper. Of scenes that begin with the peaceful olive grove, and end in the euthanasia of the world-worn Œdipus. Nothing could be finer or more effective than that touch of the pen of Sophokles which paints, not indeed the death of Œdipus, but Theseus, who alone saw it, with his face shaded by his hand, as though to shut out some stupendous revelation. To this history of Œdipus Sophokles has given the only satisfactory and worthy conclusion which was possible. In his life he was a contradiction to the laws that regulate human affairs; he remained a contradiction in his death. Others passed by the grove of the Eumenides with bated breath and averted faces—he found there rest and a conclusion of his toils. The grove trodden by Bacchus, nymph-traversed and nightingale-haunted, was to him, upon whom all tempestuous airs had broken, a haven "windless of all storms." And here the troubled life at length ceases, and peace is found at last. In the choruses of this play the poet's love of Athens finds expression. Many poets had spoken with enthusiasm of the "violet-crowned city," but never with such beauty and exalted passion as does Sophokles in the ode, *εὐίππου, ξένε, κ.τ.λ.* The legends connected with it are probably false, but they bear witness to the opinion of the ancients concerning it. Sophokles, unlike his rivals in the dramatic art, remained true to his native city. No offer of foreign patronage could tempt him to leave Athens. Æschylus died in Sicily, Euripides in Macedonia. There were many princes who would gladly have welcomed Sophokles to their courts—indeed, there were many who invited him thither; but he remained unmoved by their offers, and never left his city except to do her service and to further

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* Schneidewin suggests the *ἱππομαχία τις βραχεῖα ἐν Φρυγίοις,* mentioned Thukyd. ii. 22, as a possible occasion.

aer interests. The anonymous biographer says that he was φιλαθηναιότατος, "most enamoured of Athens." And the city repaid his affection. The same biographer says, "In a word, such was the grace of his nature that he was beloved by all."

It is unfortunate—it is more than unfortunate—that of the personal history of the poet we know so little. Few and far between are the dates that we can assign to the events of his life. The seventeenth year after the supposed date of the *Œdipus Rex* saw the calamitous termination of the Sicilian expedition. Amongst the names of the ten elderly men elected *Probûli* to meet the emergency of the crisis, we find that of Sophokles. If this be indeed our poet, we have here another instance of the confidence and love which the city felt towards the tragedian, who was now eighty years old. The seventeen years to which reference has been made are important in the history of Greek literature. They include the birth of Plato, the exhibition by Aristophanes of the *Knights*, the *Clouds*, and the *Peace*, but they cannot definitely be connected with any play of Sophokles. Possibly the *Elektra* falls within this period. It is at any rate marked by the best characteristics of the poet. It dispenses with the breadth of treatment which a trilogy allows, and concentrates the interest upon the action of a single play. In the trilogy upon the same subject which Æschylus exhibited, probably thirty years earlier, the death of Klytemnestra forms an episode of the middle drama, and the ethical problem of filial duty in antagonism to divinely-directed justice is sketched only in outlines which leave much to be filled in.

Sophokles treated the subject as follows:—During the absence of Agamemnon in the Trojan campaign, his wife Klytemnestra formed an adulterous union with Ægisthus, and upon the return of Agamemnon, slew her husband and wedded with Ægisthus. Elektra, daughter of Agamemnon, fearing foul treatment for her brother Orestes, then a child, sent him out of the country, whilst she herself remained, together with her sister Chrysothenis, at Argos, waiting for the manhood and return of Orestes to claim his hereditary throne. When due time arrives, Orestes, under the direction of Apollo, comes back to Argos unheralded and unknown. He is accompanied by his faithful attendant the Pædagogus, who brings to Klytemnestra an account of the death of Orestes at the Pythean chariot contest. The play opens with the arrival of Orestes and his attendant at Argos. Elektra comes forth to bewail the death of her father and the delay of Orestes, and is comforted by such consolation as the chorus can offer her. Next, Klytemnestra, who has been terrified by a dream, appears, and an angry altercation takes place between her and Elektra. When this is concluded, the Pædagogus enters and announces the

death of Orestes. The grief of Elektra occupies the attention of the spectators until the entrance of the disguised Orestes and Pylades his friend, bearing an urn which contains the pretended ashes of Orestes. In the interview between Orestes and Elektra which follows, a recognition takes place, and nothing remains to be done but to effect the revenge. Orestes therefore enters the house and slays his mother, and Ægisthus, upon his arrival, shares the same fate.

The work of Sophokles is finer and fuller of artistic power than the work of Æschylus. The character of Elektra is unborrowed, and forms a contrast to that of the Æschylean Elektra. She, and not Orestes, is the centre of the action, and though not the actual avenger, is really the prompter and promoter of the deed. In the *Choephorœ* we are perpetually reminded that the death of Klytemnestra was the work of the gods; Elektra falls into the background, a weak, suffering woman, whose strongest trait is love for her brother, and he, a mere tool in the hands of the deity, after numerous hesitations and delays in accomplishing the divine purpose, becomes a victim of madness and terror. The Sophoklean drama is more valuable than the Æschylean trilogy. In the *Elektra* we have, as in the *Antigone*, a distinct and noble type of character set in full light and drawn in clear lines of power. Elektra is the personification of justice and fidelity, as Antigone is of love and strength. Like justice, she never wavers from her purpose. When all hope of the return of Orestes has ceased and his death seems certain, she herself undertakes the work which should have been his, for vengeance must be done, and the house of Agamemnon must be freed from the accursed and abiding crime. And when Orestes reveals himself as her brother, she does not leave the central position of the group. One short burst of natural joy, and she is ready to take any measures which may bring about the punishment of the murderess. Nay, she stands on guard while the deed is being done, and to the prayers of Klytemnestra her answers are stern and inexorable as destiny. With subtle words of double meaning she leads Ægisthus into the prepared snare, and then forbids parley or delay—ἀλλ' ὡς τάχιστα κτεῖνε, she says—and the house of Athens is freed from its long and intolerable servitude.

