

Euripides on the other hand is intelligible, but prosaic ; his scenes are those of everyday life ; his language is that of the man in the street ; his characters are human, too human in fact, being at times positively mean.

The moral tone of their respective tragedies is considered. Æschylus aims at making men " noble, vigorous and brave," Euripides on the contrary makes them clever and " prudent," so that " specially they know much more Of keeping house than e'er before." Aristophanes, the Tory, has but little sympathy with this point of view.

After such preliminary fighting the poets came down to detail.

SCENE IV.

A Hall in Pluto's Palace arranged like an Athenian Court of Law. In the background Pluto is seated on his throne, beside which stand four attendants. In front is Dionysus conducting the trial ; on his right stands Æschylus, on his left Euripides. The Chorus are present in Court as interested spectators.

Chorus. Now we long to hear from you,
Gentlemen of light and leading
What will be your first proceeding
With the enemy in view.
Fury is upon their tongue,
Both have got their manes erect,
And their nerves are highly strung ;
This is what we may expect :
He will speak with polished phrasing,
Smoothed and sharpened with a file ;
He with Titan volleys blazing
Scatter all his shifts and guile.

Eur. Well then I take his Prologues (1) first to test
For that comes naturally earliest.
The statement of his subjects is obscure.

Dion. Which will you test ?

(1) The " Prologos " is that part of a Greek play which precedes the first entry of the Chorus. (" Parodos "). In the works of Æschylus and Sophocles the prologue would often be a whole scene ; in Euripides it tended to consist of one or two mere introductory speeches, explaining the situation before the action of the play properly begins.