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the Soudan "shall soon stretch out her hands unto God." And He will say, "Blessed be Egypt, My people."

SAMUEL GARRATT.

ART. V.—ÆSCHYLUS.

THE grand characteristic of Æschylus is terror. All forms of awe find in him their most powerful embodiment, and its most favourite embodiment is the supernatural. Six out of seven entire surviving dramas attest this. The great trilogy is a triple-twisted cord of crime, retribution, and expiation. In the "Prometheus" the entire conception is formed from a supra-human standpoint. The sympathy of all Nature in her mightiest forms waits upon the sufferer whose doom was procured by his relief of the sufferings of humanity; yet proper humanity is wholly excluded from the action, as being too puny, abject, and ephemeral to contribute even sympathy for the great Titan, their benefactor. The "Seven against Thebes" is one continual clash of arms and parade of the horrors of war, amidst which rises ever and anon, as in a minor key, the wail of the terrified maidens of the Chorus, now anticipating the havoc of capture, now dirging the fratricidal brothers, whose death crowns the plot, if plot it can be called, with a catastrophe in kind. But amidst the whole natural terror of the scene there hovers, like a vulture in lurid gloom, the curse of Œdipus on his unnatural sons, imparting a supernatural climax to the tragic intensity. In the "Persians," impious human pride finds its loftiest impersonation then known to history in Xerxes. Here again the poet breathes his native air of martial ardour. We hear the crash of the charging triremes and the splintering of their oars, the war-cheers of the Greek mariners, the trumpet-call to action, and the roaring rush of beak and broadside as the galleys lash the waves of Salamis into foam. Solemnly, over the demoralized remnant of the broken host, rises the august Shade of Darius, the father-king, whose wisdom had built up the empire shattered by the audacious rashness of his son, to learn the tale of rout and wreck and ignominy from the lips of living despair; and to denounce the impious havoc of altar and sanctuary as having drawn down the lightning of Heaven's vengeance on his overweening son. Pride and sacrilege must have a fall. Strict reckoning and heavy damages must all expect who so presume. With such words of cold comfort the royal ghost sinks back beneath the tomb.

The sole exceptional play is the "Suppliant Maidens."

Their innocent fears, and heroic ecstasy of resolve to die rather than be wed by force, form the chief topic of pathos. The sagely gnomic father who chaperons their flight from Nile-mouth to Argos, and the chivalrous lord of the soil and city who guarantees their safety when there, form a companion pair of heroic portraits in mighty *chiaroscuro*. They are rescued from the marauding pursuer, escape the contemplated noose and precipice, and are received under public protection, as their father assures them, "rent-free." Here the story pauses rather than terminates, being continued in the next number of its trilogy, the "Danaïdes," which has perished.

Through the whole series, religion is the motive. As conceived by the poet, it was full of awe and gloom. The will of Zeus the inscrutable, with stern Necessity—the inevitable—to support and back it, like a beacon, radiating lightning, platformed on a tower of adamant, is the source whence all springs, the deep to which all returns.

The rise of the Greek Drama, especially its Tragedy, finds a close parallel in that of the Western mediæval stage. Not only in the facts of its plot being those of sacred story, but in the material altar of a deity being its scenic centre, the close alliance of religion with histrionic representation stands cemented, and shows from how deep a root in human nature the dramatic instinct springs. The Greek original of the word "scene" serves alike for the erection which the genius of Æschylus adorned, and in the LXX and New Testament for the "Tent of Meeting." The thymele, or altar of Dionysus, was not only the one fixture around which scene and actors revolved, but even became, as in the "Choëphoræ" and the "Persians," an actual chief piece of stage furniture, appearing there as the tomb of a hero-king. Precisely in the same way the first mediæval theatre was a church, the altar of the Sanctuary figuring as the Holy Sepulchre, the drama being the "Resurrection," and the first performers the choirmen or monastics. This was precisely the state of public sentiment congenial to Æschylus. Tragedy and Comedy alike kindled their first fires by a brand snatched from the altar. In his hand it became a torch of sacred mysteries, in that of Aristophanes one of festive revel and headlong license.

The successive phases of Greek tragedy in its three mightiest masters represent closely those of Greek thought—Religious in Æschylus, Ethical in Sophocles, Rhetorical in Euripides. It is with the first only that we are concerned at present. He was warrior as well as poet, like Calderon and Lopez de Vega, monarchs of the Spanish stage. They had both been Churchmen, too, before they wrote, and Æschylus had learned of

Pythagoras, and was not improbably an Areopagite, and an Initiate of the mysteries. As with them, his sympathies were mixed from his experience; but his genius sprang from the most eventful crisis of his country's fortunes—the struggle of the heroic few against the barbarous many, of tactics inspired by patriotism and guided by skill against brute force. He belongs to the great half-century which, after the establishment of Greek independence, placed the key of maritime empire in the hand of Athens. His contemporary was Pindar, more delicate, versatile, and dazzling in art, and more expressly chivalrous, as his standpoint is more purely human, in sentiment. But in both their minds religion, although tinctured in Pindar by the critical faculty, formed the largest and grandest factor. In Æschylus this element often thrusts all others into the background. The gods in the "Prometheus" and the "Furies" not only hold the stage, but fill it. The portentous presence which met momentarily the eye of Æneas when the films of humanity were purged from it, seems to have been normally present to his:

> Apparent dirae facies inimicaque Troiae
> Numina magna Deum.

