cients and moderns have composed an endless variety of poetic descriptions, which, besides being very beautiful in themselves, are likewise useful models for the imitation of students. (See description of night, No. 131.)

Here is a description of the scenery presented by the Mississippi in its frequent inundations:

"All the soft, damp air was full of delicate perfume
From the young willows in bloom on either bank of the river—
Faint, delicious fragrance, trancing the indolent senses
In a luxurious dream of the river and land of the lotus.
Not yet out of the west the roses of sunset were withered;
In the deep blue above light clouds of gold and of crimson
Floated in slumber serene, and the restless river beneath them
Rushed away to the sea with a vision of rest in its bosom.
Far on the eastern shore lay dimly the swamps of the cypress;
Dimly before us the islands grew from the river's expanses—
Beautiful, wood-grown isles, with the gleam of the swart inundation
Seen through the swaying boughs and slender trunks of their willows.
And on the shore beside us the cotton-trees rose in the evening,
Phantom-like, yearningly, wearily, with the inscrutable sadness
Of the mute races of trees. While hoarsely the steam from her 'scape-pipes
Shouted, then whispered a moment, then shouted again to the silence.
Trembling through all her frame with the mighty pulse of her engines,
Slowly the boat ascended the swollen and broad Mississippi."

—*Howells.*

766. In poetry as well as in prose, even when description is the direct object of the composition, **life and action** should be constantly introduced to keep it from languishing. Notice the happy effect of the reference to the steamboat in the lines just quoted.

767. On the other hand, **narration** is adorned by introducing frequent brief descriptions, and by presenting the actions narrated so graphically that they appear like to a succession of pictures

Notice the vividness of the following descriptive narration:

"In his story a moment the pilot paused, while we listened
To the salute of a boat that, rounding the point of an island,
Flamed toward us with fires that seemed to burn from the waters—
Stately and vast and swift, and borne on the heart of the current.
Then, with the mighty voice of a giant challenged to battle,
Rose the responsive whistle, and all the echoes of island,
Swamp-land, glade, and brake replied with a myriad clamor
Like wild birds that are suddenly startled from slumber at midnight,
Then were at peace once more; and we heard the harsh cries of the peacocks
Perched on a tree by a cabin-door, where the white-headed settler's
White-headed children stood to look at the boat as it passed them."

—*Howells.*

768. In most other productions of art, good taste requires that the different species be kept separate from each other; but with regard to narration and description, especially in poetry, a great secret of success lies in the art of **blending them constantly together,** so that every action is painted and every scene presented as full of action and emotion.

769. As an example of poetic narration we quote the greater portion of Longfellow's "The Monk Felix":

"One morning, all alone,
Out of his convent of gray stone
Into the forest older, darker, grayer,
His lips moving as if in prayer,
His head sunken upon his breast
As in a dream of rest,
Walked the Monk Felix. All about
The broad, sweet sunshine lay without,
Filling the summer air;
And within the woodlands as he trod,
The twilight was like the Truce of God
With worldly woe and care;

Under him lay the golden moss ;
And above him the boughs of hemlock-trees
Waved, and made the sign of the cross,
And whispered their Benedicites ;
And from the ground
Rose an odor sweet and fragrant
Of the wild flowers and the vagrant
Vines that wandered,
Seeking the sunshine, round and round.

" These he heeded not, but pondered
On the volume in his hand,
A volume of Saint Augustine,
Wherein he read of the unseen
Splendors of God's great town
In the unknown land ;
And, with his eyes cast down
In humility, he said
'I believe, O God !
What herein I have read,
But, alas ! I do not understand !

" And lo ! he heard
The sudden singing of a bird,
A snow-white bird, that from a cloud
Dropped down,
And among the branches brown
Sat singing
So sweet, and clear, and loud,
It seemed a thousand harp-strings ringing.
And the Monk Felix closed his book,
And long, long
With rapturous look
He listened to the song,
And hardly breathed or stirred,
Until he saw, as in a vision,
The land Elysian,
And in the heavenly city heard
Angelic feet
Fall on the golden flagging of the street.

