

seem to me essentially frivolous. I anticipate a time, and that, too, before the coal-fields and great forests of the North are exhausted, when the South shall resume her ancient and normal supremacy; when the voices of other Isaiahs and Homers, of other Greek and Roman orators, of younger Cæsars and Napoleons, shall give new law to human thought and human destiny. Other Phidiases, Raphaels, Michael Angelos, Murillos, and Canovas will again be found at Athens, Florence, Madrid and Rome, or will rise with glorious masterhood at Mexico, Sonora, or Port Rico. If no divine decree has forbidden the resurrection of decayed nations, and with intention transferred their much abused pre-eminence to newer states that manifest a truer reverence and a juster appreciation of privilege, the site of the world must inevitably reach and penetrate the old seats of civilization, as well as every other region where climate and landscape are most congenial to grand necessities and the grandest development.

O. C. D.

\*Than the common notion that a high temperature is unfavorable to intense mental effort, nothing can be more absurd. In his Memoirs, prefixed to the works of Shelley, W. M. Rossetti, chapter XXIX, says: "It was a season of sultry heat and long drought; but this was, to Shelley, small objection or none, for he revelled in heat, and would court any amount of scorching weather from the suns of summer abroad, or from the winter fire within doors." And, were not the lives of Athanasius, Augustine, and Cyrian, who of all thinkers, have exercised the greatest and most permanent influence upon the world, mostly spent in Northern Africa.

I have noticed that general health is always at its best in Nebraska, during the hottest season; and have myself gained most in weight when the thermometer stood for a month at 108 in the shade.

### Origin of the Greek Drama.

The origin of the Greek Drama may be traced to the annual festivals, given by the peasantry, in honor of the God Bacchus, at the close of the harvest season. Bacchus was especially venerated as the inventor of wine and joint patron, with Ceres, of Agriculture. Upon these festive occasions, the natural fondness of the people for poetry and poetic recitation, together with their keen relish for the joke, gave rise to two kinds of extemporaneous effusions; the one, a kind of hymn directed to Bacchus; the other, the offspring of wit and wine with mutual jest and sarcasm.

From this ancient source has been developed the modern drama, with all its splendor; to us, of very little practical value compared with what it was to the Greeks.

Omitting much that has been said about the strolling Thespis and his influence upon the progress of the drama, I pass to a brief notice of the Tragedians Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides; the only persons of whom we can have any accurate knowledge and who may be regarded as representing distinct epochs in the progress of the Tragic art among the Greeks. Although some improvement had been made by the introduction of the Chorus and still more by introducing an actor, separate from the Chorus, and although Phrynicius had advanced still farther by dropping the ludicrous representations and elevating the mythological history of the country, still, the most important changes in the drama were wrought by the three persons just mentioned. Of each of the two older poets Aeschylus and Sophocles, we have but seven pieces remaining; but among these, according to the best authority, are their most distinguished productions.

Of those of Euripides, we have a much greater number; and if it were possible,

we might well exchange some of them for the productions of others, if for nothing more than the sake of comparison.

Aeschylus may be regarded as the Creator of Tragedy: "in full panoply from his head she sprang, like Pallas from the head of Jupiter." He clad her with dignity and gave her an appropriate stage; he was the inventor of scenic poetry and not only instructed the chorus in singing and dancing, but appeared himself as an actor. His characters are sketched with a few bold and strong touches. His plots are simple in the extreme; he did not understand the art of enriching and varying an action, and of giving a necessary march and progress to the completion and discovery of the plot. Hence his action often stands still; a circumstance which becomes yet more apparent from the undue extension of his Choral songs. But all his poetry evinces a sublime and earnest mind. Terror is his element, and not the softer affections. In his handling, desineny appears austere in the extreme; she hovers over the heads of mortals in all her gloomy majesty. He endeavors to make his language correspond to his gigantic sublimity of thought and the vast dimension of his personages. Hence he abounds in harsh compounds and overstrained epithets, and the lyrical parts of his pieces, from their irresolved construction, are extremely obscure. In the singular strangeness of his images and expressions he resembles Dante and Shakespeare. Yet in these images there is no want of that terrific grace which almost all writers of antiquity commend in Aeschylus.

He flourished in the very height and vigor of Grecian freedom, and a proud sense of the glorious struggle by which it was won, seems to have animated him and his poetry. He had been an eye-witness of the greatest result in the history of Greece, the overthrow and annihilation of the Persian hosts under Darius and Xerxes, and had fought with distinguished bravery in two of their most memorable battles. In his poems entitled "The Persians" and the "Seven before Thebes", there gushes forth a war-like vein; the personal inclinations of the poet for a soldier's life are apparent throughout. It was well remarked by Georgias, the Sophist, that Mars and not Bacchus, had inspired this last drama; for Bacchus, rather than Apollo, was the tutelary deity of Tragic poets, which, at first thought, appears somewhat singular; but then we must recollect that Bacchus was not merely the God of wine and joy, but also the God of all highest inspirations.