But, as there in the crash of Troy's overthrow, all is stern and awe-inspiring. Every god of the Æschyleän drama is a jealous god—jealous of his own attributes and prerogative, jealous of human success and prosperity, as though feeling therein a *laesa maiestas*, jealous even of the fame of heroic deeds and the renown of triumphant valour.[1] It is in reliance on this feeling that Klytæmnestra persuades her husband against his sounder instincts to march on tapestry from his chariot to his palace, and thus, from the superstitious standpoint of the age, sets a man-trap for him in spreading it, much as William the Norman did for Harold in the relics on which he induced him to swear. Only the relics were in that case hidden from view; in this the sumptuous carpet is spread for all eyes to see. This arrogance in the moment of success to which she counsels him is the anti-climax to the desperate suggestion of Job's wife in the darkest hour of his suffering, "Curse God, and die!" It is in effect, "Defy Heaven, and never mind the consequences!" He, however, consents at last with deprecating apprehension, as of divine wrath before his eyes. We see here the mind of the future murderess bent on sealing his doom with consent of deities to his fall. But it requires a fine and close insight into the mode of viewing things adopted by a reverential Greek to discern the awful weight of her impious motive. She seeks to stamp him with Heaven's condemnation, and then to strike

[1] τὸ δ' ὑπερκύτως κλύειν εὖ βαρύ.—*Agam.*, 469.

him down in security, forsaken by the angered gods. Thus she closes a strain of adulation chiming in with her treacherous counsel by the invocation with concealed meaning:

> Zeus, Great Effective! grant my prayer's effect!
> And have Thou heed to what Thou art t' effect.

Here the prolonged play upon the words τέλειε, τέλει, τελεῖν, reminds us of Macbeth's "If 'twere *done* when 'tis *done*, then 't were well 't were *done* quickly." Then follows the choral ode presentient of murder in the air. The poetic augury, drawn now from the monarch's consent to presume, had hovered vaguely before round the sacrifice of Iphigeneia, the cruelty to the vanquished and the pride inspired by conquest. It becomes more defined at this provocation given. I will present it to the reader in the prose paraphrase of a careful Cambridge scholar.[1] It would be difficult to find a passage in which this aspect of Greek deity is more clearly seized:

Why does this hovering phantom ever flit before my heart, and why can I not spurn it and restore confidence to my soul? I have seen the Argive host set sail for Troy; and now with my own eyes I have witnessed its return. But still my heart of its own impulse sings the Fury's lyreless dirge, and refuses to be encouraged by hope. And I know that this feeling within me is not all in vain, and that it points to some fulfilment of my forebodings; but yet I pray that my fears may prove groundless and without result.

Great prosperity is ever insatiate to extend its limits, reckless of the close neighbourhood of calamity; and human fortune, as it sails onward, strikes a hidden reef. Yet the sacrifice of a part of the cargo to save the rest may keep the ship from sinking, and the fortunes of the house from falling, and one plenteous harvest averts all danger of a famine. But far otherwise is it when the life-blood of a man has once fallen to the earth; this no incantations can recall. Were this not so, Zeus had never stopped Æsculapius from raising the dead. My only hope is in the thought that one line of fate fixed by the gods may sometimes interfere with another line of fate (also fixed by the gods), and so hinder it from securing too much; were this not so—had I not this desperate hope to encourage me—my heart would outstrip my tongue and pour forth all its burden. But, as it is, I can only hide my grief in darkness, sore vexed, and with no hope of ever seeing order come out of this confusion, while my soul is burning within me.—*Agamemnon*, 975-1034.

The whole notion of any hope of Divine mercy is here ignored. The very foremost note of religious solace as known to us is silent. The mere fact of external success provokes the wrath of Heaven, without regard to the inward temper of the successful. That wrath may be averted by flinging overboard a part, which act becomes an insurance to the residue. But when homicide has been committed, the loss is total, and the only hope left is that one line of fate may overrule or neutralize another. Who could draw the waters of consolation

[1] Mr. W. W. Goodwin, *Journal of Philology*, No. xx., p. 229.

from such a rock as this? This is really the key to the monotone of gloom which pervades Greek, and especially Æschyleän, tragedy. Man is weak, and God or fate is mighty; but besides, man is prone to overfill the cup, and God is relentless to dash it to the ground.