And he would fain
Have caught the wondrous bird,
But strove in vain ;
For it flew away, away,
Far over hill and dell,
And instead of its sweet singing
He heard the convent bell
Suddenly in the silence ringing
For the service of noonday.
And he retraced
His pathway homeward sadly and in haste.

" In the convent there was a change !
He looked for each well-known face,
But the faces were new and strange ;
New figures sat in the oaken stalls,
New voices chanted in the choir ;
Yet the place was the same place,
The same dusky walls
Of cold, gray stone,
The same cloisters and belfry and spire.

. . . .

. . . Such had been the power
Of that celestial and immortal song,
A hundred years had passed,
And had not seemed so long
As a single hour."

770. See specimens of poetic descriptions *supra* Nos. 7, 8, 9, 15, 46, 131, 238, 271 ; see also Bryant's description of the Indian Summer. As specimens of narration read Miles' "Inkerman," Longfellow's "Evangeline," Macaulay's "Lays of Ancient Rome," Campbell's "Gertrude of Wyoming," Scott's "Lady of the Lake," etc. In Latin see Ovid's charming stories of "The Death of Icarus" and "Baucis and Philemon" (*Metamorph.* l. viii.)

771. The **fables** of Phædrus in Latin and of La Fontaine in French are brief narratives to which there is no paral-

lel in English literature. Their style is simple, lively, and rapid; the stories are brief, and the moral is very obvious. Gay, Wilkie, and others have attempted fables, but their productions are wordy and want sprightliness.

§ 2. *Epic poetry.*

772. **Epic poetry** is the recital of some illustrious enterprise in a poetical form. It is considered as the highest effort of poetic talent, on account of the loftiness of its conceptions, the dignity of its character, and the difficulty of its execution. Few epic poems have gained general admiration. Those most highly prized are Homer's "Iliad" and "Odyssey," Virgil's "Æneid," Milton's "Paradise Lost," and Tasso's "Jerusalem Delivered."

773. All poetry aims at giving pleasure: epic poetry does so by the exhibition of heroic qualities, which it holds up for admiration. Admiration may be called the **characteristic mark** of epic poetry, while that of tragedy is compassion; of comedy, ridicule; of lyric poetry, sentiment; of didactic, good sense; of pastoral poetry the prevailing idea is innocence and simplicity. Epic poetry is more calm, self-possessed than lyric or dramatic; it requires more than any other kind of poetry a grave, equable, and sustained dignity.

774. **Its action or subject must have three properties:**

1. **Unity,** which requires that all the parts make up one well-connected story, that all tend to the accomplishment of one grand undertaking or achievement; for example, the subject of

Homer's "Iliad" is the wrath of Achilles;
Homer's "Odyssey," the return of Ulysses to Ithaca;
Virgil's "Æneid," the establishment of Æneas in Italy;
Tasso's "Jerusalem Delivered," the taking of Jerusalem;
Milton's "Paradise Lost," the fall of Adam and Eve;

Lucan's "Pharsalia," Cæsar's triumph over Roman liberty;
Statius' "Thebaïd," the vengeance of Œdipus;
Camoëns' "Luciad," Vasco da Gama's expedition;
Klopstock's "Messiad," the redemption of mankind;
Milton's "Paradise Regained," the same.

775. **Episodes** are such incidents as are introduced for variety's sake, connected with the main story, but not necessary to it. They are departures from unity, but they atone for this imperfection by the happy variety which they introduce and the superior beauties which they exhibit. For, being ornaments, they are always expected to contain some special excellences, for the sake of which they are admitted. They should: (*a*) Fit in well, and be naturally introduced into the story; (*b*) Vary the character of the narrative; (*c*) Be very elegant; (*d*) Conclude with some thought that leads naturally to the continuation of the main subject. The interview between Hector and Andromache in the sixth book of the "Iliad," the descent of Æneas into hell in the sixth, and the expedition of Nisus and Euryalus in the ninth book of the "Æneid" are episodes of remarkable beauty.

776. 2. The action should be **great**—*i.e.*, sufficiently important and splendid to command attention and to justify the magnificence of the style.

