
THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT

—OF THE—

GREEK DRAMA.

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*Aut agitur res in scenis aut acta refertur
Segnius irritant animos demissa per aurem,
Quam quae sunt oculis subjecta fidelibus et quae
Ipse sibi tradit spectator.*

The Dramatic Art, associated as it has been, in its primary efforts, with the development of the religious principle, and, in its later and more matured effects, with the upholding of the moral virtues, has ever had a most remarkable influence upon humanity. As an educative process or civilizing agency, it is to be classed among those mental activities which indicate how the imagination acts upon, and expands, the intellectual faculties; and as such it has been duly analyzed by those whose task it has been to investigate the genesis of society. To the student of Greek literature, moreover, the first fruits of the art, as witnessed at the Attic festivals, afford a special attraction; and certainly the labour of research and criticism bestowed upon those masterpieces of dramatic art which are among the most precious treasures bequeathed to us by the genius of Greece, has not been without its reward. And just as the explorer, in determining a correct opinion respecting the physical features of a country, unweariedly follows the mighty river to its source to watch the varying scenic effects which burst upon him as he takes note of the soil, the fauna and the flora, or just as he eagerly climbs the rugged mountain to its very summit, in order to command a more extensive prospect of all

that may mature his knowledge of the country, so the scholar, with an honest desire to understand as far as he may, the grand trilogies of the Athenian dramatists, seeks out with enthusiasm the origin of the art which produced them, observing with interest the outward conditions and occasions which followed that art towards its perfection. Nor is the task of following the dramatic art back to its origin an idle one, even to the casual reader of the records of antiquity. As he passes across the vast field of past time, he reaps his reward in the invigorating exercises of his mental powers, in the pure exhilarating atmosphere to be breathed in the presence of primitive life, in the new and pleasant scenes opening up before him, and in the many quaint, attractive flowers of ancient literature lying in his path.

That natural law of imitation which is to be seen so distinctly at work in children of the most tender years, is also to be observed as an influence at work in nations at the period immediately succeeding their dawn. The earliest acts of conscious childhood, notwithstanding the well established theory of innate tendencies, are for the most part only the reflections of the child's acquired perceptions. The experience of the child affords the material out of which the mental energies at once proceed to construct "a mirror held up to nature;" and imperfect though such a reflecting surface certainly is, its very imperfections add to the interest with which a spectator observes its representations of nature, before the organs of special sense have been trained to carry to the mind true impressions of the outside world. And as with children so with nations, in their progress towards a higher condition of affairs. As Macaulay remarks, men in a rude state of society are children with a greater variety of ideas; and though it cannot be said of the dramatic art, as it has been said of poetry, that it is in such a state of society it reaches its highest state of perfection, yet it was

at a time when men's minds were still untrammelled by the co-ordinating influences of the higher intellectual faculties,—when the imagination, revelling in the freedom which is peculiar to the child in his earlier years, committed the strangest freaks—that the dramatic art received the impetus which never left it in its steady growth towards perfection. It is indeed in the earlier stages of society, when the imitative faculties of men have an unlimited freedom, that we may expect to find the true origin of the dramatic art.

The dramatic art and the art of oratory have much in common, so much so that the former may be called the oratory of poetry. As the one acts upon the mind through the intellect, so the other acts upon the whole being through the imagination. Oratory appeals to the judgment, the dramatic art to the emotions. Oratory suffuses the whole intellect with the knowledge of the good and the true, the dramatic art delights, refines and fills the whole mind with a flood of enthusiasm. Both acting in their truest phase, aim alike at ennobling mankind. Oratory, appealing to those purer instincts of man, which enable him to distinguish the right from the wrong, the true from the false, quickens within him the consciousness of a personal responsibility, and on the ground of such a consciousness seeks to promote unanimity in the many; while the dramatic art, acting upon the passions by scene, and character, and sentiment, lifts humanity for the moment out of the rut of everyday life to a higher plane of thought and feeling, and fills the soul with a purifying draught from the atmosphere of the poet's fancy. And while the influence exercised upon man by both of these arts is to a great extent identical in its general tendency, that of the latter seems to be the more permanent. Though we of the present time are unable fully to appreciate the effect which the drama, as perfected by Æschylus or Sophocles, produced upon the minds of an Athenian

audience, we can fairly understand how the temerity and sublimity of thought in the *Prometheus Vincetus* and the vindication of fate in the *Œdipus Rex* would awaken feelings and opinions of the most elevating and permanent character. We cannot enter into the spirit of their "agony, ecstasy, or plenitude of belief," as they sat in the theatre of Dionysus and beheld the piety, wisdom, and modesty of the high-souled Amphiaraus, the steadfast unselfishness of Antigone's love towards a brother fallen in disgrace, or the furious passion of Medea and her vindictive devices, yet we feel assured that the impressions produced must have been anything but momentary. As they listened to the flow of "Angels' Speech" in the choral odes, they must have felt themselves elevated to a region beyond their own imperfect natures. Coming in contact with the noble enthusiasm of the poet's own nature, they must have longed for a nobler life, and with such a longing for better things they must have striven to improve the condition of life in which they found themselves. The principles they heard enunciated in the dramas were not the principles of expediency founded upon the necessity of passing political events. They were the principles of an unalterable fate, and hence, permanent as a corrective of the lives and characters of men. Far other is it with oratory. When Demosthenes thundered his philippics against the King of Macedon, it is true he succeeded in rousing the passions of his countrymen to a fever-heat of indignation and resistance. But there was little that was lasting in the influence thus exercised by the orator. When his tongue was stilled in the silence of past events, his influence withered away; and to-day his speeches are looked upon merely as embalmed bodies for critical examination or dissection,—bodies which had been the abode of spirits that left them when the occasion seized upon by the orator had passed away. The occasion with the dramatist possessed of true genius however seldom

passes away. The greatest of the Greek plays, in the hands of skilful artists and actors, have impressed an audience in the twenty-fourth century of their existence. The popularity of Shakespeare's plays is almost universal, and the influence he wields in the third century of his immortality is the influence of an inspired writer. And so it is with the higher flights of the highest dramatic genius in other countries. True dramatic art is permanent in its results; its sway is not limited by the time, place, and circumstance of passing events. The continuous action of its power in moulding men's minds and manners, leaves oratory behind it as a secondary art, unless we recognise it as the highest form of oratory. Indeed the rapidity with which it sprang from infancy into a strength and excellence bordering on perfection indicates its origin as nature's own offspring, having its root, like the principle of religion, in the strongest of human propensities. Its growth is spontaneous and natural, and, in order to be consistent, those who continue to condemn the drama even in its legitimate operations, should seek to root out the imitative faculty in the child, and repress altogether the almost divine operations of the true poet's imagination.