A well-defined general characteristic of Æschylus is the closeness with which he clings to the skirts of Homer, and is content with intertwining two or more threads from the epic loom. In the great trilogy, however, we see that epic myth had fructified by the inclusion of various fruitful germs before it reached Æschylus. In him we trace the profounder ideas of a perpetuated curse, a retribution treasured up against the perpetrator of crime, and the notion of blood requiring blood as an expiation—one murder, as it were, washing out another, and requiring its effacement by a third. Thus the daughter's death is the plea of the faithless wife for slaying her husband, while that deed calls down vengeance by the hand of her son. Here at length theurgic means interpose to stay the ruin of the house from being total. It is, however, by no prerogative of mercy, but by formal trial and bare acquittal on the merits, and still further by ceremonial purgation, that Orestes is at last rescued and spared.

"Homer," no doubt, in Æschylus's day, included a great deal more than our "Iliad" and "Odyssey." There was a tendency among the rhapsodists to claim no authorship for themselves, but to affiliate all their effusions upon the Father of Epic; whilst in expanding and rearranging the pre-existing poems of the epic cycle, a license reigned with no scruple to refrain or criticism to control it. Thus the epic Νόστοι, or homeward voyages of the hero chiefs from Troy, including, of course, the sons of Atreus, may have furnished the tragedian with themes or incidents which cannot now be traced to their source. A large number of the lost dramas of Æschylus seem by their titles, and, where fragments remain, from those fragments too, to have been taken from such an epic repertory.[1]

Round the great trilogy peculiar interest will always centre; everyone who thinks of Æschylus thinks first of that. The fate of Agamemnon by the hand of his treacherous rival

[1] Those of the Trojan cycle are the following: the "Thracian Women," founded on the suicide of Aias (Ajax), of which perhaps the "Heralds" formed the satyric afterpiece; the "Myrmidons;" the "Mysians;" the "Adjudication of (Achilles') Arms;" the "Bone-gatherers," a satyric drama to a trilogy which included the Penelope following: the "Penelope;" the "Proteus," satyric epilogue to the Oresteän trilogy; the "Telephus;" the "Philoktetes;" the "Ransom of Hektor;" the "Soul-weighing." This last is founded upon a single passage in the "Iliad" (xxii., 209-13), but was by the poet applied to the fatal struggle of Achilles and Memnon, in

Ægisthus, with his queen, seduced by the latter, as an accomplice and secondary, is continually kept before our minds in the "Odyssey," and gives to the Eleventh Book, containing the hero's visit to the Shades, its most interesting episode. The fidelity of Penelope, beset as she is by suitors on all sides, forms a striking contrast to the treachery of Klytæmnestra, who yielded to a single suitor; just as the return of Odysseus in disguise, to conquer at last by the aid of a faithful few, is contrasted with the return of Agamemnon, flushed with victory, to perish by domestic treason. The Odysseän narrative is very simple. Ægisthus, having corrupted the affections of Klytæmnestra, and made away with a bard whom Agamemnon had appointed as her custodian, sets a spy to watch for the hero's return, then meets him with feigned hospitality, and invites him to a stately banquet with a large retinue of comrades. They are all slaughtered there, Ægisthus's followers also being all killed. Agamemnon is slain "as one might slaughter an ox at the stall." How far his wife had a hand in the actual deed is not consistently stated.[1] She is, at any rate, equally involved with Ægisthus in its guilt; although the Titanic traitress of the Æschyleän Klytæmnestra is foreign to Homer's conception of womanhood, and by him she is drawn as "gifted with good principles," but yielding to Ægisthus[2]—a woman who slides, in short, from weakness to wickedness, but not the arch-hypocrite, crafty, vindictive, resolute, and bloodthirsty, which dwarfs all other female figures in tragedy. Ægisthus on this is lord of Mykenæ for seven years unchallenged. In the eighth year Orestes returns; but though he slays Ægisthus, there is no direct statement that he slays his mother, and the one line which seems to countenance it is probably one of the numerous later accretions on the Homeric text due to the popularity of the legend in its later form.[3] If this surmise is correct, the Homeric proto-

which application some poet of the epic cycle had perhaps preceded him. The precise links which connect the plots of several of these with Homeric incidents have been considered in my preface to volume iii. of the "Odyssey," pp. lvi. foll., and need not be repeated here. But I may add to the list the "Odysseus Pseudangelus," mentioned by Aristotle, "De Poët.," c. 16.

[1] See "Od.," iii. 250 foll.; iv. 516 foll.; xi. 409, 410, and 453. That she assisted and abetted seems clear, although we are probably to regard the death-blow as given by Ægisthus.

[2] *φρεσὶ γὰρ κέχρητ' ἀγαθῇσιν.*—"Od." iii. 266.

