

involved to Zeus in a wedlock which he desires—is used by Aeschylus, as we shall see, for a main pivot on which the action of his trilogy turns.

Sixth, the Argive legend of Io, the daughter of Inachus; beloved by Zeus, hated therefore by the jealous Hera, by her bereft of reason and changed into a heifer; tortured through her wiles, first by the watchful Argos "the herdsman hundred-eyed," and after he is slain by Hermes by the maddening sting of the gadfly, which drives her from land to land over all the earth in endless wanderings. At last she reaches Egypt and has her human form and her reason restored to her by a touch from the hand of Zeus. By that same mere touch also she bears Epaphus, the ancestor of a long line of princes in Egypt and Argos which culminates in Alcmena, and her great son Heracles, the deliverer of Prometheus.

These six elements are the main threads which Aeschylus has woven into his trilogy. Half of them came from Hesiod; the others from various sources attracted and modified by the inward requirements of his shaping imagination. There is no other Greek play in which such a wealth of diverse mythological material is fused together and organized into a harmonious whole. The bare statement of these elements combined with a moment's reflection on the extremely refractory character of some of them, when looked at from the point of view of the religious and moral consciousness which we find everywhere in this poet—the passion of Zeus for Io, for instance, and all her unmerited sufferings, the imminence of his overthrow through another fit of amorousness—affords some measure of the force of that secret impulse which impelled Aeschylus to bring light and order into the innumerable crudities and irrationalities of the traditional mythology; affords some measure, too, of the potency of that inward fire which transformed such mixed matter into the vehicle of a lofty conception of God and Duty.

We shall best understand the movement of Aeschylus' thought in this trilogy if we suppose him to start from the conflict of two of the elements into which we have analysed his raw material. He had before him on the one hand Hesiod's account of the sinful presumption of the rebel Prometheus and his terrible punishment by Zeus. On the other hand he saw this same Prometheus established in Athens as a greatly worshipped God, side by side with Athene and Hephaestus, the children of Zeus, and, as Aeschylus conceives them, the ministers of his will. How were these facts to be reconciled? To us there is nothing here that needs explanation. In the vague all-absorbing gulf of Polytheism, the kaleidoscopic record of man's shifting and capricious fancies about the divinity which he dimly feels in the innumerable aspects of nature and human life, we are not astonished to find that the most violent contrasts may

peacefully repose side by side without awakening any sense of incongruity in the pious worshipper. But Aeschylus and his generation had advanced beyond this stage of primitive religious feeling. They felt the need of some organized scheme of divine things, some more or less systematic theology. If Prometheus, once the tortured rebel, is now an honoured power that works harmoniously in his own place side by side with the children of Zeus in that great system of which Zeus is the head and life, then there must have been a process by which the transfiguration was effected. The Prometheus-trilogy is the unfolding of Aeschylus' conception of this process. It begins in the Prometheus Bound with the most uncompromising exhibition of the conflict; moves onward in its majestic march through myriads of ages to the ultimate reconciliation in the Prometheus Unbound; while a final play probably represented the establishment of Prometheus in the grove of Academus with torch-light and song. Similarly the great Oresteian trilogy ends with the reconciliation of the dread Erinyes, now become the Eumenides, with the younger gods, the children of Zeus, and their installation with dance and song and festal light in fair Colonus. A subordinate motive which is never absent from the great Athenian poets meets us here, the glorification of their city. There are several things which compel us to envy the Athenians of the best time. But among them all there is nothing more enviable than this ideal light reflected upon their daily scenes from those works of grave and earnest beauty by which their poets and artists made the glories of an immemorial past live for them in the present, and joined their little life to the imperishable continuity of their city, the undecaying brightness of their heroes and their gods. We can scarcely wonder if, in the hour of danger, when a self-sacrifice without limits was demanded, an inspired statesman like Pericles could appeal to a civic consciousness such as we can only dimly and from afar off imagine, and presuppose in his hearers a passionate affection for their city, no less capable of bearing the test of uttermost devotion than the love of man for woman. (In the next number will follow a short account of the action of the trilogy, with some reflections upon it.)

"For I believed the poets; it is they
Who utter wisdom from the central deep,
And, listening to the inner flow of things,
Speak to the age out of eternity."

—Lowell.

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"Science was faith once; faith were science now
Would she but lay her bow and arrows by
And arm her with the weapons of the time."

—Lowell.