The dramatic art, as has already been said, is to be found in its earlier stages of development, associated with the rites and ceremonies of religious worship. This is specially the case in the history of Grecian ethics. Nor is this to be wondered at, seeing its origin may be traced to that simple law in human nature, which in its lower as well as in its higher activities, is ever compelling man to represent his abstract conceptions in the concrete form. Pure subjectivity is a state of mind altogether impossible, unless we put faith in the credulity of those Neo-Platonists, who professed to be able to rise to the contemplation of Being in itself. In every phenomenon of what is called subjective thinking, there is an image or an object lurking somewhere, and however

transcendental the training of the mind may have been, the energy of instinct throws the perceptive faculty back upon the objective for a basis of support. Indeed, the impulse to supplant the subjective by some corresponding objective, the abstract by the concrete, the idea by some physical representation, seems to be almost irresistible. Witness, for example, the varied attempts which have been made to bring the ideal cosmos within the sphere of man's conception. Even Plato, the father of idealism, in telling us of the world beyond, compares us to persons chained in a dark cave, with our backs to the entrance and looking upon the shadows projected on the back wall of our prison ; without the image, "the shadows," he can offer us nothing to contemplate but the impotency of our own minds. In like manner, anthropomorphism, as the great exponent of all religions, appears to be the inevitable result of the operations of the human mind. As the boldest phase of the law of imitation, it is to be encountered in the most ignorant and barbarous condition of life, as well as in communities premeated by the highest intelligence. In fact, it may be recognized as one of the earliest results of the instinctive impulse towards the realization of the subjective by means of the objective, which has emanated from men associated with one another in a fixed state of society. And may we not, with some show of reason, seek to find the origin of the fine arts within the compass of this great religious principle? Has it not, at least, been their parent or foster-parent? To endow God with the characteristics of man—with human-like propensities and desires to be gratified, and with human necessities to be provided for—was the initiatory step towards the ultimate erection of a suitable abode for Him—some dwelling-place in which He might possibly manifest his presence, or in which His presence could be manifested by some image or idol. But to indicate the superiority of God, His house would naturally be dis-

tinguished by some superiority of structure, from the other humble, cave-like abodes of primitive society ; and would not this call into being the first notions of a progressive Architecture ? Then again, with such a temple built, would not the beautifying of its interior, as an early step in the decorative art in its progress towards more ambitious aims, lead to the development of the Art of Painting ? And, more probable still, would not the desire naturally excited in the worshippers to devise some central figure, or image-representation of the humanized divinity (on which their minds might rest during worship through the sense of seeing,) lead to the art of carving in wood and stone, or, its perfection in the Art of Sculpture ? In the ceremonial there would also be improvements. The emotions, when allowed to act beyond the control of the will, usually find vent in muscular activity ; and, as an actual fact in history, we know that man, in his primitive condition of life, shows the appreciation of the god whom he worships, by an emotional activity which tends to the utter exhaustion of the body. This bodily excitement, at first irregular and under no restraint, seems eventually to have been reduced to some uniformity by the prehistoric tribes as they advanced towards civilization. This uniformity or rythmic movement of the limbs, as the origin of the dance, would naturally induce the rythmic action of the vocal organs as a fitting accompaniment. And in this accompaniment, have we not the origin of choral music and the hymn ? But as the gods may claim the best of everything, men strove, as an act of piety, to excel in the dance and in the song ; and may we not, in reaching the ultimatum of our theory, decide that, from the progress promoted by such emulation, the Poetic Art, as a twin-birth with the Rythmic Art, became further developed in the Drama as a religious ceremony through the mimic dance and invocation ode ?

From the surmise of theory, we turn with a feeling of greater

security to the records of tradition, respecting the origin of the Drama, though it is with the assurance of the explorer, who, after wandering through the mazes of the wilderness in search of the source of a river, finds himself in the bed of a stream, whose shallowness is ominously shaded by the overhanging forest, and where the slippery path is a premonition of danger. All investigations, which have for their purpose the determining of the origin of the drama, must eventually seek a vanishing point in the early history of Greece, the mother-land of the fine arts. In the Scriptures, we have some examples of what may be called dramatic dialogue, and evidence is not wanting to show that the dance was looked upon by the Hebrews as a legitimate accompaniment to their songs of praise and thanksgiving. But beyond these, the elements of the drama, the Jews seem to have made no advance towards the invention either of tragedy or comedy. In Sanskrit literature, there are to be found specimens of dramatic poetry, but the date of their production does not preclude the suspicion that the Hindus learned the art from the Greeks. Nor is there any certain knowledge that the drama existed among the Egyptians. Indeed, it is to Greece, and to Greece alone, that we must accord the historic birth of the drama, just as it is to Attica we must look for the perfection of the religio-dramatic art.

There is but one opinion in regard to the origin of the Greek Drama. As will be indicated further on, the tragedy and comedy of the Greeks were outgrowths from the Dionysian worship, which, after the migration of the northern Doric tribes, was adorned with a spirited ceremonial of sacrifice, music and dancing, in imitation of the festivities of the earlier worship of Apollo. To no other god have there been ascribed so many functions as to Apollo. In these lines of the Iliad—

Autar epeit' autoisi belos echepeukes ephieis
Ball' aiei depurai nekuon kaionto thameiai

he is introduced as the deity who avenges injustice; and again, as the father of Æsculapius, or under the name of Paeëon, he is represented as the god who sympathises with men in their troubles and shields them from danger. As the god of prophecy, presiding over his oracle-temples at Delphi and Delos, his name was for centuries the most potent in Greece, so potent indeed, that but for the influence of his worship, and the faith of the Greeks in his identity, Athens might possibly never have produced a Phidias or a Socrates, Sparta a Lycurgus or a Leonidas, in the process of attaining to the perfection of human art, knowledge and virtue. Again in the story of Apollo tending the flocks of Admetus, the god assumes the rôle of protector of the husbandman, while the ceremonies connected with the founding of a town indicate that his benignity was not supposed to be confined to the bucolic life. He was the patron god of civil institutions. In war, he is sometimes represented as usurping the authority of Mars. Indeed the universality of his influence for good and evil is typified in his name Phœbus Apollo, the Sun-god, the god of that store-house orb, which pours forth a recuperating stream of energy on man, when he abides by nature's laws, but a torrent the most destructive, when these he forgets or resists. But it is as the god of music and song that his name occurs in connection with the origin of the Greek Drama. As the perfect ideal of youthful manliness, he is usually represented with the bow in one hand and the lyre in the other, and is otherwise recognised as the inventor of the lyre. He takes rank as the leader of the choir of the Muses under the special title of Musagetes. His victory over Marsyas in a musical contest is referred to by Xenophon in his description of the Palace of Cyrus. He also sought to excel the musical skill of Pan, being indignant with the unlucky Midas for deciding in his rival's favour. And so it is with other traditional references. The god of the sun