[3] The passage is "Od." iii. 309, 310:

δαίνυ τάφον 'Αργείοισιν,
μητρός τε στυγερῆς καὶ ἀνάλκιδος Αἰγίσθοιο,

in which the latter line seems to me suspicious. See some remarks in Preface to vol. ii. of the "Odyssey," pp. xxv., xxvi.

plasm of the story is merely a murder complicated with adultery, and the vengeance taken for the former. There was room between Homer and Æschylus for intervening poets to expand the tale. The sacrifice of Iphigeneia was probably unknown to the poet of the "Iliad," in which the detention of the Greek fleet at Aulis is expressly mentioned, but without any notice of the victim to release it. This generated a blood-feud, as it were, within the house itself, and opened an ethical question with opposite sides, by which the tragedian at once complicates the plot and reinforces its moral interest. In short, by the time that Æschylus fastened upon it, it had acquired all the materials suited to his genius. Similarly nothing about the Thyesteän banquet and the quarrel of Thyestes and Atreus is traceable in "Iliad" or "Odyssey," although a favourable occasion for noticing it occurs in the tale of the "demise of the sceptre" of Agamemnon.[1] We see from these facts how slender was the Homeric source, and how full the later flow of the legend had become under the treatment of Stesichorus and others. On all these fruitful germs of horror and pathos the genius of Æschylus set sympathetically to work.

The closest parallel to that genius is to be found in Dante, differentiated by the intense personality which the later poet imports into his tremendous descriptions, and by the bitter root of patriotism which he infuses. In sculpture Æschylus is symbolized more closely by Michael Angelo than by his own near contemporary, Pheidias. The gracious majesty of the Olympian Zeus by the latter is wholly foreign to the stern and awe-guarded potentate who personifies the inexorable and darkens doom by portents in so many passages of the Æschyleän Chorus. Dante was limited in his sternness by Christian tradition; but the feeling which has made the "Inferno" more popular than the "Paradiso" shows how much there is and ever was in human nature on which Æschylus could draw for sympathy in his Oresteän feast of horrors. Either poet was "back-boned" in his conceptions of humanity by the theology of his time. But there is in Æschylus more of religious reserve. He does not lay bare the whole subject in the ruthless visions with which Dante dwelt familiarly. He rather deals in partial glimpses of the inscrutable, and hints through figures of mystery that, but for the reserve imposed, "he could a tale unfold," than actually unfolds it. He seems to hold the clue of a labyrinth of which a step only

[1] The passage was early known as the Σκηπτροῦ παράδοσις, and is referred to by Thucydides, l. 9, as giving that designation to the whole section of the poem which included it. It is "Iliad," ii., 100 foll.

here and there peeps up to light. Whether he had any coherent and connected system of what we may call theology in his mind may be doubted; but that there was a lower deep either of dogma or of questionings than he cared to reveal, especially as to the ultimate relations of the will of Zeus to destiny, and the attributes of that will in reference to human responsibility, seems clear. The phantoms of these ghostly thoughts seem to flit before his mind, never fully exorcised nor made to deliver their burden in the light of day. He heaves the lead deep down, but it never really touches the bottom, and leaves the mind which has laboured through his mystical enigmas of language overwhelmed with a vague sense of the unfathomable.

But all could feel the fascination of the terrible which pervades his *mise en scène*, and to which the least educated minds in every age are most susceptible. All could thrill with horror at the spectral charnel-house of the palace, and the captive maiden-prophetess walking to her foreseen doom amid the ghastly visions of earlier victims of the same polluted hearth. All would feel their flesh creep and blood curdle as the train of sleeping hell-hounds rouse and scent their fugitive, and rush off in pursuit. The veil of startling and abrupt imagery, the confusion of metaphor and simile, which so often checks the modern student of his page, would rather add a zest of mystery to those who witnessed his drama, marching, without complexity of plot, right to the end, and by its tremendous impressiveness forcing its sense into the difficulties of dialogue, or even chorus, by a sympathetic illumination drawn from the action itself. A large portion of those difficulties arise from the nature of his subject, which required a deeply shadowing drapery rather than a nude exhibition of thought. Another portion are due to the imperfect formulation of Greek syntactic principles at his period. This, which is largely traceable even in Sophokles, appears on a much greater scale in the earlier master. The analytical exercises which come so powerfully to the front under Sokratic influence in the next age had not begun their process of solving and re-combining according to law when he composed. Hence we have vast lumpy phrases, turning on no dialectical hinge, incorporated in his odes as they occurred to his mind. They are strung on to one another, as it were, fortuitously, and gain rather than lose in their awful impressiveness by their oracular style and loosely floating massiveness of diction. His mind seems like a sea choking with the wreck of an iceberg, where the fragments roll so deep that you cannot trace their true form. There is, perhaps, no poet in the study of whom it is so needful to catch the governing idea, and yet where the governing idea is so difficult to seize.

