

the time of the action did not cover a greater period, and the action itself did not stray farther from one place than the time employed in presenting the play might allow. Unity of action required oneness of story, and the unities of time and place permitted only the crisis of that story. The events leading up to it had to be narrated, not acted. Yet there is another restriction arising from the chorus. The story could be presented from but one point of view,—the point of view of its sympathy for the hero, its reverence for deity, its desire to impart some ethical or religious principle.

This is the unit—this dramatization of a single-sided crisis—of which modern tragedy is the multiple. In later days the fetters of the unities are broken, there is unbounded license as to extent of time or place, and oneness of story has passed into the harmonious blending of several stories, by contrast, parallelism or interlacing. Singleness of perfection has changed to rich variety. "produced by the delicate development of many-sided character, and the complicated grouping of contrasting forms." Yet the same process which effects this breaks down completeness. For, directing the thought simply upon one story, one crisis of that story, and one face of that crisis, the situation can be worked out thoroughly. But when the attention is divided between several stories and conflicting phases of events, fragmentariness ensues. Yet this fault is more than compensated by the virtues which accompany it. Plot is reduction of human experiences to artistic form, and that plot is the most admirable which covers the widest range of experience, and shows the most art in combining, as can modern, unhampered by antique restrictions. Which is the grander product of the sculptor's skill—the marble limbs or the marble man? The limbs, to be sure, arrive nearer perfection, for it can have more of the artist's care and attention in details. But the wondrous symmetry of the man, arising from the harmonious arrangement of a multiplicity of parts, is by far the more wonderful achievement.

Another feature, wherein modern surpasses ancient in dramatic art, is the by-scenes. In tragedy there must be suspensions of the plot, in order that the emotions of the audience, excited by some strong scene, may be rested. In the ancient drama this is done by the introduction of choral songs, argumentative discussions and epic narratives, which detract from the dramatic effect. The modern introduces incident of a lighter nature, but still dramatic. The ancient tragedian led his hearers along by-ways, passing through lovely gardens of choral odes, among the scene paintings of epic narratives, into the cloud regions of philosophic thought. The modern tragedian leads us not away from contact with men, but where men are seen under the influence of the more airy emotions, and in this way the excitation of the

hearer is relieved without suspension of dramatic action.

As the chorus determined the forward art of the ancient drama, so it determined the theme. The primal purpose of the chorus was didactic. It stood in the play as a body of ideal spectators, whose duty was to teach the audience what sentiments and emotions should be aroused by the action. In later days with the chorus has passed away its didactic function: for men have attained to more freedom of thought and feeling, and they require no one to show them the ideal influence that the action should exert upon themselves. In an open way the ancient, in a hidden way the modern, exerts its elevating effect upon heart and soul.

The theme of the chorus was religion, and so we find ancient tragedy drawing its inspiration and subject matter from the pure, profound depths of mythology. Its characters were gods and heroes, its action was a mirror of the noblest life. But this very ideality, this possession of particular natures, made of ancient characters, types and classes, they became cold and conventional. This quality is brought into stronger relief in comparison with the romantic tragedy which takes all humanity in its infinite variety as its dramatic personæ, and produces that reality, that diversity of characterization, which gives to modern its vigor, originality and warmth. Modern drama shows life as it really exists, "Coarse with fine, mean with heroic, grotesque with tragic." The ancient gives us life, but only select portions for æsthetic handling. It casts a mystic veil over life's stage and involves it in clouds, hiding the crudeness and extravagance in life, and showing men and things only in their ideals. Modern tragedy divides the veil, rolls asunder the clouds, and life appears in a natural light.

The ancient is religious tragedy, the modern is ethical tragedy. The principle of external, divine interference is replaced by that of the self-conscious, self-acting individual. In the modern the principles of the ethical world enter into man, and become the main-spring of his activity, and the tragedy in his life is the result of collision of ethical principles in himself. He is then a dramatic individual endowed with character, and developing according to the inherent necessity of his nature, not according to divine necessity. The religion of the ancient is outside of life, and acting upon life; that of modern is acting in life, and so comes nearer the heart of life. In the Elizabethan tragedy men's lives are depicted as they proceed under the guidance of natural law, not as they are "bound down by fatality, not as they are disorganized and denaturalized by irruption of the miraculous." Irony of fate replaced by irony of circumstances, destiny replaced by providence, retribution replaced by revenge, illustrate how the controlling principles of the two tragedies have changed.