is frequently represented as the patron of music, the dance and the song. He was the favourite deity of the Dorians amid the mountain fastnesses of their northern home. That hardy race, even after their invasion of Southern Greece, seemed to think that war, or the rehearsal war, was the only occupation in which a man of valour should engage. Military discipline, leading to military glory, was evidently the *movendi principium* in the life of these ancient warriors, and its regulation and supervision engrossed a large share of Dorian legislation. Every other purpose of life was subordinated to this. Religion lent part of her ceremonial to the drill-sergeant. The Pyrrhic and Gymnopœdian dances, which had been invented in honour of Apollo, became two of the principal war or drill dances. The hymns or songs of thanksgiving which had been sung before the altar, became the war-chants and marching choruses of the soldiers. And just as we read of the Covenanters sustaining their courage by singing the verses of the *Forty-sixth Psalm* as they approached Claverhouse at Drumclog and Bothwell Bridge, or of the Germans in modern times filling their souls with enthusiasm by the invigorating chorus of *Wacht am Rhein* on their way to the battlefields of Alsace and Lorraine, may we not lay our ear to the path leading back to the darkness and uncertainty of the past, and hear some sacred, soul-inspiring chorus ringing out in the pure Doric, all along the line of a Dorian band, as they rushed into close quarters with their adversaries. As Apollo not unfrequently usurped the authority of Mars over the army, so Mars thought himself justified in filching from Apollo part of his ceremonial. And, as an issue of this, the first encounter between the religious and the secular, Mars carried his religio-military chorus with him in his raids upon southern lands, and eventually handed it over to the Athenian dramatist, to be used by him as the warp of a poesy the most sublime the mental activity of man has ever woven.

As an invention of the Dorians, evidently suggested by the ceremonial of Apollo-worship, and preserved, as it has been in the Doric dialect, the dithyrambic chorus lies as the foundation of the religio-dramatic art of Æschylus and Sophocles, through whose transcendent genius the Greek drama found a perfection, to be surpassed only by the perfection of a Divine inspiration.

From the worship of Apollo we turn to the worship of Dionysus, in order to inquire how the choruses sung in honour of one god came to be introduced as part of the worship-ceremonial of another god. There is the greatest uncertainty with regard to the introduction of the Dionysian revels into Greece. When or by whom they were inaugurated no one can tell. The god himself, who, like nearly all the deities on the calendar of the ancient mythology, was the impersonation of a well-known natural law—in his case, the personification of the productive and intoxicating power of nature—must have risen more and more into favour, as the fertility of the country, under the husbandman's improving intelligence became more productive, and as the cultivation of the vine extended over Attica and Arcadia. The Bacchus-worship of the Pelasgians, the original inhabitants of Greece, must have been of the rudest character—hardly to be identified with these grand choral processions and extravagant festivities which in later times stirred the people of Greece with religious frenzy, and suspended for the moment many of the decorous impulses of humanity. These rude tribes, it is known, worshipped at least two deities, who performing almost similar functions, held towards each other the relation of male and female under the names Helios and Selene. This could have been nothing but the primitive Sun-worship; and as it is a natural stage of development for the savage to pass from the worship of the heavenly bodies to the worship of their presiding divinities or gods, it is easy to

understand how the names Helios and Selene, as the names of deities, soon disappeared among the Pelasges, and how Dionysus, the god of the sun, and Demeter, the divinity of the moon, sprung up in their place. But among the Dorians, there was also to be found the notion of a female divinity, a goddess, who took rank as the sister of Apollo, and to whom were attributed characteristics and powers peculiar to that god. In the struggle for the supremacy of southern Greece, there was thus a sympathy between the conqueror and the conquered in the matter of religion. The divinity of the sun was the favoured deity of both races, and the process of further assimilation in the worship-ceremonial was an easy one, especially as the Dorians seem to have adopted towards those whom they had subdued, a toleration in religious matters which might have been imitated, to the praise of the Christian faith in times more civilized. The celebrations of Apollo-worship blended their ceremonies with the Dionysian festivities. The dances of the Dorian soldier and of the Pelasgian husbandman soon became common to both systems of worship, and those choruses, which probably cheered the heart and sustained the courage of the Dorian invader on his way to Naupactus or Megara, were in days of peace made use of as songs of thanksgiving to the god of the conquered race.

From the mist of tradition and fable we reach at length the clear light of fact. About the first thing that strikes the student in his examination of the tragedies of Æschylus and Sophocles is the simplicity of the constructions in the dialogue when compared with those of the choruses. In the choruses he meets with many words which are not to be found in the Attic prose writers or in Homer. The metres are also very irregular and the style condensed. The dialect is chiefly Doric. And as he carries his studies back to the lyric poets, he soon establishes the identity of the tragic chorus with the dithyramb or invocation ode, written

in honour of Apollo and Dionysus respectively. One of those dithyramb, written by Pindar as an hyporcheme or dance-song, has been preserved to us as the model from which Sophocles probably drew the metre and style of that celebrated chorus in the opening scene of the *Antigone*, beginning:—

Aktis haelioio, kalliston heptapulo phanen
Theba ton proteron phaos,

Another has been preserved, which Dionysus of Halicarnassus says was written by the same poet for the Dionysian festivals at Athens, while of his rivals Simonidas and Bacchylides there are extant several lyric remnants written in the dithyrambic measure, and indicating how closely the dramatic poets in composing their choruses, imitated the early lyrics. Indeed, to such an extent do Æschylus, Sophocles and Euripides appear to have borrowed from the form and diction of the dithyramb of preceding poets, that more than one German critic has favoured the theory that there existed a lyrical tragedy, which lay as the medium of development between the dithyramb and the chorus of Attic tragedy. But such a theory is altogether improbable. The dithyramb has evidently been the model directly copied by the dramatist.

The burden of the dithyrambic ode, except in the case of Epigines of Sicily, who honoured Adrastus in his dithyramb, is the mythical suffering of Dionysus or some scene in his career. The story of the jealous and wilful temerity of his mother, with its frightful consequences, is tragedy itself, while the double-birth of the god, has given rise to the conjecture that the word dithyramb is only another form of *dithuramos*. The etymology of the word is, however, no assistance to its true meaning, for from the many conjectures in regard to its origin, we learn nothing beyond the fact, that it was first used to denote the poem or invocation ode,

and afterwards the mimic combinations of music, poetry and dancing at the festivals of Dionysus.