His best-known editor in this generation, Professor Paley, says, after noting the difficulty caused by some of the mental characteristics above dwelt upon:

> In the next place Æschylus is difficult, because his mind was given to brood over subjects in their own nature obscure, and the point and interest of which centres in the very fact of their being obscure. Dreams, prophecies, oracles, bodings, omens, and portents, were the favourite food of his fancy. In a word, the supernatural was his delight. We have ghosts and demons, furies and gory spectres, prophetic ravings and dark presentiments—all grand and terrific both in the language in which they are clothed and the conceptions which they embody.

One salient point of myth, which I have not seen duly noticed by Mr. Paley or anyone else, is the utterly immoral attitude of the Zeus of his "Prometheus." The fact of this play having been the middle drama of a trilogy, the first and last members of which are lost, prevents us from knowing how far the poet reduced these attributes, if he did reduce them, ultimately to his normal view of the Will of the Supreme being the solvent of human paradoxes. It is not enough to say, as Mr. Paley says, "In the 'Prometheus,' daring rebellion is curbed and disobedience is made a fearful example." The sympathies of the spectator are and were clearly intended to be from first to last with the suffering demigod—how is the relative antipathy to his tyrant and persecutor to be evaded? The deliberate cruelties of the opening scene, in which the benefactor of humanity is impaled to the rocks of the Scythian steppe, are meant to harrow the feelings, and the key-note of the drama is struck by the hammer of the fiend Brute-force, here personified. The sympathetic reluctance of the Fire-god himself to wreak these tortures on a kindred being of immortal mould would carry the audience with them. If one wished, on the other hand, to produce from the ancient drama a full-length portrait of selfish and ruthless tyranny, it would nowhere be found so fully and faithfully drawn as in the Prometheän Zeus.[1] The sufferer's sole crime is his boon to hapless mortals in their misery, on whose extermination Zeus had resolved. He is a new ruler, with the taint of usurpation, and is depicted as inexorable, arbitrary, of merciless inhumanity, and trampling by the aid of his thunderbolts on domestic sanctities. Beyond even this, the stigma of base ingratitude rests upon him. Prometheus had been at pinch of need his

[1] One may cite a single line as an epigrammatic epitome of the tyrant, *τραχὺς μόναρχος οὐδ' ὑπεύθυνος κρατεῖ* (324): add to this the accessory touch of the untrustworthiness of tyranny in its own nature, as founded on the fear which casts out love, *ἔνεστι γάρ πως τοῦτο τῇ τυραννίδι νόσημα, τοῖς φίλοισι μὴ πεποιθέναι* (224, 225). It is uttered by Prometheus, but evidently expresses the poet's own moral standpoint also.

ally, had aided in establishing his sway against the faction of hostile powers, and counselled him how to disable permanently those who withstood him. Zeus, further, is a monster whose love and whose friendship are equally fatal. The hapless princess Iô is first haunted by flattering yet terrifying visions, and is then by the edict of oracles from Pytho and Dodona driven outcast from her father's house, under fearful threats, her shape transformed from human to bestial, the ever-wrathful and ever-watchful Argus set upon her tracks, as it were to keep her restless, for whom, when a sudden doom removes him, the tormenting gadfly, his eidôlon after death, is substituted (567-574, 642-682). Retaining her own feelings and utterance, she appears with wild cries of agony, vainly entreating Zeus to terminate her woes by death, and too intensely absorbed in her suffering to notice at first that of Prometheus extended before her. They confer, and each tells his or her tale; the common point of sympathy being that Zeus' gratuitous and ungrateful cruelty is the root of wrong for each. Prometheus then reveals the future link of destiny which connects them yet further. He had before proclaimed that Zeus should yet need his aid; he now discloses that Iô's descendant in the thirteenth generation (770-74) would imperil the tyrant's sway, who would be, unless rescued by Prometheus' counsel, the victim of his own lawless passions (908-927). This would enable Prometheus to dictate his own terms, the choice apparently lying between his unconditional release and Zeus' overthrow by the son of Iô's line, who is no other than Herakles. Zeus further seems to know less of the future than Prometheus, from whom he seeks to extort some further information about the secret of the fates. The demand for this by Hermes, as Zeus' envoy, forms the last scene in the play. On Prometheus' disdainful refusal the whole scene breaks up with thunder from above and earthquake from below, and we have a glimpse of the "winged hound of Zeus" entering to fasten on his immortal prey. Baffled of everything but the exercise of brute-force and the infliction of pain, the slave of carnal appetite, and the tyrant-tormentor of his benefactor and paramour, Zeus is the standing example of the "right divine to govern wrong." Prometheus, the philanthropist and benefactor of god and man, is requited by an immortality of torture not *per accidens*, be it observed, but expressly *because* of his kind and helpful efforts towards the doomed and helpless race of men, appointed victims of the same tyrant's wrath. To him might be almost applied the words, "He saved others, himself he could not save;" while the proverb, "Physician, heal thyself," appears in nearly literal