The character of Elektra, as we see it in its final manifestion, is as terrible as it is grand. Klytemnestra endeavours to justify her own conduct, and to represent it as righteous; but Elektra strikes the key-note in her long nightingale lament, when she says,

δολος ἦν ὁ φράσας, ἔρος ὁ κτείνας.

Chrysothenis, weak and vacillating, ready to condone the past

and enjoy the present, serves as a foil to the stronger character of her sister. The same may be said of the Chorus, which although sympathetic, does not rise to the same heights of sublimity or lyric sweetness as in the other plays of Sophokles. Dr. Ribbeck sees here a reason for believing the *Elektra* to be an early work. Yet it is not the lyric element which we should expect to see failing in a younger work, and the conception and delineation of character in the *Elektra* is of the highest kind. The balance of proportion between the brother and sister is admirably kept. Orestes is not the instrument of the gods, though under their protection, but of Elektra. By her side he must not waver, he must proceed at once to vengeance. That portion of the ethical question which Æschylus has indicated in the *Eumenides* does not come into the drama of Sophokles.

The description of the chariot race has always been regarded with justice as a masterpiece of art, and there is scarcely anything more touching in literature than the scene which describes the recognition of brother and sister, and the rapid change of mood, which, in broken iambics, passes from hopeless sorrow into overpowering joy.

In the *Elektra*, Sophokles presents before us a character, which, as it were, wrestles with destiny, and conquers; in the *Ajax* we have a character ennobled by its very defeat. Ajax was the most distinguished of the Greek generals in the Trojan war, next to Achilles, and upon the death of Achilles a dispute arose for the arms of that hero. The claimants were Ajax and Ulysses, and the arms were adjudged to the latter. Full of anger at this decision, Ajax determined to slay both Ulysses and the Atridæ, who had acted as arbitrators; but as he was going by night to accomplish his revenge, he was inspired with madness by Athene, whose aid he had previously rejected. In this madness he fell upon the flocks of cattle around the camp, and slew some and carried others to his tent, thinking he had captured in them his rival and his enemies. When day dawns his right mind returns, and he is overwhelmed with the ignominy of his position and resolves to put an end to his life. This he accomplishes by falling upon his sword. The Atridæ command that his body should be left unburied, but Teucer resists them, and he is honourably buried. This drama is placed here, not because it certainly belongs to this period, but because its date is undetermined and undeterminable. Schneidewin and others assign it to an earlier period, make it indeed nearly contemporary with the *Antigone*, both on account of its resemblance in lyric measures to the Æschylean dramas, and on account of the rarity with which a third actor is brought

forward. But the *Antigone* sufficiently shows that Sophokles had passed this stage. Others see in the speeches which follow the suicide of Ajax an approximation to the rhetorical style of Euripides. Those who adopt a middle course, will place it rather in the long undated period, when the literary activity of Sophokles was at its height. It is a poem in which the national feeling of Athens was likely to find especial gratification. Of all the heroes celebrated in the Iliad, Ajax was the only one that Athens could claim as connected with herself. Salamis had been in close union with Athens from immemorial time, and one Athenian tribe took its name from Ajax. Herodotus tells us (viii. 64), that before the battle of Salamis, the Athenians prayed to all the gods, and to Ajax and Telamon. This connexion gives rise to the beautiful ode

ὦ κλεινὰ Σαλαμίς κ.τ.λ.

The drama opens with a scene which breathes the frenzy of fierce hatred and lust for murder that mark Northern poetry rather than Greek. Yet it serves to set a stamp upon the character of Ajax, and to indicate his disposition, not without a warning note of admonition. The degradation into which Ajax has fallen is a punishment for the excess of that self-reliance which forms a heroic character, the first sin which he commits is insolence (ὕβρις). When setting out to battle, he rejected the pious prayer of his father, that he might wish to be victorious by the help of the gods, and added the vaunt, "With a god's help, even a man of nought may win the victory; but I, I trust, without God's help shall be victorious." And in the battle itself, when Athene proffered aid, he bade her go elsewhere, for he would none of it. Such is the disposition of the man who finds too late that he is powerless against the gods. But against disgrace his unyielding mind still contends. The real interest of the drama lies in the moral conflict between heroic independence and the necessity of submission to higher authority. The motives for submission are forcibly brought out, the agony of disgrace, and the strength of domestic affection. The turning point is reached when Ajax says—"I, once as strong as steel, have now been softened by the words of this woman as steel is softened by the bath, and I shrink from leaving amongst my enemies, her a widow, and my son fatherless." Yet from the shame there is now but one escape, and from that he does not shrink—death. But ere he goes to the baths of ocean and the sea-marge, where he may appease the wrath of the goddess by his death, he freely acknowledges his error. Honour and authority are worthy of submission. Snowfooted winter yields to blooming spring, and dark-tiaraed night gives place to bright-crowned day. Life is full of change, so he too bends to authority, fears God and honours

the Atridæ. Another scene reveals Ajax about to put an end to the life he can no longer honourably cherish. His last prayer is earnest and simple—That Teucer may first raise his body, and give it rites of sepulture; that Hermes may grant him funeral escort; and that Helios may rein in his golden car, and tell the sad news to his aged father and mother. Then follows the farewell of the Greek to the bright sun, a long adieu to Salamis and illustrious Athens, and all the plains and crystal founts of Troy.