The first to develop the dithyramb in its dramatic effects, was Arion of Methymna. Among his artistic improvements, he introduced the antistrophe among his choreuti, now fixed at the number of fifty—an innovation which specially distinguishes his invention of what has been called the cyclic chorus. In fact, Arion's cyclic chorus is the true historic origin of tragedy. It had all the solemnity and dignity of the choral worship of Apollo, and must not be confounded with those rude dithyramps which were sung in earlier times by a group of dancers *circling* round the altar of the god. The cyclic chorus as invented or improved by Arion, had nothing orgiastic in its character; and, further improved, as it was by Lasus, who introduced it into Athens, it assumed through its mimetical accompaniments, the true appearance of the drama. The subject-matter of the chorus no longer referred exclusively to Dionysus; the adventures of other heroes came within the scope of the dramatic art, in its literary effort to progress.

This development of tragedy proper, moreover, led indirectly to the subsequent introduction of the Satyric Drama. This involved a revival of some of the exciting ceremonies of the rude dithyramb of the country districts. As the drama became more serious in its tone, and more and more dissociated from the myth of Dionysus, the common people began to regret the absence of the satyrs, in their goat-like garb, and their merriment around the blazing altar. They also thought that their favorite god was being neglected, and on more than one occasion, the cry of dissatisfaction was raised in the theatre,—*ouden pros ton Dionyson*, there is no Dionysus in it. At length, this spirit of discontent produced the desired effect, and Pratinus of Phlius, the first of the satyric dramatists, was induced to restore the chorus of tragedy to the satyrs. The satyric drama in this

way consisted of tragedies with a change in the chorus, and must be distinguished, both in origin and character, from comedy. It is called "sportive tragedy." Partaking much of the character of the modern pantomime, the grotesque blended with the serious, it stood, as a stage performance, in the same relation to tragedy proper, which the after-piece holds to the five-act play of the present time. Indeed, a satyric play was usually placed upon the Athenian stage on the second of the two holidays set apart for theatric representations. The programme for the two days generally consisted of a trilogy and a satyric play: the fun and frolic of the satyrs, and their mirth-provoking dances, as a vivid contrast to the tragic in one and the same play, forming a very necessary relaxation to the minds of an audience that had patiently listened to three or more consecutive tragedies.

The origin of dialogue is shrouded in conjecture, although its introduction as an appendage to the cyclic chorus of Arion, may safely be referred to Thespis, the rhapsodist and dramatic poet of Icaria. Becoming a fellow citizen of the tyrant Pisistratus, Thespis brought himself under the notice of that ruler, by exhibitions of his dramatic skill, similar to those he had essayed in his native village. The earlier part of his life he had spent as a rhapsodist, travelling about from place to place, reciting his own or the verses of others, and frequently taking the position of coryphæus at the Dionysian revels, for which his native district was famous. Like the troubadour of the middle ages, the office of rhapsodist was honourable and remunerative, having been sanctified by the divine genius of the old rhapsodes, Homer and Hesiod; and the fact that the rhapsodic art has much in common with the dramatic art in its effects, is significant enough to raise the conjecture of an historical connection between the two. Can the dialogue of tragedy be traced to the alternate speeches in Homer? The arrival of two or more rhapsodists at a Dionysian festival, with all its

attractions of the mimic dance and dithyrambic chorus, may have led to the alternate recital of the speeches of Homer's heroes. Plato mentions an occasion on which a division of labour among the rhapsodists, enabled them to recite a whole poem in one day. But the practice was not general. The possibility of entertaining an audience with Homeric dialogues, may have induced the innovation of an actor exchanging speeches with the leader of the chorus. The conjecture, however, is not fortified by collateral evidence. The iambics of the dramatist have little in common with the hexametric measures of the Iliad or the Odyssey. Their literary character is as distinct as their prosodial. The latter are couched in figurative language; the former, where the alternate speeches are short, in the language of every day life. In fact, the many imitations of the lyric poets, found in the Greek tragedies, point to the source from which the dramatists drew their measures and style of composition, and seem to throw discredit upon the notion of an Homeric origin of the dialogue. It has been supposed that the actor was at first introduced during the interludes of the drama, or during the necessary pause in the exhausting operations of the choreuti. The principle of the antistrophe in the chorus had been recognized in Arion's time, and this in itself, if it did not suggest, would smooth the way for the innovation of the dialogue.

What part Thespis played, when he first appeared as an actor in connection with the cyclic chorus, it is difficult to say. By means of pigments on his face and linen masks he was able, it is said, to personate more than one character during his interruptions of the chorus. An anecdote, told of him, testifies to the impressive character of his representations. When he first essayed his art as actor before an Athenian audience, the drama in which he took part was witnessed by the two greatest men of the age, Solon and Pisistratus. The latter, who subsequently owed his

restoration to the *arche*, to the dramatic effect produced upon the minds of the populace by a representation of Minerva riding through the city, and whose political obliquities are forgotten in presence of his protective zeal for the literary art, encouraged the tragedian in his efforts. But Solon condemned the innovation, declaring, with the sternness of a lawgiver, that if falsehood and fiction were tolerated on the stage, they would soon find their way into the common occupations of men—an argument fallacious enough, but which is used *ad nauseum* against the modern theatre, by people who know less about the stage as an educative agency than Solon did, whose premature opinion of the art of Thespis, was certainly unguided by experience. In the *Ars Poetica*, Horace makes the following allusion to Thespis:—

Ignotum tragicæ genus invenisse camœnæ,
Dicitur, et plaustris vexisse poemata Thespis,
Quæ canerent agerentque peruncti fœcibus ora.

This has given rise to the idea that the theatre of Thespis was a mere perambulating show, a kind of *spectaculum gesticulantium*. The phrase *vexisse plaustris poemata*, may possibly refer only to the ambulance which carried the 'properties' from one town to another. But it is more feasible to suppose that the Roman poet confounds the small stage or platform on which the actor stood, in order to be on a level with the chorus, with the appliances which Susarion, the comedian, used in his excursions round the Isthmian districts. The part which falls to Thespis, in the development of the drama, has been fairly stated in Mahaffy's conjecture—"We would fain believe that an acquaintance with the mysteries and deeper theology of the day, suggested to Thespis the representation of human sorrow, for a moral purpose. There seems no trace of this idea in the earlier dithyrambs, which sang or acted the adventures of Diony-

sus as a cult and not as a moral lesson. But it seems that with Thespis may have arisen the great conception, which we see full blown in Æschylus—the intention of the drama to purify human sympathy, by exercising it on great and apparently disproportioned afflictions of heroic men, when the iron hand of a stern and unforgiving Providence chastises old transgressions, or represses the revolt of private judgment against established ordinance.” Be this as it may, his improvements, whatever they were, gave to the drama its permanent form. The enthusiastic ingenuity of the poet was fostered by the great patron of Athenian literature, and the “new tragedy” grew into favour with the populace. Pisistratus, we are told, added greatly to his popularity by building a temple, in which a record might be kept of victories won in dramatic competitions. Indeed, so rapidly did tragedy work its way towards perfection, that within a century from the time of Thespis, the little stage or table from which the actor addressed the chorus, or on which he produced his dramatic illusions, had been supplanted by the *pulpita instrata modicis lignis* of Æschylus, who, as Horace says, taught the actors the art *magnum loquendi et nitendi cothurno*.