3. It should be **interesting,** so as to keep up the attention of the reader throughout the long narrative. The chief **sources of interest** are:

(*a*) The *choice of a story* and of characters that enlist the sympathies of readers; for instance, great benefactors of humanity or of the particular nation for which the poem is written.

(*b*) The skilful *management of the plot,* so that the hero is made to pass through many affecting incidents before he

succeeds or fails at last in his undertaking. A favorable termination is more gratifying to the reader, and is usual in epics: the "Paradise Lost" is an exception, from the necessity of the case, not from the author's choice.

(*c*) The masterly *drawing of characters*. In this respect Homer is unrivalled; Virgil has only Æneas and the boy Iulus; Tasso has displayed great skill: his characters are varied, some very noble, and all well supported.

777. By machinery we mean the gods and goddesses and other preternatural beings introduced by many epic poets. No machinery is necessary; when any is used it should be such as the readers would consider proper and conformable to their belief. Camoëns shocks all common sense by blending pagan superstitions with Christian faith.

778. *Selections from the "Iliad":*

Book I., II. The plot is unfolded.
" IV., V. Battles.
" VI. Lines 370–529. Episode of Hector and Andromache.
" VIII. 1–75. Jupiter's power.
392–408. The gates of heaven.
" IX. 485–515. Speech of Phœnix.
" XV. 1–200. Jupiter awakens.
" XVI. Patroclus fights and perishes.
" XVII. 412–450. The horses grieve.
" XVIII. Achilles, Vulcan, and Thetis.
" XIX. Achilles and Agamemnon are reconciled.
" XX. The gods join the combat.
" XXII. Hector is slain.
" XXIV. Priam and Achilles.

779. *From the "Æneid":*

Book I. Wreck of Æneas' fleet.
" II. Æneas relates the fall of Troy.
" V. Æneas in Sicily.
" VI. 236–755. Visits the lower regions.
" IX. Episode of Nisus and Euryalus.
" X. 789–908. Death of Lausus and his father

780. *From the "Jerusalem Delivered":*

Canto I. entire. Godfrey elected.
" III. 1–16. Arrival at Jerusalem.
58–end. Christian camp.
" IV. 1–28. Satan's plans—Armida.
" VI. 1–54. Single combat.
" VII. 23–end. Tancred decoyed.
" IX. entire. A night attack.
" X. 57–end. The returning knights.
" XI. entire. Storming Jerusalem.
" XIV. 1–52. Rinaldo recalled.
" XVII. 1–35. The Egyptian army.
" XIX. 1–56. Argantes slain.
" XX. 1–121. The great battle.
137–end. Conclusion.

781. *From the "Paradise Lost":*

Book I. entire. Pandemonium.
" II. 643–925. Gates of Hell—Chaos.
" III. 56–143. God the Father and Son.
" IV. 355–440. Satan in Paradise.
788–873. Satan discovered.
" V. 136–246. Morning hymn.
577–672. Satan's sin related.
" VI. entire. War in heaven related.

Book VII. entire. The creation of this earth related.
" IX. 494–1010. The fall of man.
" X. 1–965. Consequences of the fall.
" XI. 1–555. Expulsion from Paradise.
" XII. 552–end. Departure from Paradise.

Article II. Didactic Poetry.

782. The **Didactic** (from διδάσκειν, to teach) is a species of poetry intended to convey instruction. As instruction is naturally uninteresting to many, it must be rendered interesting by skilful treatment. Hence judgment and poetic talent are required in the selection of the subject as well as of the details. Especially needful is poetic thought clothed in poetic diction; there should be pleasing ornament and variety. The style should be simple, clear, dignified, neat, or even elegant. The episodes or digressions should be ornate, not too long, naturally introduced and naturally dismissed.