phrase in the reflections of the Chorus on his doom.[1] The implied parallel diverges from this point absolutely. Prometheus is haughty and defiant—as resolute, implacable, and unbending as Zeus himself. The great heathen ideal, it is needless to say, shows no trace of the Lamb of God, in gentleness, resignation, and blamelessness of utterance; and the divergence is even more instructive than the parallel. For these reasons the loss of no single drama is more to be regretted than that of the "Unbinding of Prometheus," which contained whatever solution of this conflict of goodness and right with cruelty and might the poet was able to effect. The tenor of one rather long grand passage is known to us from Cicero's Latin translation ("Tuscul. Quæst.," ii. 10); but it turns wholly on the pains of Prometheus, and yields no trace of the ethical harmony after which we wonder in vain. Wild trains of Oriental mythology seem to meet us in this grand exercise of the poet's mysticism. The cow-headed Herê appears here in the reflex image of Iô transformed, the victim of that jealous goddess, whose share in this outrage on her rival is only glanced at (590-2). The form is familiar to us from Dr. Schliemann's Myceneän excavations, and is referred to a Vedhic original. The Brahminical sanctity attaching to the ox has thrown the long shadow of its powerful superstition down to modern times, as witnessed in the episode of the "greased cartridges," which led up to the Sepoy outbreak in 1857. Besides this, we have the essential sacredness of fire, supposed stolen by Prometheus and given to mortals, which still survives among the Parsees; as well as the transmigration of souls in the death of Argus and the appearance of his eidôlon[2] as the gad-fly, while the notes of his pipe still haunt the charmed air (574-5).

This aspect to the mind of Æschylus of a suffering saviour of mankind is one of the most striking figures in all heathen mystic theology. Prometheus suffers not as a propitiation that he *may* rescue, but penally, because he *has* rescued; and his will is not in accordance with, but in resistance and defiance to the will described as Supreme. This, instead of bringing God and man together by reconciliation, drives them further apart. Nor has the rescue any reference to sin or pollution, even ceremonial, but solely to the miseries of mortal life. The expiator and purifier, even as the oracular revealer of that will, is embodied in another distinct mythical form—that of Apollo or Loxias, especially as he appears in the "Furies." These last

[1] *Κακὸς δ' ἰατρὸς ὥς τις ἐς νόσον πεσὼν ἀθυμεῖς καὶ σεαυτὸν οὐκ ἔχεις εὑρεῖν ὑποίοις φαρμάκοις ἰάσιμος* (473-5).

[2] *βροτῶν εἴδωλα καμόντων*, "Od.," xi. 476, cf. xxiv. 14, is the Homeric phrase for the shades of the departed; cf. "Prom.," 567.

have been by some regarded as the objective shadows cast by an evil conscience. But that is not the conception formed of them by Æschylus.[1]

To return for a moment to the moral problem of the "Prometheus." If any doubt could remain that the feeling of detestation expressed for Zeus is shared by the poet, let us regard the attitude of the Chorus, to whose special function ethical comments on the action pertain. They, when threatened by Hermes at the close with the tyrant's thunder, show no touch of feminine weakness, although full of tender, womanly sympathy so far; they declare, in short, their resolve to suffer, if need be, with the suffering hero, and reject with lofty disdain, touched by female impetuosity of self-sacrifice, the suggestion of cowardice and desertion and truckling to superior force (1063 foll.). This is their last word on the subject.

Æschylus belongs to the heroic school of poetry. He not only receives and moulds the epic legends, but he shares largely their antique and simple spirit. What he brings to them is a mind which had drunk deeply of the Pythagorean doctrines from the West, of the Ionian sages from the East, and of oriental mysticism from that further orient, which the collision with Persia brought within the mental horizon of Hellas. But these teachings were overlaid on a nature-worship, the protoplasm of the Greek Olympian pantheon, in which we trace vast elemental deities all rooted in Mother Earth and called thence "Chthonian." Earth seems to hold all powers in her lap. Stagnant and impassive in herself, the energy passes from her under the various forms of good or evil genii, potent in proportion as she is inert. She rears the produce which supports all life, and, as she is the source, is the receptacle of all. She thus is appealed to when any of these genii become oppressive in their agency. Iô, haunted by her gadfly, the eidôlon of the earth-born Argus, appeals to Earth to efface or suspend his infliction upon her.[2] The Suppliant Maidens

[1] The *conscience* of the sufferer is at rest. He has obeyed a divine mandate as well as fulfilled natural piety, as then understood, although by an outrage on the ordinary relations of nature. It is that outrage which brings the furies upon him, as the avengers of any infraction, however justifiable, of nature's law, especially one in which blood is shed. The curious special pleading which the situation calls out, touching the father's right and mother's wrong, and the share of either parent in the son's personality and consequent claim on his duty, shows in the mimetic struggle of the stage, more clearly than any passage in real history exhibits it, the weakness of human casuistry to decide on difficult questions of duty by the light of nature ("Eumen.," 657-66). In short, the whole illustrates rather the weakness of conscience, until trained by a revealed ideal, than the strength of it.