The mantle of Thespis fell upon Phrynichus, who reached the acme of his dramatic fame in the two plays, which were put upon the stage under the supervision of Themistocles as his choragus. The name of the most famous of these, the *Phoenissae*, is all that is left of it, although we may acquire some knowledge of its character from the *Persae* in which Æschylus is said to have closely imitated the style of the older dramatists. Another of the tragedies of Phrynichus has been rendered famous by the circumstances attending its first and only representation on the stage. Under the title of the *Capture of Miletus* it stands as one of the earliest of the many unsuccessful attempts to represent dramatically immediate events in history. The *malapropos* of the piece

was its condemnation. It moved the thirty thousand listeners to tears; but it touched their pride and inflamed their remorse, exciting a full blast of their envy against the men, of whom Phrynichus himself had probably been one, who had counselled them wisely. In the condemnation of Phrynichus and his play, we get a glimpse of that spirit which brought Socrates to the hemlock-cup, which sent Themistocles into exile and which defamed Demosthenes and Pericles. The unlucky poet had to pay his thousand drachmas, not because his art was on the wane, but because, like Socrates, he had pricked the ignorance and folly of a people who plumed themselves on their intelligence. Several improvements in the drama have been referred to Phrynichus, but it is almost impossible to say what these were, so few of the fragments of his writings are extant. By separating the actor from the exarchus, he created the interest of personal antagonism or contrast in the dialogue, drawing out the character represented, by the turn of a phrase or the acumen of an answer or a question. He is said to have introduced female characters on the stage, and to have made several changes in the metres usually employed. Aristophanes speaks of him thus in the *Birds*:—

Enthen hosper he melitta
Phrunichos ambrosion
Meleon apebosketo karpon aiei
Pheron glukeion odan,—

and Plutarch has preserved an epigram in which his skill in inventing figured dances is referred to. Among his immediate predecessors was Choerilus, who is said to have written one hundred and fifty pieces, and to have made changes in the costumes worn by the actor; but it is Phrynichus, who forms the most prominent link in the chain of dramatists that extends historically between Thespis and Æschylus.

The development of the Greek Drama culminates in the genius of Æschylus and Sophocles. Sophocles certainly must be regarded as the *rex* of the Greek dramatists; but as it was Æschylus who, in limiting the functions of the chorus, brought into full play the histrionic faculty, by introducing a second actor on the stage, and in whose writings the drama assumed its highest and permanent form, there is no inconsistency in closing this part of our paper with his name instead of Sophocles. It is very little we know of his life. He was born at Eleusis, a little town on the north shore of Salamis. From the humble position of vine-herd, he rose to that of soldier, and is said to have gained some military distinction at the battles of Marathon and Salamis. In his first competition as a writer of tragedies, he was the opponent of Chœrilus and Pratinas; in his last he was obliged to leave the victory with Sophocles. After travelling in Sicily and other of the outlying Grecian colonies, he died at Gela, in the seventieth year of his age. This is about all there is left of the personal history of the great dramatist; and in seeking the development of the dramatic art in the fruits of his life and genius, we have to pass from the most imperfect of his tragedies to that with which his name has always been the most closely associated, the *Prometheus Vincetus*. The *Supplices*, perhaps the first of his works, is the oldest specimen of a Greek play in existence, if play it may be called. As may be expected from what we know of the primitive character of the drama, the chorus is predominant. Hamlet, or the chief actor, plays a part so humbly secondary, that the play might easily have been performed with the part of Hamlet left out. There is in the plot neither action nor surprise; in fact, the introductory stanzas reveal what there is of a plot, and thus the reader has to wade through the namby-pamby sayings of Danaus, without the hope of being surprised. In it, the dramatic of the dialogue is lost in the poesy of the chorus; it is the poetic struggling towards the

dramatic ; and this struggle is seen in several of the plays of Æschylus, ending, as it does, in the creation of character, which lies at the bottom of true dramatic power. Indeed, the creative genius of Æschylus as a dramatist, is to be seen repeated more in Milton than in Shakespeare. The picture of Satan, as his huge length lies “floating many a rood” with his pride unsubdued, and his angelic dignity little defaced, is the dramatic art in its sublimest effect, the dramatic art which, centuries before Milton, is seen culminating in the Prometheus of Æschylus. The temerity of genius is seen in both conceptions—the imagination of man playing with the affairs of the gods, and yet producing pictures with a god-like consistency of human knowledge. The imagination of Milton is the imagination of Æschylus, with the influence of previous models upon it ; and it is only the student who, among English students, has fallen under the spell of the sublime figures and almost divinely inspired thoughts of the English poet, that is able to enter into the spirit of the ecstasy of an Athenian audience, whilst listening to the Attic dramatist through his plays. Seated in that vast gallery of the Dionysian theatre, with the grandeur and glitter of an eastern splendour illuminating the stage, and with the reflection of the sun itself from the blue vault above for a footlight and headlight, those of the thirty thousand auditors, who could hear distinctly, must have been moved, not by the action of the play, but by the grandeur of the poet’s conceptions. To gratify the Athenian religious sympathies, the poet throws open that store-house of his, filled to repletion with dramatic energy, and overflowing perennially with mythic lore in the dramatic form. His comparisons between gods and men are as audacious as some of Milton’s invocations. As an orthodox pagan, he revels in the figures which his imagination, under the influence of the ancient mythology, sends bubbling up in his mind ; and his revelry has in it all the contagion of faith.

And herein lay his great influence to stir the Athenians. His gods and furies and ghostlike personifications were realities to his audience; through their belief he reached their hearts which he inflamed with his own poetic fire. *Strength* was to the Greeks an actual personality, sent down from the council of Jupiter to bind Prometheus to the rocky shadows of Mount Caucasus, just as Milton's picture of Satan has become a true picture to many Bible readers. The Titans, in the days of Æschylus, were still to be seen at work in the earthquakes, and all the known forces of nature were positive personal activities. The Gorgons were to the Athenians, what witches were to Macbeth and his vassals; Hades was no fancy, no prophetic hell, but the actual abode of the dead, with its presiding deities and shadowy multitudes. The war in heaven which threw the *imperium* into the hands of Jupiter, and sent Saturn down to "bottomless perdition" was to the Greeks no myth, but the actual fact of pre-cosmic times. Every forest, river and mountain had its presiding divinity. Gods and demi-gods were men created on a gigantic scale. Between human nature and god nature there was only the measure between the pigmy and the giant. The passions of hatred, despair and revenge in the gods formed only a higher phase of the same impulses in men. And it was from this treasure house of mythological faith and experience that the genius of Æschylus drew its inspiration. The sublimity of his mind was the sublimity of myth, and mythical terror. To inspire the Athenians with tragic awe at the uncontrollable power of Jupiter, and the evil results of ambitious tendencies against the will of the gods, is evidently the aim of the *Prometheus*. And is not the poet's success the success of tragedy itself? The play, like many others of Æschylus, is built up of the gloomiest passages of mythical and heroic images. The imagination of the writer gains the mastery over art. The true spirit of genius is seen in the vivid conceptions almost unconsciously

born of the mind which stud every chorus and which sparkle like gems in the grosser setting of the actor's words. "Æschylus does what is right without knowing it," said Sophocles. "His plays are not tragedies, but tragedy itself," said Schlegel. "His greatest dramas, like all highest poetry, formed the tranced insight of the imagination," says the modern critic.