783. Didactic poetry is usually written in heroic verse. **Example** from a "Treatise on Health":

"O comfortable streams! with eager lips
And trembling hand the languid thirsty quaff
New life in you; fresh vigor fills their veins.
No warmer cups the rural sages knew;
None warmer sought the sires of humankind.
Happy in temperate peace, their equal days
Felt not the alternate fits of feverish mirth
And sick dejection. Still serene and pleased
They knew no pains but what the tender soul
With pleasure yields to, and would ne'er forget.
Blest with divine immunity from ails,
Long centuries they lived; their only fate
Was ripe old age, and rather sleep than death.
Oh! could those worthies from the world of gods
Return to visit their degenerate sons,

How would they scorn the joys of modern time,
With all our art and toil improved to pain!
Too happy they! but wealth brought luxury,
And luxury on sloth begot disease."—*Armstrong.*

784. The highest species of didactic poetry is a **regular treatise** on some instructive and important subject. Such were, among the ancients, Lucretius' treatise "De Rerum Naturâ," Virgil's "Georgics," and Horace's "Art of Poetry." Among the moderns Vida has composed an elegant "Art of Poetry" in Latin, Boileau in French, Pope an "Art of Criticism" and an "Essay on Man" in English; all these, as well as Armstrong's poem on "Health," Akenside's on the "Pleasures of the Imagination," are works of superior merit.

§ 1. *Poetical epistles.*

785. Poetical epistles and satires may be classed under the head of didactic poetry. **Epistles**, it is true, may belong to various species of writings, according to the matter treated in them. The reason why they are classed with didactic poetry is that many didactic compositions, such as the "Art of Poetry" of Horace, have been written in the form of a letter. When they are letters properly so called they are usually letters of friendship; their matter is sometimes serious, sometimes light and pleasant.

786. They **differ from prose** letters in *thought* and in *language.*

1. The **thoughts** should be choice while they are natural; what is ordinary should derive an additional charm from the delicacy, liveliness, or energy of the expression.

2. The **language** should be (*a*) Adorned with figures of the more modest kind, and (*b*) Metrical, but in an easy measure. It may be quite musical · usually it is but slightly

inverted, so as to keep the air of conversation. Sometimes the language is as elevated as that of the ode.

787. Their **principal beauty** lies in delicacy, liveliness, sweetness, refinement of thought and expression. (See *Spectator*, No. 618, "On Poetical Epistles.")

Models: Southey's "To a Friend"; Pope's "To Earl of Oxford," "To James Craggs," "To Lady Montagu"; Horace's "Epode I.," "Epistles," b. i. Ep. 2, 8, 9, 10, 20.

788. **A Letter of Condolence** (Horace, *Odes*, b. i. 24):

To Virgil.

"What cheek would blush to greet the falling tear?
And who shall bid our loving tribute cease,
Our sad lamenting o'er a bard so dear?
O tragic Muse! on whom thy loving sire
Bestowed the harp and mellow voice of song,
My aching heart to mournful themes inspire!
And doth Cremona's bard for ever sleep?
Eternal slumber close his weary lids?
Ah! when shall meekness find his modest peer?
Or spotless faith discover one so pure?
Or truth unsullied meet his equal here?
Around the sleeper good men bowed the head
Yet none, O Virgil! mourned his fate like thee.
Thy rare devotion cannot wake the dead;
His life was loaned on other terms than these.
Although thy finger sweeps the magic lyre
With greater skill than charmed the listening trees
When minstrel ardor thrilled the bard of Thrace,
The blood no more shall warm his empty shade
Or paint the whiteness of that marble face.
The soul by Hermes sent to gloom profound
With wand relentless is for ever lost.
A bitter thought, and hard to bear, my friend;
Yet patience lightens every earthly lot
Beyond the power of mortal grief to mend."—*Pierce.*

789. Compare with the preceding Tennyson's "Letter to J. S.":

I.

"The wind that beats the mountain blows
More softly round the open wold,
And gently comes the world to those
That are cast in gentle mould.

II.

"And me this knowledge bolder made,
Or else I had not dared to flow
In these words toward you, and invade
Even with a verse your holy woe.

III.

"'Tis strange that those we lean on most,
Those in whose laps our limbs are nursed,
Fall into shadow, soonest lost;
Those we love first are taken first.

IV.

"God gives us love. Something to love
He lends us; but when love is grown
To ripeness, that on which it throve
Falls off, and love is left alone.

V.

"This is the curse of time. Alas!
In grief I am not all unlearned;
Once through mine own doors Death did pass—
One went, who never hath returned.

. . . . . .

XV.

"I wrote I know not what. In truth,
How *should* I soothe you anyway,
Who miss the brother of your youth?
Yet something I did wish to say:

XVI.