It is perhaps worth pointing out that this drama has severa Shaksperian peculiarities. As in the works of our own dramatist, overflowing sorrow finds relief in a play upon words.

> *αιᾶι, τίς ἂν ποτ' ᾤεθ' ὧδ' ἐπωνυμον*
> *τοὐμὸν ξυνόισειν ὄνομα τοῖς εμοις κακοις ;*

The speech already referred to (line 646), which describes in the form of a soliloquy a moral crisis, is in the manner of the English writer, and the final monologue of Ajax recalls the meditation of Hamlet.

Minuter resemblances might be noted. The cry of the sailors in their search for their lost chief—*πόνος πόνῳ πόνον φέρει*—may almost be translated by the "Double, double toil and trouble" of the Witches in Macbeth.

But a more characteristic peculiarity of the drama is the sea air which blows through it, and the number of nautical allusions which must have been grateful to a seafaring people. Sophokles never forgets the mariners of Athens in his eulogies of the city. In the great choric song of the *Œdipus at Kolonus,* the crowning glory of the land is "the well-used oar fitted to skilful hands, that leaps through the sea in the train of the hundred-footed Nereids," and here from the first we are thrown into sailor company. It is to the "shipmates of Ajax, from over the sea," that Tecmessa turns in her trouble, and it is they who search for their lost leader at the last, though Sophokles with poetic propriety reserves the discovery of his body for Tecmessa herself. And to the sea the thoughts of Ajax turn in his despair:

> "*O ye paths of the watery reach,*
> *O ye caves of the sea,*
> *O ye groves of the Ocean beach,*
> *Where my steps were wont to be.*"

By the death of the hero atonement for all his sins is made, and his body is honourably buried by the sea he loved.

It is a real satisfaction to arrive at a period when we can attach a date to a play of Sophokles. In B.C. 409 appeared the *Philoktetes.* Before this time Athens had passed through

the conspiracy of the Four Hundred, and had seen the recall of Alkibiades. In the measures of the oligarchical body we are told Sophokles concurred, not because they were good, but because they were expedient. "οὐ γὰρ ἦν ἄλλα βελτίω," are the words attributed to him. The anecdote, however, may possibly refer to another Sophokles. It is possible also that Sophokles had little sympathy with the later democracy, which may have alienated amongst others the mind of the poet. But his poetry retained the astonishing energy and freshness of his younger days. The *Philoktetes* shows no sign of the decay of intellectual power. It is worthy of the first prize which it received. The subject was not a new one upon the Attic stage. Æschylus and Euripides had handled it before, and other tragedians had aided in making it familiar to an Athenian audience. Sophokles, while adopting the well known mythical outlines as the groundwork, succeeded in lending the drama a new and powerful motive. These outlines are to be found in Homer. (Il. 2. 716). Philoktetes, carrying the arrows of Hercules, joined the expedition against Troy, but being wounded in the foot by a serpent, he was left in the island of Lemnos. In the tenth year of the war it was predicted by a Trojan prophet that Troy could only be taken by the arrows of Hercules, then in the possession of Philoktetes. Accordingly Ulysses and Neoptolemus, son of Achilles, were sent to Lemnos to bring Philoktetes with his arrows to Troy. The play opens with the landing of these messengers upon the island of Lemnos. Ulysses tutors Neoptolemus in deceit, and urges him to gain possession of the arrows by falsehood. Neoptolemus obeys, and having persuaded the suffering Philoktetes that he is about to take him home is entrusted with the arrows. When Philoktetes discovers the treachery that has been practised upon him, he endeavours to commit suicide, but is prevented. Feelings of pity and compassion now come upon Neoptolemus, and he restores the arrows in spite of the angry remonstrances of Ulysses. The mission has thus nearly failed of its object, when Hercules descends from heaven, and bids Philoktetes proceed to Troy, where he shall win renown and be healed of his sore disease. The interest of the play does not centre in the person whose name it bears, but in the person of Neoptolemus. It is *his* character that Sophokles has brought out from the massive block of tradition in proportions of exceeding beauty. Between Philoktetes hardened by suffering, and Ulysses wily and wise, the open-hearted son of Achilles stands forth a contrast to both. This contrast of character, together with the dramatic development of natural nobility in the person of Neoptolemus, is the work of Sophokles alone, and bears his stamp. The minor characters

are powerfully drawn. Philoktetes is immovable in his love to his friends and in his hatred to his enemies. The extreme agonies of physical suffering which wring from him cries and groans, leave him still tears for the misfortunes of his friends and imprecations for his foes. He is, in the words of Lessing, "a rock of a man,"* a hero still, though life has lost all that is worth living for, except constancy and submission to the gods.