Among the remaining pieces of Aeschylus, we have a complete Trilogy. The Trilogy was a series of three plays, with which the poets, at a later period, contended for the prize of the goat; and which men connected by a common destiny running through the actions of all. In other words it was the thesis, the antithesis, and the synthesis. The three pieces which form the Trilogy of Aeschylus are the "Agamemnon," "Electra" and the "Furies". The subject of the first is the murder of Agamemnon by Clytemnestra, on his return from Troy. In the second, Orestes avenges his father by killing his mother: *facto pius et scelvatus eodem.* In the third, the conflict of natural duties is represented by a contention between the Gods, some of whom approve the conduct of Orestes while others persecute him, until Minerva establishes peace, and puts an end to the long series of crime

and punishment which had desolated the house of Atreus.

This much I have thought proper to say concerning the father of Tragedy, and I shall be content with a less lengthy notice of the writings of Sophocles and Euripides.

The birth of Sophocles occurred nearly midway between that of Aeschylus and that of Euripides; and for the most of his life he was the contemporary of both. He often contended with Aeschylus for the ivy wreath of Tragedy, and he out-lived Euripides, who also attained a good old age. Nature seems to have favored Sophocles in many respects. Born of rich and honorable parents and a free citizen of the most enlightened State of Greece, he possessed birth, necessary condition and foundation. Beauty of person and of mind, and the enjoyment of both to the utmost degree of perfection; a choice and finished education in gymnastics and the musical arts; the rich bloom of youth and the ripe fruit of age; the possession and enjoyment of poetry and art; the love and respect of his fellow citizens; renown abroad and the countenance of the Gods; these seem to be the principal features of the life of this pious and virtuous poet. When a youth of sixteen, he was selected to dance, on account of his beauty, at a celebration of a famous battle. He afterwards held the rank of General, as colleague with Pericles and Thucydides; and still later was elected to the priesthood of a native hero.

At twenty-five he began to exhibit tragedies; twenty times he was victorious; he very often gained the second place but never ranked so low as the third. He continued in his most successful career until his 90th year, and some of his best works bear even a still later date.

One gift was denied him by nature: a voice attuned to song. He could only call forth and direct the harmonious effusions of others; and consequently only appeared once upon the stage in the character of the blind singer playing upon an instrument.

The principal points of improvement in the dramas of Sophocles were a smoother polish of the rhythm, the introduction of a third actor, the multiplication of incidents, a more striking theatrical effect allowed to the more decisive action, and above all, a more harmonious perfection of mind than was possessed by Aeschylus.

According to some authors Sophocles was exceedingly fertile, having produced 130 pieces and according to the most moderate account, over eighty. However we have but seven of these remaining, including some of his greatest works; for example, the "Antigone", the "Electra" and two on the subject of "Oedipus". This simple reference to his writings must be sufficient for present purposes; and I pass to notice his successor Euripides.

So much has been said both to the credit and discredit of Euripides, that it is quite difficult to decide whether we should praise or condemn him. However, I think it must be admitted that he added much to the progress of the tragic art among the Greeks. Considered without reference to his predecessors or contemporaries, he is deserving of great praise; but he either lacked the lofty earnestness of purpose, or the severe artistic wisdom which we reverence in Aeschylus and Sophocles, to regulate the lux-

uriance of his splendid and amiable qualities.

"But with all this we must never forget, that Euripides was still a Greek, and the contemporary of many of the greatest names of Greece in politics, philosophy, and the fine arts. It, when compared with his predecessors, he must rank far below them, he appears in his turn great when placed by the side of many of the moderns. He has a particular strength in portraying the aberrations of a soul, diseased, misguided, and practically abandoned to its passions. He is admirable where the subject calls chiefly for emotion and makes no higher requisitions; and he is still more so where pathos and moral beauty are united. Few of his pieces are without passages of the most ravishing beauty. We cannot deny him the possession of the most astonishing talents; but we can truly say that these talents were not united with a mind in which the austerity of moral principles, and the sanctity of religious feelings, were held in the highest honor."

Quite a number of the plays of Euripides have come down to us; and as most prominent among them we might mention the "Alcestes", "Iphigenia in Aulis", "Ion", "Phædra and Medea".

On the score of morality none of them deserve greater praise, perhaps, than "Alcestes." As delineations of female passion and the aberrations of a diseased mind, Phædra and Medea, have been justly praised.

Much more might be said upon this most fruitful subject; especially concerning the form of the ancient theater and the manner of scenic representation.

This question, however, presents itself to me before closing: what difference was there between the influence upon and relation to the people of the ancient and modern drama?

Doubtless the difference was great. The relation of the modern drama to the people is simply that of artistic representation and amusement; while to the ancients its relation was one of political importance. It was the chief source of disseminating ideas among the populace, and from this fact its additional importance can easily be inferred. It was to Greece and later to Rome what the press is to America.

D.

### Granger Legislation.

In the last number of the STUDENT we find a severe criticism upon the misdirected economy of our last Legislature, in which the writer reviews the educational legislation and points out the short-sightedness of the legislators, and finally closes in the following significant language—"By the way, it is our private opinion, that it is a sample of Granger legislation, and we might further add, if we thought it policy, that we think the nation should celebrate, with due splendor and rejoicing, the death of that institution, whenever it may occur. 'God speed the day.'"

That the legislature of 1875 was short-sighted, and that its so-called economy will prove highly detrimental to the progress of the State, we shall neither attempt to palliate nor deny; but that all this should be attributed to the Grange element, we shall attempt to show, is not only unjust, but wholly false.

We did not suspect that our editorial friend would admit that the Grangers possessed so great influence as he would now have us believe that they wielded in the