" For he too was a friend to me:
Both are my friends, and my true breast
Bleedeth for both; yet it may be
That only silence suiteth best.

XVII.

" Words weaker than your grief would make
Grief more. 'T were better I should cease,
Although myself could almost take
The place of him that sleeps in peace."

. . . . . .

790. We miss, however, in the two epistles just quoted the beauty of **Christian sentiment.** How much more consoling are the following lines of Longfellow:

" RESIGNATION.

" There is no flock, however watched and tended,
But one dead lamb is there;
There is no fireside, howsoe'er defended,
But has one vacant chair!

" The air is full of farewells to the dying
And mournings for the dead;
The heart of Rachel, for her children crying,
Will not be comforted.

" Let us be patient! These severe afflictions
Not from the ground arise,
But oftentimes celestial benedictions
Assume this dark disguise.

" We see but dimly through the mists and vapors;
Amid these earthly damps
What seem to us but sad, funereal tapers
May be heaven's distant lamps.

" There is no death! What seems so is transition;
This life of mortal breath
Is but a suburb of the life Elysian,
Whose portal we call Death.

" She is not dead, the child of our affection,
But gone unto that school
Where she no longer needs our poor protection,
And Christ Himself doth rule.

" In that great cloister's stillness and seclusion,
By guardian angels led,
Safe from temptation, safe from sin's pollution,
She lives whom we call dead.

" Day after day we think what she is doing
In those bright realms of air;
Year after year, her tender steps pursuing,
Behold her grown more fair.

" Thus do we walk with her, and keep unbroken
The bonds which nature gives,
Thinking that our remembrance, though unspoken,
May reach her where she lives.

" Not as a child shall we again behold her;
For when with raptures wild
In our embraces we again enfold her,
She will not be a child,

" But a fair maiden, in her Father's mansion,
Clothed with celestial grace;
And beautiful with all the soul's expansion
Shall we behold her face.

" And though, at times, impetuous with emotion
And anguish long suppressed,
The swelling heart heaves moaning like the ocean,
That cannot be at rest,

"We will be patient, and assuage the feeling
We may not wholly stay;
By silence sanctifying, not concealing,
The grief that must have way."

§ 2. *Satires.*

791. A **Satire** holds up to ridicule the faults and follies of mankind. It aims at reforming them, and hence it is classed with didactic poems. It is the comedy of didactic verse. If well managed it is productive of good. If managed with awkwardness or bitterness it excites rancor but produces no reformation.

792. Here is a satire on "Love of Praise":

"What will not men attempt for sacred praise!
The love of praise, howe'er concealed by art,
Reigns more or less, and glows in every heart.
The proud, to gain it, toils on toils endure;
The modest shun it but to make it sure;
O'er globes and sceptres how on thrones it swells;
Now trims the midnight lamp in college cells:
'Tis Tory, Whig; it plots, prays, preaches, pleads,
Harangues in senates, squeaks in masquerades;
Here to Steele's humor makes a bold pretence,
There bolder aims at Pultney's eloquence;
It aids the dancer's heel, the writer's head,
And heaps the plain with mountains of the dead;
Nor ends with life, but nods in sable plumes,
Adorns our hearse and flatters on our tombs."—*Young.*

See also Saxe's "Satire on Progress."

793. The **Lampoon** or **Pasquinade** is directed against an individual, and aims solely at irritating. The **epigram** is a short but pungent piece. To be successful it must be brief and elegant, and discover suddenly at the conclusion a brilliant turn. Here is a specimen of the lampoon and epigram united—"To a noble Lord G——":

"Spare me thy vengeance, G——,
In quiet let me live:
I ask no kindness at thy hand,
For thou hast none to give."—*Robert Burns.*

An epigram—"Woman's Will":

"Men dying make their wills, but wives
Escape a work so sad;
Why should they make what all their lives
The gentle dames have had?"—*Saxe.*

Article III. Lyric Poetry.

794. **Lyric poetry** expresses the sentiments of the heart. It occurs usually in the form of brief compositions, because passion soon exhausts itself. The lyric may, however, be prolonged by the judicious introduction of narration and description, and by the combination of various passions in one poem, as is well exemplified in Dryden's celebrated "Ode on Alexander's Feast."