The Ulysses of this drama is differently portrayed from the Ulysses of the *Ajax,* and the Ulysses of Homer. He is brought forward in an ungracious part, and one more in accordance with the *rôle* he takes in the plays of Euripides. He counsels deceit and is willing to attain his end by means honourable or dishonourable. We must not however forget that this end is the well-being of the Greeks, and that the means are poetically justified by his knowledge that neither persuasion nor violence will avail to shake the firmness of Philoktetes. The psychological interest lies then in the struggle through which the mind of Neoptolemus has to pass. On the one hand, with the bow of Philoktetes he may win undying renown by the taking of Troy, but he must desert and deceive his father's friend, leaving him doubly desolate and deprived of the means of supporting his piteous existence. On the other hand he must bear the bitter reproaches of Ulysses, the loss of the promised glory, and the failure of the Achæan arms, but he will have respected the rights of a suppliant and his plighted word. How will the struggle end? The sincerity of a noble nature prevails. Already the treachery inspired by Ulysses has been successful; the bow of Philoktetes is in his hand, but he can no longer endure the part he has been compelled to play: he leaves the path of deceit into which he has been misled, and assumes the character which he has already shown to be his. The intervention of the "*deus ex machina*" serves only to justify what has happened, it neither diminishes the interest nor interferes with the action of the play. The psychological question has been already answered.

The *Trachiniæ* is to be considered a later work than the *Philoktetes.* Otherwise it is probable that Sophokles would have used the connexion that lies in their subjects. For the bow of Philoktetes was none other than that bequeathed him by Hercules at his death. The *Trachiniæ* tells the story how the death of Hercules was unwittingly brought about by his wife Deianeira. Many years before the opening of the play, Hercules had slain the Centaur Nessus by means of his unerring and poisoned arrows. As he was dying, the Centaur bade Deianeira take of the blood of his wound and the poison of the arrow, and

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* "Laokoon," ch. iv. p. 34.

preserve it, for it would prove an unfailing philtre to recover her husband's affection if he ever forsook her for another woman. When the play opens, Hercules has been long absent, but is now returning with captives, the reward of his victorious arms. Amongst these captives, who arrive at Trachis before Hercules, is the beautiful Iole, and Deianeira is not long in learning that she it is who now possesses the affections of her husband. Therefore she imbues a garment with the philtre she had received from Nessus, and sends it to Hercules, bidding him wear it whilst transacting the sacred rites of Zeus. The venom of the mixture does not fail in its efficacy. It seizes at once upon the body of Hercules, who is consumed with intolerable burnings. In the agony of death he orders himself to be borne home, but the news flies before, and Deianeira ends her life with her own hand. Upon his arrival, Hercules bids his son Hyllus erect a funeral pile for him on Mount Oeta, and after his father's death marry Iole. The drama concludes with the promise of Hyllus to obey his father.

The opinions as to the value of the drama have been various. A. W. Schlegel deemed it of far inferior merit to that of the other plays, and many modern readers have agreed with him. Schneidewin, a critic of weightier authority, places it exceedingly high amongst the works of ancient art. In looking at it, however, we must regard it as a diptych rather than a single picture. From this circumstance it suffers perhaps when compared with the other works by the same author. Nevertheless each part has its own merit. In the first part the figure of Deianeira forms the centre; in the second, the half-divine half-savage character of Hercules exercises a strange imperious fascination upon the spectator. Nothing can be more delicately and finely represented than the amiable character of Deianeira, the faithful and forgiving wife. It is in the true colour of Sophoklean irony that the sympathy of a tender nature which leads her to express pity for the captive woman, draws her most closely to Iole, who is the cause of her misfortune. And it is the very strength of her love for Hercules which brings about his ruin and her own. The first part of the *Trachiniæ* may indeed be ranked with the best dramatic exhibitions of character. Nor is it deficient in those cross lights and special excellences in which the best abound. The self-devotion and feminine dignity of Deianeira reaches its climax when she implores Lichas to tell her the whole truth :—

> *τὸ μὴ πύθεσθαι τοῦτό μ' ἀλγύνειεν ἄν·*
> *τὸ δ' ἐιδέναι τί δεινόν ; ὀυχὶ χἀτέρας*
> *πλέιστας ἀνὴρ ἓις Ηρακλῆς ἔγημε δή;*
> *κοὔπω τις αὐτῶν ἔκ γ' ἐμοῦ λόγον κακὸν*
> *ἠνέγκατ' οὐδ' ὄνειδος.*

This is in the very spirit of mediæval devotion, and almost in the words of the "Nut-browne Mayde:"

> "Though in the wode I understode
> Ye had a paramour,
> All this may nought remove my thought
> But that I will be your.
> And she shall find me soft and kynde,
> And courteys every hour."

For vigorous word-painting, the passage which describes the virulent corruption of the poisoned wool rotting away into nothingness, is unsurpassed. (Lines 695 *et seq.*)

The second portion of the diptych is less agreeable to modern feeling, since the character of Hercules seems little fitted for the tragic stage. By his semi-divinity he is above humanity, by his semi-brutality he is below it. Hercules suffering is most likely to gain our sympathy; for the picture of excessive suffering is redeemed from the peril of awaking horror or disgust by the consistency and firmness of Hercules. He meets death with his spiritual strength still unbroken, and his self-possession when he recognises his real position changes the grief of the spectator into admiration of his undaunted fortitude.

The marriage which he is represented as proposing between Hyllus and Iole, however repugnant to modern feeling, was too firmly an article of popular belief rooted in popular tradition to be neglected in the drama.

