

individuals sacrificed. A dark, inscrutable necessity, which is not blind fate, but the action of a great, though perhaps vaguely understood, righteous principle, is discovered thwarting or overruling the actions of men. The recognition of some force which appeals to men's moral and religious instincts meets us in the tragedies of Æschylus and Sophocles. The strong religious element is still there. Men may no longer believe as children did in the exact literal personality of those who were called gods, but the divine is felt to be operative in human life. The vast and unexplored regions which lie beyond the range of man's investigating power afford scope for imagination. There are no uninhabited worlds, no regions where fortune, right and intelligence do not find expression. There are forces encountered by man which prove alike his helplessness and his greatness. There are realms which challenge imagination and there are powers and incidents which provoke curiosity. Life teems with experiences which suggest problems, and with conflicts which create tragedies. The religious man will think and evolve a theology. The poet will think and produce a drama. There will be poetry in the theology of the one and there will be religion in the poetry of the other. The constant questions of existence combine to foster the religious element in poetry.

That this is the case the most casual glance at the poetry of the past will prove to us. One or two illustrations will suffice.

We turn to Æschylus, for example, and we find that the pressing sense of the power, not ourselves, which makes itself felt resistlessly in human life, becomes operative in the poet's works. He represents an advance in human thought. The

more childish conceptions of the gods have lost hold upon men's minds. The thinking men and women of Athens can no longer believe in the capricious intervention of petulant and jealous deities in human affairs; but the great tide which moves forward and bears all human life along with it cannot be ignored. It must have a name. It is stronger than all gods. It is Fate or Necessity—man must endure.

I needs must bear
My destiny as best I may, knowing well
The might resistless of Necessity.

It is not, however, eyeless or senseless. It has the nature of deity, vague and dim, perhaps, but great, with some wide moral sweep of action, as an overlord of gods.

This power is not understood. Its actions are mysterious to men; they look capricious, envious at times, enigmatical, but they are actions which mean discipline and order. The proud are lowered, the bribes of men are disdained, the curse comes but comes not causeless. There is a force or power which men may forget but which they cannot wholly ignore.

There come times when the most careless is compelled to recognize it. Men are startled into the religiousness which in easy times pleasure helps them to forget, but which in hours of danger they are compelled to remember. The most natural illustration of this is Horace's well-known Ode, which I give in Conington's translation:

PARCUS DEORUM.

My prayers were scant, my offerings few,
While witless wisdom fool'd my mind;
But now I trim my sails anew,
And trace the course I left behind.
For lo! the Sire of heaven on high,
By whose fierce bolts the clouds are riven,
To-day through an unclouded sky
His thundering steeds and car has driven.