795. Still, **unity** must be kept in view: it will result from the plan of the narration or description, or, better still, from the subordination of all the sentiments to the expression of one leading emotion; in the poem just referred to admiration for the power of music is the link of unity.

796. Lyrics may be classified under three **heads**: *odes*, *psalms*, and *elegies*. In a wider meaning the name 'ode' is applied to any lyric; for an 'ode' means originally a song, and it was sung to the accompaniment of the 'lyre.' 'Psalm' is the term applied to a sacred song, and in particular to the collection of one hundred and fifty inspired songs in the Sacred Scriptures. 'Elegies' (from ἔ λέγειν, to say woe!) are plaintive lyrics. We shall first take the term 'ode' in its widest meaning, and afterwards treat of psalms and elegies in particular.

§1. *The Ode.*

797. The **versification** of the ode has been explained and exemplified in the treatise on Versification (b. v. c. iii. art. vi. § 4).

798. The **nature** of the ode is the outpouring of emotion by means of poetic thought and language. Here is Dryden's "Song for St. Cecilia's Day," considered one of the most beautiful odes in the English language:

I.

"From harmony, from heavenly harmony,
This universal frame began:
When Nature underneath a heap
Of jarring atoms lay,
And could not heave her head,
The tuneful voice was heard from high,
Arise, ye more than dead!
Then cold and hot, and moist and dry,
In order to their stations leap,
And Music's power obey.
From harmony, from heavenly harmony,
This universal frame began;
From harmony to harmony,
Through all the compass of the notes it ran,
The diapason closing full in Man.

II.

"What passion cannot music raise and quell?
When Jubal struck the chorded shell,
His listening brethren stood around,
And, wondering, on their faces fell
To worship that celestial sound.
Less than a God they thought there could not dwell
Within the hollow of that shell,
That spoke so sweetly and so well.
What passion cannot music raise and quell?

III.

"The trumpet's loud clangor
Excites us to arms,
With shrill notes of anger
And mortal alarms.
The double double double beat
Of the thundering drum
Cries, Hark! the foes come;
Charge, charge! 'tis too late to retreat.

IV.

"The soft complaining flute
In dying notes discovers
The woes of hopeless lovers,
Whose dirge is whispered by the warbling lute.

V.

"Sharp violins proclaim
Their jealous pangs, and desperation,
Fury, frantic indignation,
Depth of pains, and height of passion
For the fair, disdainful dame.

VI.

"But oh! what art can teach,
What human voice can reach,
The sacred organ's praise?
Notes inspiring holy love,
Notes that wing their heavenly ways
To mend the choirs above.

VII.

"Orpheus could lead the savage race;
And trees uprooted left their place,
Sequacious of the lyre.
But bright Cecilia raised their wonder higher:
When to her organ vocal breath was given,
An angel heard and straight appeared,
Mistaking earth for heaven.

"GRAND CHORUS.

"As from the power of sacred lays
The spheres began to move,
And sung the great Creator's praise
To all the bless'd above;
So when the last and dreadful hour
This crumbling pageant shall devour,
The trumpet shall be heard on high,
The dead shall live, the living die,
And Music shall untune the sky."

799. It will be noticed that the lyric poet, in passing from one passion to another, does not express the transition in words. The imagination, warmed by the sentiments, readily supplies the link, provided there be truly some natural association of thought or feeling. When the transition is very bold it is called a **saltus lyricus**—in the language of Wordsworth, "a bound of graceful hardihood." Lyrics remarkable for such hardihood are called Pindaric odes; but unfortunately the hardihood in them is not always graceful. The reason why we admire such bounds in the Greek poet Pindar is that he used them judiciously to extricate himself from a special difficulty. Pindar was a kind of poet-laureate in his day; he was expected to sing the victories of the Olympian and Pythian games. The heroes were different, but the theme was ever the same. With 'graceful hardihood' he would 'bound' away from one subject to another. A 'lyric bound' is a license, and, like all licenses, it is not beautiful in itself; but we admire the judicious use made of it to avoid an unpleasantness or introduce some beauty which would otherwise be lost.