Turning from the higher development of tragedy in the sublimity of the dramatic genius of Æschylus we retrace our steps in point of time to seek in the uncertainty of theory the origin of the Greek comedy. While tragedy, in its intimate association with religious rites and ceremonies, fell at a very early period under the fostering, protection of the State, comedy seems to have attained to some definite dramatic form only after a long period of irregular growth. The derivation of the word has some historical importance in strengthening the claim of the Dorians as the inventors of the art, if we agree to derive it from *koma*, the Doric word for village, and not from *komos*, a band of revellers. And yet the theory, that as tragedy was developed from the dithyramb and cyclic chorus, so comedy took its rise from the productions of the early comic satirical poets and from the phallic processions in connection with the vintage festivities, affords a reasonable excuse for adopting the latter derivation of the word. The *komoi* or vintage processions, were originally ceremonies in honour of Phales, the associate deity of Dionysus, which eventually degenerated into a kind of carnival, at which jests and ribald songs were indulged in by those who took part in the fun and frolic of the occasion. During these festivals, the holiday seekers of Megara were accustomed to pass from village to village in their rude waggons, singing satirical hymns as a part of the impromptu exhibitions of which the so-called holiday chorus of Dionysus formed the centre, and allowing no one who came in the way of their maudlin frenzy to

escape their not altogether harmless mirth. Among the villagers of Attica in later times there existed a custom somewhat similar in its effects, according to which they would enter the city at night, with their faces disguised by the lees of wine, and make merry by means of lampoons and satirical verses at the expense of those who had given them cause of offence in their conduct of public affairs. It is difficult to say how far these customs were connected with the origin of comedy, yet there is reasonable ground for believing that the toleration of this *mardi gras* of ancient times and of its abusive speeches formed the traditionary excuse or license, which protected Aristophanes and the Attic comedy-writers in their ridicule of the philosophers and public men of Athens. It is also not improbable that in the special hymns and choruses sung on these holiday and turbulent occasions may be recognized the *nuclei* from which comedy was developed, just as tragedy sprung from the religious or cyclic chorus; though there is no direct historical warrant for saying that any of these compositions ever assumed a definite dramatic form or were incorporated in subsequent comedies.

Beyond mere philological surmise, the idea that comedy had its origin among the Dorians is further fortified by the fact that their descendants, the Spartans, had a kind of comedy in which the Helots made sport for their masters; but this, which was more or less pantomimic in its character, had little in common with the true Greek or Attic comedy. The historic birth-place of the comedy of Aristophanes and his contemporaries is Megara, whence the art was exported which Susarion introduced into the country districts of Attica, and Epicharmus developed in Sicily. Susarion was the first of the comic poets to turn comedy-writer, or comedian-author, just as Thespis was the first of the rhapsodists to turn tragedy-writer and actor; and nearly all we know of him, is as a kind of itinerant showman

performing among the Attic villages." It is Epicharmus who has been honoured with the title [of the father of comedy. In the early part of the fifth century before Christ the Sicilian colony had reached the zenith of its glory in the splendour of Hiero's court at Syracuse, and it is under the patronage of that king that we are to look for the full development of what has been called the Sicilian comedy in the hands of Epicharmus, Phormos, and Deinolochus. Of the last two we know little except the names of the comedies they wrote. Phormos was an Arcadian, and as tutor of the king's children was held in much favour at the Syracusan Court. He is said to have written six comedies. Deinolochus, the contemporary and rival of Epicharmus, wrote fourteen dramas, of five of which the titles have been preserved. By far the greatest of the three writers, however, was Epicharmus. He was born in the island of Cos. After spending some time as a student under Pythagoras, he took up his residence at Megara, in Sicily, and there set himself the task to reform the earlier Sicilian drama, and to drive from the stage that vulgar buffoonery which marked the customs from which comedy sprung. Several fragments of his writings have been preserved. In his plays there seems to have been as little plot as in the early Attic tragedy. The wit and humour of his pieces, set in clever dialogues, played around the mythological records of gods and heroes, or parodied the scientific thought and investigation of that day. As an illustration of his travesties of the gods, may be cited his comedy of the *Marriage of Hebe*, in which the greater part of the fun is drawn from the supposed gluttony of the Olympic heroes. The habits of the Sicilians, who are said to have degenerated from sheer excess, must have added to the piquancy of the plot, when they beheld the gods satirized on account of that gluttony which was an every day occurrence among themselves. In their excess in eating and drinking may

probably be found the cause of the popularity of the *parasite*, a character which Epicharmus has the credit of inventing, and which has been perpetuated in the Roman plays of Plautus and Terence. Having the reputation of a philosopher of the Pythagorean order, Epicharmus also introduced a vein of philosophical thought into some of his plays, which probably formed the source from which Euripides in this respect largely drew his innovations in Attic tragedy. The fragments of the writings of Epicharmus remaining to us, however, give no definite outline of the form which the comedy assumed in his hands, or of the relation between his chorus and actors. We know more of the literary and critical character of his plays, which seem to have embraced a wide variety of topics, mythological, philosophical, social and political, than the manner in which they were represented on the stage. His praises, uttered by later Grecian writers, moreover, leave no room to doubt that his reform in comedy was a reform inaugurated by the highest genius. Before his time the Sicilian comedy was little better than the irregular pasquinade of revellers, such as that portrayed by Sir Walter Scott in his description of the "Abbot of Unreason," or the carnival frolics still to be witnessed in some of the Italian towns; and though it is difficult to establish any direct historical connection between the so-called Sicilian comedy and the old Attic comedy, except in their common Megarian origin, yet the inventive talent of Epicharmus has been duly recognised by all critics as one of the most important elements in the development of the art of comedy writing.