Nor does Herodotus (vi. 52) deem the tradition unworthy of notice, since it was from Hyllus that he traced the descent of the Dorian invaders of the Peloponnese.

The link which binds together the two portions of the drama and preserves the unity of the action is the magic poison of the Centaur. In the first part we have the motives which lead up to its use; in the second we see its effects. The same protagonist took the parts both of Deianeira and of Hercules.

The long and illustrious life of Sophokles was now drawing to a close—a life more enviable, perhaps, than that of any man who has lived so long. He had seen the growth of the Athenian state; he was spared the sight of her last declining days. He was the contemporary of all the great men who had made Athens glorious; and he was the personal friend of many of them. Ten years older than Euripides, he yet survived him, and lived to see his own son Iophon wearing the ivy crown. One pleasing anecdote is told of the last year of the poet's life. When the news of the death of Euripides in Macedonia reached Athens, Sophokles was preparing a tragedy for exhibition. As a last tribute of respect to the memory of his rival, he himself appeared in mourning at the head of his chorus, and the choral company

were without the wreaths which they were accustomed to wear.

The wife of Sophokles was a native of Athens and was named Nikostrate. By her he had one son, Iophon, already mentioned. By Theoria of Sikyon he was the father of Ariston, whose son, Sophokles, reproduced the *Œdipus at Kolonus* two years after the death of his grandfather. A story related by Cicero, and often repeated, asserts that Iophon brought his father before the Phratores on the ground of mental incapacity to manage his own affairs. There is much improbability in the story and we may well discredit any tradition of dissension in the family of Sophokles. Hardly, if the story be true, could the comic writer Phrynikus have written, as he did, a few months after the poet's death, a lament with the concluding words—

καλῶς δ' ἐτελεύτησ' οὐδὲν ὑπομείνας κακόν.

The immediate occasion of his death is unknown, and various accounts are extant. One tradition asserts that it was joyous excitement at again winning the tragic prize. Be it so. καλῶς δ' ἐτελεύτησεν. In the year B.C. 406, the year of the battle of Arginusæ, Athens lost her two great tragic writers, Sophokles and Euripides.

Our consideration of the plays will be more than imperfect unless we examine briefly the religious views with which they are interpenetrated and coloured. What was the religious position of the mind that conceived and brought them forth? Art and religion have often been combined, but never more intimately than in the dramas of Sophokles. Γέγονε δὲ καὶ θεοφιλὴς ὁ Σὸφοκλῆς ὡς οὐκ ἄλλος, says the anonymous biographer: "Sophokles was beloved of the gods as no other." And the attitude of the poet's mind was one of reverent, almost superstitious, adoration of the gods. Æschylus, no less than Sophokles, believed in the nothingness of human nature and the omnipotence of Zeus. For man he marked out a narrow path beyond which he could not go without offending those unsleeping powers which punish the insolence of men to the third and fourth generation of them that transgress. This narrow path he named σωφροσύνη; Sophokles called it ἐυσέβεια, reverence.

In the *Elektra* the chorus says to Elektra (1093)

"Thus have I found thee not in prosperous case
Advancing, but of all the highest laws
Wearing the crown by reverence (ἐυσέβεια) of Zeus."

And in the same play, commending her language, the chorus says (464)

"The maiden speaks with reverence."

In the chorus of the *Œdipus Rex* (863) the doctrine of εὐσέβεια is laid down at length. And in the praise which Œdipus gives to Athens (Œd. Kol. 1125) the highest is that she is the city where Reverence dwells:—

ἐπεὶ τό γ' εὐσεβὲς
μόνοις παρ' ὑμῖν ηὗρον ἀνθρώπων ἐγώ.

How comes it then, if this be a chief article in the religion of Sophokles, that so many of his characters are found speaking against the gods? The number of characters who so speak is not very great. Tecmessa accuses Pallas of working the bane of Ajax (Ag. 652). Philoktetes doubts the justice of the gods (Phil. 447), and again (1035). Hyllus (Trach. 1266) speaks still more harshly of their unkindness, and reproaches (1272) Zeus himself. But it is to be remembered that Sophokles himself does not always speak by the mouth of his characters. Their verisimilitude lends a force and warmth to the personification which is absent from the poems of Æschylus. It is quite in keeping with the Sophoklean stage that his *dramatis personæ* should not be without a tinge of popular superstition. Instances may be selected. Thus, Teucer is persuaded that the sword of Hector was fabricated by the Erinnys; Hercules calls the fatal robe which takes away his life a web of the Erinnys; Deianeira is the victim of a popular superstition when she sets her hopes upon a love-charm; and the guardians of the corpse of Polyneikes are instances of a similar delusion, when they believe that the unseen burial was supernatural.

But Sophokles, as he had received from the hands of Æschylus the drama already formed, so, too, he accepted from him a body of religious doctrines already in advance of popular belief. Nor was the progress which he inaugurated in this line of thought less striking than his development of the dramatic art—as far as the liberation of human thought is concerned it was more important. Æschylus, as we have seen, attributed the misfortunes of mortals to a judicial blindness, the consequence of previous guilt whereby a man falls into greater sin and supreme destruction. His teaching is the teaching of Eliphaz the Temanite; "Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished being innocent? or when were the righteous cut off?" (Job iv. 7.) Sophokles distinguished between the guilty blindness and involuntary crime. With regard to the former he held the same position as did Æschylus. When a mortal willingly, and with full intent, commits a crime, the Deity punishes him with moral madness; he is delivered over to Alastor. Yet for all the actions committed in this madness, he, and none other, is responsible. It is so with Ajax. He deliberately rejects the aid of Athene, and falls into a madness from which there is no escape. It is so with Kreon.