[2] Ἄλευ' ὦ Δᾶ.—"Prom.," 568.

make a similar appeal: "Mother Earth, Mother Earth! turn away the fearful omen."[1] This old nature-worship had been largely displaced by the newer mythology; and the struggle between them is represented by the Titans, etc., overthrown, and Zeus with his satellite deities enthroned in their stead. The tenacity with which he clings to the antique mythology stamps Æschylus as more primitive in his religious conceptions than even Homer. He seeks to reconcile the old and the new, and in reconciling somewhat confuses them.[2] On this, however, I have not now space to dwell. These Chthonian powers appear chiefly in a noxious or punitive agency: authors of fire, flood, earthquake, pestilence, and blight.[3] Among them seem to be classed the Fates and Erinyes, who guide the helm of Necessity ("Prom." 516), and therefore are foremost powers. But these are daughters of Night, as representing perhaps the primeval darkness before earth yet was. They form a dark background occasionally in other tragedians, where the sympathies of the subject require it, as in the "Œdipus at Kolonus" of Sophokles. But in Æschylus they obtrude in the foreground of his grandest theurgic conceptions, and dwarf for the purposes of dramatic interest the agency of the brighter dynasty of deities. Being mostly demons of darkness, they demand and receive expiation and propitiation, and on their acceptance of it, to darkness they return.[4] The ghosts of the dead have the further connection with earth which arises from the associations of sepulture. They are wrought upon by spells which gain power by reiteration and accumulation, and the prolonged stationary pause in the action of the Choëphoræ at the tomb of Agamemnon, which shallow critics often blame, is nothing else than the gradual working of the appeal addressed by his children to the royal shade, acquiring concentration and intensity up to the necessary point which rouses him effectually to assist them. We have seen how Prometheus is made to know more than Zeus—nay, claims knowledge of all the future, and nothing can surprise him.[5] Yet he asks with nervous eagerness, just before the Nymph-chorus enters, "What is this rustling as of birds, the ether whirring with light wing-strokes? All that comes near me alarms me!" Similarly the shade of

[1] Μᾶ Γᾶ, μᾶ Γα, *βοαν φοβερὸν ἀπότρεπε.*—"Suppl.," 890, 891.

[2] See Mr. Paley on "Prom.," 213, and "Eumen.," 1.

[3] See the stanzas sung by the Chorus in the scene which concludes the drama of the "Furies" and closes the great trilogy, in which the exertion of such noxious influence is expressly renounced as against Athens. "Eumen.," 938 foll.; cf. also 810-18.

[4] Cf. *βᾶτε δόμῳ, μεγάλαι φιλότιμοι Νυκτὸς παῖδες ἄπαιδες . . . γᾶς ὑπὸ κεύθεσιν ὠγυγίοισι* ("Eumen.," 1032-6)—the invocation under which they withdraw.

[5] *πάντα προὐξεπίσταμαι σκεθρῶς τὰ μέλλοντ', οὐδέ μοι ποταίνιον πῆμ' οὐδὲν ἥξει.* —"Prom.," 101-3.

Darius is first of all in ignorance of the catastrophe of the Persian force, and asks the news, as Rip Van Winkle when unearthed from his cave; then proceeds to develop a knowledge of details which have *not* been told him, in order to draw the necessary moral that impiety brings down ruin on the sacrilegious ("Persæ," 693, 715, 717 foll., compared with 809 foll.). He begins by being unaware that the leader of the expedition was his own son, and he ends by giving the information that in it the Persians had not scrupled to wreck and burn the Greek shrines! Omniscience and prophecy are rather unmanageable stage-properties.

Our poet was an ardent conservative of the Solonian Constitution as remodelled on the expulsion of the Peisistratids. He had little sympathy for the growing extension of political rights to every citizen, and the removal of checks to popular impulse. He regarded such changes as so many steps towards anarchy. Yet he is no venerator of Oriental absolutism.[1] The stand made in vain in behalf of the Areopagite political influence shows that he treasured it as a brake-power on the downhill force of democracy. To this end he dedicated the crowning effort of his great genius in the last scenes of his mighty trilogy. Its failure may be said to have drawn after it the demoralization of Athenian political life. So long as the Areopagus subsisted as a state-force, there was an influence at work above party with its degrading strife, its disintegrating forces, and ever-waxing unscrupulousness. It had not been extinguished for a generation ere political murder became a common resource. Had its powers remained unshorn at the ominous epoch of Arginussæ, the voice of Sokrates would not have been uplifted singly and in vain in favour of acquitting the generals arraigned for the loss of their crews. From that time onwards the impulses of alternate cowardice and ferocity prevailed among the populace more and more freely, the strife of parties became strained into a life-and-death struggle, and Athens was her former self no more. But of this gloomy train of political consequences the poet knew not. He is believed to have retired to Sicily; some said in mortification at his defeat by younger poets, some said a victim to the bigotry of the Athenians; more probably in disgust at the rising tide of democracy under the leadership of Perikles and Ephialtes, with the feeling expressed in his own line:

καθιππάζει με πρεσβύτην νέος.[2]

[1] This is sufficiently clear from the attitude of the hero-king to the Suppliant Maidens, who must consult his people ere he guarantees their reception, although he afterwards undertakes to persuade his subjects ("Suppl.," 397 foll., 517, 518).