Attic comedy is usually considered in its three aspects, the old,* the middle and the new. The old comedy seems

* There is some difficulty in distinguishing the old from the middle comedy. The plays which have been included under the middle comedy are supposed to have been more subdued in their tone, with their witticisms somewhat generalized: they were non-political. Of the new comedy we know more from the imitations of Latin comedy-writers; for it was from the new comedy that Plautus and Terence borrowed the plots which so long amused the Roman citizens in such plays as the *Captivi* and the *Adelphi*.

to have developed with the growth of Athenian democracy. It opened up a new source of amusement to a people so engrossed in politics as the Athenians, by satirizing political events, and social weaknesses, and by ridiculing the men who stood prominently before the public gaze—the statesmen, orators and philosophers of the time; and in this way it came to lose much of the vulgarity and obscene wit of Susarion's time. Cicero says, that, as an influence in politics and a restraint on morals, it received the sanction of law; though it is also known that on several occasions its virulence had to be repressed by the Archons.

The earliest of the old comedy authors to be mentioned here is Chionides, who wrote at least three comedies, of which the names and a few fragments survive, just sufficient to indicate their political tendency. His contemporaries were Magnes and Euphantides. The former, a native of the same deme in which Thespis, the father of tragedy, was brought up, is mentioned by Aristophanes as an old man neglected by a once favouring public, and as the author of several plays; from two of these, it may be said, the author of the *Birds* and *Frogs* borrowed these titles. Euphantides is known only from his nickname *Kapnias*, and from one of his plays the *Satyrs*, in which the State appointed a definite chorus, and thereby for the first time raised the Attic comedy to the dignity of a satirical play.

In tracing the development of the Attic comedy up to the time of Aristophanes we need only mention other three of his predecessors. First comes Cratinas, who has been called the *Æschylus* of political comedy, and who has been spoken of in the following words by a Greek writer: "Those who first in Attica constructed the general scheme of comedy brought in their characters without method, and placed as their highest object excitement to laughter. But when Cratinas took it up, he first limited

the number of characters to three, thus correcting the irregularity, and moreover, he added a serious moral object to the mere amusement in comedy, by reviling evil-doers, and chastising them as it were with a public scourge. Nevertheless, even he shows traces of earliness, and even slightly a want of method." He seems to have outrivalled on more than one occasion Aristophanes, the Sophocles of comedy, whom he ridicules as a pedant, and treats to a shower of his own virulence. He wrote twenty-one plays of which the names and numerous fragments are still extant. The second of the three authors is Crates, who in imitating Epicharmus, was less virulent in his satire than Cratinas, confining himself in his plots to the affairs of life in their more generalized aspect, and shunning everything in the way of personal abuse. Of his plays there is but one fragment left, which indicates, so far, the moderate tone of his writings. The third name is that of Eupolis, upon whom the mild example of Crates seems to have been lost. He was brilliant in his wit and refined in his style, but was accustomed, it is said, to break out into the scurrility and rude personalities of earlier times. Somewhat in that spirit which animates the editors of some of our daily journals in their political prejudices and partizanship, he seems to have used his pen in lampooning the person against whom his political spleen was for the moment aroused, "pursuing a relentless opposition policy against the democratic party and their aristocratic leaders." He is said to have been drowned by the scrapegrace Alcibiades whom he had ridiculed in the *Baptai*, a play in which the ribaldry and obscenity indulged in by the young aristocrats of Athens were exposed. It is uncertain that either the offence or the punishment occurred, though the retribution may have been held up as a warning to subsequent scurrilous writers. There is no doubt but that the vituperative spirit of Eupolis passed all ordinary bounds, especially when he turned his

pen against his friend Aristophanes whom he had previously assisted in composing the *Knights*.

The comedy-writers above enumerated, however, only glimmer like stars of a secondary magnitude in the morning twilight of Aristophanes' great reputation. The name Aristophanes is the synonym for Greek Comedy, as it is from his dramas we are able to learn for ourselves what it was in the hey-day of its fame and highest development. We know, it is true, from the fragments of his predecessors, and from references made by him and other writers, that comedy must have fallen into his hands in a well developed condition: and it is even said by some critics that had fate preserved the works of his contemporaries, as it has his, the permanent position he now occupies as the greatest of Greek comedy-writers might have been endangered. Be this as it may, it is from his eleven plays handed down to modern times that we can know with certainty the form comedy had assumed in his time. Extemporaneous effort on the stage had disappeared in the fixed dramatic arrangement of dialogue and chorus. As in tragedy, the chorus was a State-appointed body, duly trained and regulated in its actions in the theatre. The number of actors was reduced to three. There were competitions among comedy-writers as among tragedy-writers, and the emulation to gain the prize was as great in the one as in the other. In his time the *parabasis* or interlude attained to the fulness of its popularity and influence, while the language employed was developed into the purest of Attic, standing as it does midway between the everyday speech of the citizens and the figurative style of the tragic poets. From his plays we learn with pleasurable effect, of the license which once prevailed in Grecian manners, and can analyze the wit and humour, the satire and fancy, the ingenious versatility of him who has portrayed so well the ludicrous side of Athenian civilization. The intellectual power which begat such

dramas as the *Knights*, the *Clouds*, and the *Birds* was well worthy the eulogy of the greatest mind of Greece, which may be read in Plato's famous epigram. As far as we of the present time have been permitted to judge, Aristophanes stands unequalled among the comedy-writers of Greece. The richness of his imagination is fitly governed by the gracefulness of his language which runs in a pure Attic stream. Nearly every page of his writings indicate the careful skill of the finished artist, while many of his choruses breathe the purest spirit of poetry. In nearly every one of his plays, he retains his influence upon the reader by means of his playful irony, his sly allusions and his intimate knowledge of human nature. Even when in the *Clouds*, the satirist belittles the philosopher whom Xenophon and Plato have trained us to admire and revere, the imagination runs riot with our judgment, and we are apt for the moment to look upon Socrates as merely an advanced type of the Sophist, a man of many words, a busy-body. Nor need we wonder at the havoc thus wrought upon our good nature by an influence which worked such mischief to "the noblest of the Greeks," among those who ought to have known him better than we can possibly do. Socrates himself evidently knew how the Athenian mind had been warped to his disadvantage by Aristophanic caricature; at least he is represented by Plato as making at his trial a pointed reference to the evil influence. The prejudice created in the student's mind, however, is only momentary. He soon perceives that the caricature is too broad to have any historic significance. It is the conservatism of comedy run mad, with a method in its madness. As is well known, the restlessness of thought during the lifetime of Socrates was a great cause of alarm to Athenian orthodoxy. The logical or rather illogical quibbles of the Sophists played havoc with the mythology on which paganism rested; and when true science lifted its head in the So-