He designedly neglects the honour due to the gods below, and pursues a course which is the result of madness. The chorus recognise the chastisement of a divine hand when they speak Kreon as—

> ἀνῆμ' ἐπίσημον διὰ χειρὸς ἔχων
> εἰ θέμις ειπεῖν, οὐκ ἀλλοτρίαν
> ἄτην ἀλλ' αυτος ἁμαρτών.

and he himself acknowledges it (1272),

> ἔχω μαθὼν δείλαιος. ἐν δ' ἐμῷ κάρᾳ
> θεὸς τοτ' ἄρα τότε μέγα βάρος μ' ἔχων
> ἔπαισεν.

But from this frenzy, involuntary guilt is separated by a wide interval. As Ajax is a striking instance of the one condition, so Œdipus is of the other. The contrast between the two is sharp and complete. Œdipus is presented to us as a righteous prince, wise above the common standard of humanity, for he alone could solve the riddle of the Sphinx—as god-fearing, for he never doubts the oracles of the gods. When he hears of the death of his supposed father, Polybus, there is mingled with his first cry of wonder a note of distress for the credit of the oracle.

> φεῦ· φεῦ, τί δῆτ' ἂν ὦ γύναι, σκοποῖτό τις
> τὴν Πυθομαντιν εστιαν; (Œd. R. 966.)

The sins which he committed were all involuntary, and he repeatedly asserts it.

> τά γ' ἔργα μου
> πεπονθότ' ἐστὶ μᾶλλον ἢ δεδρακότα.

Yet upon him descend the heaviest misfortunes. What is the conception which Sophokles designs to express by this? There is no answer in the *Œdipus Rex*; it is found in the *Œdipus at Kolonus*. It is this answer withheld that so closely unites the former and the latter dramas. In the latter, Œdipus comes before us under the guidance and protection of the gods. They have used him for their purpose, a divine one, an unknown and mysterious one, but a just one; and now, having drunk the cup of sorrow to the dregs, he is their sacred and especial care. He himself says (287)

> ἥκω γαρ ἱρος εὐσεβὴς τε καὶ φέρων
> ὄνησιν ἀστοῖς τοῖσδε.

And therefore his passage from life is gentle and kindly. He is not, for God takes him. As his life has been beyond all others wretched though morally guiltless, so his death has beyond all others a fuller promise of happiness.

If we gather up the teaching of Sophokles upon this point, we find :—That the gods have a great progressive plan of the

Universe, which they carry out in spite of, or sometimes by means of individual suffering. That every man who seeks to do right is, notwithstanding his misfortunes, under their protection, and will finally be rewarded according to his merit. That voluntary guilt tends to worse, and lastly to ruin. This advance from the religious position of Æschylus is great, but it leads to results no less important. It leads, firstly, to the possibility of making a consciousness of right and justice an acting moral power. Thus Œdipus sets before his daughters (Œd. K. 1613) as a recompense for their labours and sufferings on his behalf, the consciousness that they had done their duty and won his love. Elektra and Antigone are penetrated with this feeling. Elektra says (352) "Be it my only reward that I am conscious of doing my hard duty." The sentiment of Antigone is the same (460):

> "That I shall die I know without thy words,
> And if before my time 'tis gain to me."

This teaching of Sophokles is a herald of the truth declared by Plato, that the moral consciousness of right in a man's own heart is the measure of his happiness.

Secondly, and here we must touch upon the mystic side of the religion of Sophokles, it imbues his dramas with a lofty spiritualism. It stands in opposition to the religion of rite and profession. It calls for the spirit and not the letter. Œdipus (Œd. K. 498) declares that the sacrifice of one pure soul rightly offered, avails more than ten thousand which are not so given. It adds a significance to the sincere unspoken prayer, for the god hears it before it is said. Klytemnestra will not utter her prayer (El. 637) for the god knows her desire, though she may not put it into words. And the voice of the god speaks within the breast of man to guide and direct him. This inward voice brought Œdipus to the grove of the Eumenides, as he himself says (Œd. K. 96) and led him—*ἄθικτον ἡγητῆρος*—to his last resting-place.

And thirdly, it finds a place in the religion of Sophokles for the doctrine of the immortality of the soul.

This doctrine was only dimly present to the popular mind; it was no active moral power. The motive to justice and righteousness lay in the fear of punishment in this life—of punishment at the hands of the civil magistrate or the offended deity. True, in Hades the unholy were unholy still, and suffered a shadowy retribution for their crimes, but the real punishment was in this life. Sophokles recognised a purer motive for human action, the love of right for its own sake, and for the sake of the divine approval. Antigone can look forward to a long and joyous existence with the dead (Ant. 73-76), for with them she will

dwell for ever. And so the highest duty is the duty of living in accordance with the will of the gods, careless of praise or blame, reward or punishment, from any but Their hands, and with eyes directed to that other life, where wrongs are righted and where justice is done.