[2] "Eumen.," 731, with the adaptive change of sex merely, the Eumenides being female.

Æschylus appears to view man as firmly fixed in the grasp of Necessity, yet as morally responsible. We must suppose that he held that what befell man externally was what fate fixed, but that his inner nature was free. But acts of impiety soon entangle a man in some inner web of Atê, whence nothing can extricate him.

But the poet regards Justice as bound to prevail, although not all at once. This justice has an outwardness about it which shows that moral problems had been only superficially examined. It does not seem to seek to correct the sufferer or to warn the careless by example, but to strike a moral balance of retribution against sin. The overthrow of Troy, however, may be taken as an instance in which human justice went hand-in-hand with divine. It is the breach of hospitality, the outrage against "Zeus Xenios," not the stain of sexual impurity, which is prominent in the poet's view of Helen's abduction. For the injurer to get off scot-free would be a fatal precedent, an affront to the moral sense, and a breach of the moral order. No question of his repentance and forgiveness seems ever to occur to the mind as part of the possibility. The poet seems always to assume that the guilty harden in their guilt, or that, without assuming that, to forgive would be weakness—a trifling with the supremacy of that pillar-principle δράσαντα παθεῖν, that "the offender must suffer." He has, by offending, laid the wrong on some one else; and that wrong is *his own*, it must come back to him. He must reap as he has sown.

The same conception, without its poetical vehicle, will be found to underlie the social sense of right and wrong in practice among all half-civilized tribes still. No inner moral work of justice on the soul, no turning of man to righteousness, seems ever contemplated by them. The grand conception of a future judgment was, however, held by Æschylus—"There is a Zeus below who judges offences in the last judgment." "The god of the unseen state is a stern scrutineer of man, and notes all that he does in the tablets of his mind." Such are some of his utterances on the subject, with which others of Pindar, his contemporary, are in close harmony; as, for instance, in the second Olympian Ode: "Among the dead sinful souls at once pay penalty, and the crimes done in this realm of Zeus are judged beneath the earth by One who gives sentence under dire necessity (*i.e.*, from which there is no escape)."

Harsh and mechanical as many of the features of this ethical system are, it has a true and noble ring on the whole. It was a living sense at Athens at the time, not a theory of some clique of philosophers. The character and popularity of Aristeides proves this; and it was a higher one on the whole than ever prevailed there at the successively later epochs of Greek

history. The age which saw the grandest sacrifices of patriotism and the noblest inspirations of poetry witnessed also the highest moral standard. From this high-water mark public and private morals sink together until one stood "on Mars' hill" five centuries later and proclaimed the regeneration of the world.

HENRY HAYMAN.

ART. VI.—THE ROYAL MAIL.

The Royal Mail: its Curiosities and Romance. By JAMES WILSON HYDE, Superintendent in the General Post Office, Edinburgh. Second edition. William Blackwood and Sons.

THIS is a very readable book, and we are by no means surprised to observe that a second edition has been quickly called for. The author has held an appointment in the Post Office, we learn, during a period of twenty-five years; and it has been his practice to note and collect facts connected with the Department whenever they seemed of a curious and interesting character. He has made good use of the Annual Reports, and various authorities, official and private; but his information is given in a chatty and anecdotal style.

The chapter headed "Strange Addresses" contains many amusing instances of mistakes made, from various causes, in addressing letters. Sometimes the writing is so bad as to be all but illegible; sometimes the orthography is extremely at fault; sometimes the writer, having forgotten the precise address, makes a paraphrase; sometimes, through forgetfulness or interruption, only a part of the address is given. The vagaries of writers in addressing letters indeed are manifold.

"No. 52, Oldham and Bury, London," was once written for "No. 52, Aldermanbury, London." "Epsig," "Ibsvig," "Ipswitz," and fifty-two other varieties of Ipswich were noticed on letters addressed to the Danish and Norwegian Consul in that town. A letter from Australia addressed to

Mr ———
Johns 7
Scotland

proved to be intended for Johnshaven, a village in the north of Scotland. On one occasion the following address appeared on a letter:

too dad Thomas
hat the old oke
Otchut
10 Bary. Pade
Sur plees to let olde feather have this sefe;