cratic philosophy, it was an easy matter for the unreflecting populace to develop Socrates, the thinker, into the greatest of the Sophists. Thus when Aristophanes, in the legitimate spirit of the old or political comedy, made sport of the Sophists in the person of Socrates, the best known of Athenian philosophers, he merely prepared a dish which he believed the Athenians would relish. It was the business of comedy to make sport of every innovation; and if Socrates was not a Sophist, he was certainly an innovator, and this was probably sufficient to justify the great comedy-writer in his own mind, in associating with his name all the absurdities of the Sophists. In the same light, must be viewed the pictures which Aristophanes gives us of Cleon, Euripides, and others. As author, he wrote to satisfy the conservatism of a dominant democracy, the bitterest kind of conservatism. To produce a pleasing effect he appealed to the ignorance which has light enough only to laugh at wisdom; and yet, strange though it may appear, in such service, the Greek comedy reached its culminating point. Tragedy as Aristotle says, purifies our affections by terror and pity, and the comedy of Aristophanes had evidently for its purpose a like purification by laughter and ridicule. "Never again," says Grote, "will the full and unshackled force of comedy be so exhibited. With a universal liberty in point of subject, there is combined a poignancy of derision and satire, a fecundity of imagination and variety of turns, and a richness of poetical expression such as cannot be surpassed and such as fully explains the admiration expressed for him by the philosopher Plato, who in other respects must have regarded him with unquestionable disapprobation. His comedies are popular in the largest sense of the word, addressed to the entire body of male citizens on a day consecrated to festivity, and providing for their amusement or derision with a sort of drunken abun-

dance, out of all persons or things standing in any way prominent before the public eye.”

The enterprise of the students of some of our American colleges in resuscitating the *Œdipus Rex* and the *Antigone* of Sophocles as stage performances, adds a further degree of interest to any modern investigation in connection with the Greek Drama. The first attempt to place a Greek play upon the stage of a modern theatre was made by the management of Covent Garden in 1845. The experiment was repeated in Dublin, when the part of *Antigone* was taken by an actress, whose fame was at its height, when the writer was a student in Glasgow. The representation was spoken of as a great success, just as were the late efforts of the students of Harvard and Toronto universities. But the word success in such criticisms can only be used in a limited sense. Such resuscitations can give but a feeble picture of the grand semi-religious dramatic festivals which the Athenian populace was wont to enjoy two thousand years ago. With the exception of the Olympic Games, there was no greater event in the routine of Athenian existence than a contest among the tragedy and comedy writers ; and the expense itself of some of these dramatic representations—frequently more than five hundred thousand dollars—affords us some idea of the extravagant grandeur of the theatre of Dionysus and its ‘properties.’ With its tiers of seats rising one upon the other in the semi-circular sweep of a hill-side, this great structure is said to have accommodated thirty thousand people, and in such a way that all could see and hear. From far and wide, the country folks flocked to witness the plays which had previously been selected by a council appointed for that purpose ; with the Athenians themselves it was more or less a religious duty to attend the theatre. In early times the admission was free, but eventually to prevent disorder and overcrowding a charge of two obols was

made, though it became customary for the State to pay for the indigent, in order that no one considered worthy would be excluded from joining in the ceremony of the public adoration of the national deity. To exclude a Dionysian devotee from the theatrical festivities on account of his poverty would have been as gross an insult to Athenian piety, as it would be to Christian piety to shut the church door in the face of one whose all is the widow's mite. Each person provided himself with a cushion for his seat, while there were reserved seats in the front for those high in authority. Women were allowed to be present at the tragedies, but the comedies were only for the males. The expense of training a chorus was generally assumed by a wealthy citizen who was ambitious to stand well with the democracy. The person who occupied this office was known as the *choragus*, and Xenophon tells us of the dignity attached to the position. He also drops a hint in regard to the rivalry which sometimes sprung up between successive choragi, who as supervisors of theatrical arrangements became partners or patrons of the poets in competition, and took upon themselves the heaviest share of the responsibility of success or failure. As the chorus was appointed by the State, the needy dramatist in these days as in ours had not unfrequently to seek shelter in the political influence of a richer neighbour. Of the manner in which the competitions were conducted we know very little; but as might be expected under the active emulation of extravagant choragi, no expense was spared in arranging a tetralogy for the stage. Everything must have been on a magnificent scale of splendour. The stage itself was a large oblong platform, facing what we call the 'pit' or the open space on the ground floor set apart for the chorus and the satyric dances. Its breadth was very narrow for its length. Above and below it, there was the necessary machinery for lowering a god

through the fleecy clouds of linen, or for raising some wretched shade or demi-god from Pluto's realms. There were, it is said, splendid decorations of carved wood shining with gold, and immense shifting scenes which in later times were arranged according to the principles of perspective. There were three doors for the actors, whose actions on the stage were subject to the most formal regulations. There was also a curtain which could be drawn up through a slit in the front of the stage, by means of strings running over pulleys, to be used when it was necessary to conceal the operations of the scene-shifting. Everything, however, was constructed on an exaggerated scale. The actors and the chorus were alike superbly attired in long flowing robes of brilliant hue and costly texture. The thick soled buskin added greatly to the natural height of the actors, while their utterance was strengthened by means of a pipe inserted in the mask which they always wore. On this account, notwithstanding all the pantomimic magnificence, which neither the students of Harvard nor Toronto could hope to equal, the Athenian stage must have fallen far short of what we nowadays think the stage ought to be. There must have been much of "the art that appears" and little of "the art which hides itself" in the conduct of the Athenian actor upon the stage. The 'tragic walk' of the Athenian Booth or Irving may have been in keeping with the sublime iambics of the divine Æschylus as far as Athenian dramatic taste went, but it could not have been other than unnatural. The heavy copper mask must have hidden every facial expression. The clumsy buskin must have impeded the natural movement of the actor's body as he passed across the stage, just as the mask-tube must have given an artificial tone to every word he uttered. The varying emotions excited by the changeful expression of the eye, the muscular play of the features running over the whole gamut of the passions,

the heart and blood action in the listener produced by the throbbings of the human voice from grave to gay, from deep wrath or indignation to the high tone of jubilancy—these must have been experienced by the Athenians more from their orators than from their actors. The Greek stage was a mirror convex in its effects : everything was gigantic but often out of proportion. And thus it is that when we seek the origin of that influence which the drama exercised upon the Athenian mind we must fall back upon the genius of the dramatist. He it was who by his literary efforts fortified the Athenians' faith in the gods and thus promoted Greek civilization. It was the *religious* spirit more than the intellectuality of Athens which was played upon by the art of its dramatic poets ; and hence with one of the factors of the effect lost in the past, our modern stage representations of Greek plays can only be successful in a very limited sense.

THE GENIUS AND LIFE-WORK

—OF—

LONGFELLOW.

A PAPER READ

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BY

GEO. STEWART, Jr., F.R.S.C.,

First Vice-President of the Society.