> ἐπεὶ πλείων χρόνος,
> ὃν δεῖ μ' ἀρέσκειν τοῖς κάτω τῶν ἐνθάδε,
> ἐκεῖ γὰρ ἀεὶ κείσομαι.

The monologue of Ajax sets this point of view still farther in contrast with that of Æschylus. Æschylus has exemplified the terrors of conscience with appalling power in the persons of Klytemnestra and Orestes, but the passion which he represents is rather that of remorse than that of penitence. The fear of punishment is the moving cause of terror. In the ethics of Sophokles, conscience leads to a penitent recognition of personal guilt and a desire of amendment—

> ἡμεῖς δὲ πῶς οὐ γνωσόμεσθα σωφρονεῖν;

is the cry of Ajax when he seeks to atone for his crimes by a voluntary death. And the same moral revolution is exhibited in the case of Kreon. (Ant. 1319.)

Thus in the hands of Sophokles, religion passed from a negative to a positive phase. It was no longer sufficient as in the time of Æschylus to live a quiet life with no overweening self-exaltation or insolent rivalry of the gods, but heart and hand must be alike pure, and both devoted to the service of the gods.

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, in his essay upon the "Education of Humanity," has traced the process by which a single nation rose stage by stage to fuller knowledge. The nation which he selected was the Hebrew nation, but it is not the only one which submitted to the divine education. In the works of Sophokles we see the Greek mind passing to a higher stage. It is not a final stage; *that* can never be reached as long as humanity endures, but it is one that could give strength and confidence to minds that loved the truth. That it did so to the mind of Sophokles himself we may learn from his works. The perfection of restraint and repose which reigns like a summer atmosphere in his compositions, is the result not only of a mastery of diction and a supreme command of art. The knowledge of the sorrows of humanity and a co-existing capacity of beholding above all a ruling order, which recompenses and atones for all, are the characteristics which give an immortal interest to the dramas of Sophokles. They reveal to us a man who was indeed θεοφιλὴς "beloved of God."

And however dimly his contemporaries may have understood the humane theology which pervaded his works, they understood

time of his death the Lacedæmonians were threatening Athens from Deceleia. The family burial-place of Sophokles lay eleven stades from Athens, upon the road to Deceleia. When Lysander the Spartan heard that Sophokles was dead, he granted a free pass to the funeral procession, and the body of the great tragedian was laid to rest under the protection of the Lacedæmonians. Nor were there wanting due tokens of respect at the hands of his fellow-citizens. As a hero they honoured him with a yearly sacrifice. A siren was sculptured upon his tomb, to indicate the entrancing sweetness of his strains, and Simmias the pupil of Sokrates wrote his epitaph. Forty years after his death, his bust was placed in the Athenian theatre, and the state took in charge the text of his works.

And yet against the life of Sophokles there are those who bring the charge of impurity and immorality. Such a charge we can but dismiss with indignation. A few anecdotes retailed by that prurient collector of slander, Athenæus, form the body of the charge. They are not worth the time that would be spent in contradicting them. There is nothing in Plato, there is nothing in Plutarch that can sully the pure lustre of the name of Sophokles. Plutarch indeed relates (Perikles, viii.) that upon one occasion Perikles bade Sophokles remember that a man must not only keep his hands pure, but his eyes from beholding evil. If there is in this anything more than a commonplace application of a moral maxim, it is a testimony that at least the hands of the poet were pure. Of his thoughts as mirrored in his writings we can ourselves judge. Aristophanes amidst all his baseless attacks upon his contemporaries, never brought this charge against Sophokles; modern writers with less knowledge, have had greater audacity. This, however, matters but little to him or to us.

In looking back upon the life of Sophokles as a whole, perfect and radiant, it is difficult to find in the range of literature another like it. From his boyhood to his death, there seems to be nothing to mar the beauty of his career. Germans find an analogous instance in the life of Göthe, but the analogy does not go far. Both Sophokles and Göthe lived long, and won that favour from their countrymen which is generally given to the illustrious dead alone. Each of them possessed the highest culture of his time, and aided the diffusion of that culture. The comparison cannot in reality go much farther. The life of Göthe is open to us in its minutest details: we are compelled to be satisfied with the merest outline of the life of Sophokles. Göthe has dissected for us (not without vanity) his own sentiments, emotions, and passions. Only behind the works of Sophokles can we discern the calm and majestic figure of the

Greek poet. Yet the dimmer personality is not the less impressive. To something of the calm which belongs to the works of Sophokles, Göthe could, and did attain; but it is the same with a difference. Göthe by a sublime selfishness, and his progress marked with the sorrows which he caused, rose into a clear intellectual ether. Sophokles brought down the wisdom of another sphere to brighten the ways of men. The one was a child of earth who made a path for himself to the serene heights; the other was a son of Olympus, about whom the inextinguishable glory of his birthplace shone for the delight and instruction of the world.

P.S.—Two editions of Sophokles, at present only published in part, will go some way towards familiarizing English students with the spirit of Sophokles. The one is by Mr. Jebb, Public Orator of Cambridge, the other is by Professor Campbell of St. Andrews. As a portion only of each edition is before the public, it has been deemed better to exclude them from comment in the body of this paper, but this much may be said, that we can hope everything from the complete edition by Professor Campbell. His essay on "the Language of Sophokles" is admirable and exhaustive, and the notes and introductions to the plays already published are full of refined and suggestive enthusiasm.

Mr. Jebb has set forth his views upon the genius of Sophokles in a lecture recently delivered at Dublin, and since published in *Macmillan's Magazine* (Nov. 1872). This lecture is clear, scholarly, and critical, but both the points selected and the views expressed seem scarcely adequate to the subject. The four manifestations of the genius of Sophokles which he chooses are: First, the blending of a divine with a human characteristic in the heroes of Sophokles. Secondly, the effort to reconcile progress with tradition. Thirdly, dramatic irony; and lastly, the portrayal of character. The first of these manifestations is illustrated by the cases of Ajax, of Œdipus, and of Herakles. Ajax, we are told, is human by his natural anguish on his return to sanity; he is divine by his remorse and the sense that dishonour must be effaced by death. But surely his remorse and repentance are human too. His mere cries of distress, apart from the higher feelings, are ludicrous, and insufficient to link Ajax to human nature. Nor does his nearness to Athene, as one who had spoken with her face to face, suffice to give him a divine character. The heroes of Euripides also speak with the gods face to face. The lecturer has not here brought out a real manifestation of the genius of Sophokles; he has united accidents and imagined them to be the essence. The intense suffering of Œdipus the King, and the marvellous death of Œdipus at Colonus are two conditions

through which the character of Œdipus passes, and are not more especially characteristic than are the sufferings of Medea, who is finally carried away by the dragon-chariot of the sun. The genius of Sophokles is certainly not revealed in the union of the superhuman and the commonplace; it is manifested by its power of *idealizing* humanity. The superhuman element which Sophokles introduces, forms no part of the essence of any character, it belongs to the cycle of popular beliefs, which as we have seen, he used for the purpose of verisimilitude.

Secondly.—The idea that Sophokles preserved the balance between superstition and free thought, that he endeavoured to graff progress upon tradition is misleading. In religious matters we have seen that the advance which he made was both definite and important; in politics he was the disciple, as he was the colleague, of Perikles. If he shrank from the extreme measures of a later democracy, it was because he clung to a system which had raised Athens to her highest political efficiency, and because he distrusted a variation which exaggerated and distorted the true democratic principles. Moreover, he was justified by the results.

Thirdly.—The lecturer's canon upon dramatic irony is only partially true. "The practical irony of drama depends on the principle that the dramatic poet stands aloof from the world which he has created." In fact the question of dramatic irony cannot be so summarily dealt with. The manner of Professor Campbell in treating of this characteristic (pp. 112–118) is far more diffident and satisfactory. Irony, as he says, is always accompanied with the consciousness of superiority. But the exhibition of this consciousness must be destructive of artistic effect. It is better to refer the irony to fate than to ascribe it to the author; it may, perhaps, be best not to use the word at all, but to refer the effect which every one feels, to an artistic and legitimate application of dramatic elements such as contrast and pathos, which reach their highest power only when used by the most skilful hands. Mr. Jebb thinks that Sophokles delineates broadly, and with a "deliberate avoidance of fine shading," the characters of his primary persons, and seeks for the more delicate touches of portraiture in the subordinate persons. The persons, however, to whom he refers as illustrations must be spoken of as secondary with caution. Thus Deianeira is of equal importance with Hercules in the *Trachiniæ;* the same protagonist took both characters. The real interest of the *Philoktetes* centres in Neoptolemus. But perhaps the chief inadequacy of Mr. Jebb's view of Sophokles, a view which, as has been said before, is set forth with the charm of a scholarly and balanced style, results from his notion of the religion of Sophokles. In his opinion, Sophokles is the highest type of a votary of Greek polytheism, and no more.

He does not see in his hand that torch which was to be passed on to Plato, and through him to other times. His religion had, he says, shed upon it the greatest strength of intellectual light which it could bear without fading. His art was indeed the highest of its kind, and remained his own ; but the impulse which he gave to a freer and more enlightened reverence may be traced in the best of Greek literature, the works of Plato. It is probable, therefore, that the edition by Professor Campbell will be a truer guide to the appreciation of Sophokles, for the editor has already acknowledged his obligation to Professor Jowett.

Art. II.—Parliamentary Eloquence.

1. *A Book of Parliamentary Anecdote.* Compiled from Authentic Sources. By G. H. Jennings and W. S. Johnstone. Cassell, Petter, and Galpin : London, Paris, and New York. 1872.
2. *The Orator : a Treasury of English Eloquence, containing Selections from the most Celebrated Speeches of the Past and Present.* Edited, with Short Explanatory Notes and References, by a Barrister. London : S. O. Beeton.
3. *Select British Eloquence, embracing the best Speeches entire of the most Eminent Orators of Great Britain for the last Two Centuries : with Sketches of their Lives, an estimate of their Genius, and Notes Critical and Explanatory.* By Chauncey A. Goodrich, D.D., Professor in Yale College, New Haven, Conn., U.S. London : Sampson Low and Co.
4. *Parliamentary Logic : to which are subjoined Two Speeches delivered in the House of Commons of Ireland, and other pieces.* By the Right Hon. William Gerard Hamilton. London. 1798.
5. *Hansard.* New Series.

MANY have been the writers on the theory of Government, and the framers of model governments and paper constitutions. None of these, however, devised Parliamentary Government as it actually exists amongst us, or foresaw its rise. Yet to all appearances it is the form of government which will universally prevail. The English tongue bids fair to become the speech of the greater part of the globe, and wherever an English-speaking race is to be found, English parliamentary