800. The **style of lyric poetry** should be finished and ornate, characterized by dignity or sweetness, as the subject or the occasion may require. Grandeur and solemnity are expected in *sacred* odes; enthusiasm and magnificence

in *heroic* odes—*i.e.*, in those which proclaim the praises of heroes; those of the *philosophic* or moral kind, inculcating virtue and wisdom, require an equable flow of thought and language; the *social* or festive ode, also called 'Anacreontic,' should be marked by neatness and tenderness.

801. Lyrics, like all literary productions, should be **perspicuous** in thought and language. Some readers imagine that incomprehensible utterances contain very deep and wise thought. They are ever ready to exclaim with Peona in the "Endymion":

"Brother, 'tis vain to hide
That thou dost know of things mysterious,
Immortal, starry."

802. They find frequent occasion for such blind admiration, especially in the poetry of this century. J. B. Selkirk, in his *Ethics and Æsthetics of Modern Poetry*, justly remarks:

"Although obscurity is no new grievance against the poets, we doubt much if there ever was a time in which the charge could be more justly made than our own, or in which the indictment could be more circumstantially supported in detail by direct reference to examples."

He traces the beginning of this mysticism to the writings, poetry and prose, of Coleridge.

803. Ralph Waldo Emerson in this country has carried this **obscurity** so far that many of his sayings are like riddles: they

"Dodge
Conception to the very bourne of heaven,
Then leave the naked brain."

Many labor hard to find the clue to his philosophy. There is no clue: with Emerson, and with most anti-Chris-

tian sceptics of the present day, there is no philosophy at all in their works. He says of himself in a letter to Rev. H. Ware (1838):

"I could not give an account of myself if challenged. I could not possibly give you one of the 'arguments' you cruelly hint at on which any doctrine of mine stands; for I do not know what arguments are in reference to any expression of a thought. I delight in telling what I think, but if you ask me how I dare say so, or why it is so, I am the most helpless of mortal men."—*Life of Emerson*, by O. W. Holmes, p. 126.

804. **Horace** has always been considered as the greatest of uninspired lyric poets. In enthusiasm and magnificence he is surpassed by Pindar, in sweetness by Anacreon, but he surpasses all in the combination of varied beauties. He possessed a happy, rich, and lively imagination, and the choicest language, with an exquisite ear for the music of verse; above all, a delicate tact which made him find favor with the greatest men of his age, while he maintained in his writings a certain spirit of independence. He gave the highest polish to most of his pieces. His immorality, however, in many places offends Christian modesty; he should be read with wise discretion.

805. We insert a list of **selections:**

1. *Neat odes:* Book i. 1. Mæcenas atavis. B. i. 10. Mercuri facunde. B. ii. 6. Septimi Gades. B. ii. 20. Non usitata. B. iii. 30. Exegi monumentum.

2. *Expressive of affection:* B. i. 3. Sic te Diva potens. B. i. 24. Quis desiderio. B. ii. 7. O sæpe mecum. B. ii. 9. Non semper imbres. B. ii. 17. Cur me querelis. Ep. 1. Ibis Liburnis.

3. *Grand:* B. i. 2. Jam satis terris. B. i. 15. Pastor quum traheret (compare "Lochiel's Warning," by Campbell). B. i. 37. Nunc est bibendum. B. iii. 3. Justum ac

tenacem. B. iv. 2. Pindarum quisque. B. iv. 4. Qualem ministrum.

4. *Sweet:* B. i. 26. Musis amicus. B. i. 38. Persicos odi. B. iii. 29. Tyrrhena regum. B. iv. 3. Quem tu Melpomene. B. iv. 7. Diffugere nives. Ep. 2. Beatus ille.

5. *Moral or philosophical:* B. i. 14. O navis referent. B. ii. 15. Jam pauca aratro. B. ii. 2. Nullus argento. B. ii. 3. Æquam memento. B. ii. 10. Rectius vives. B. ii. 14. Eheu fugaces. B. ii. 16. Otium divos. B. ii. 18. Non ebur neque aureum. B. iii. 5. Cœlo tonantem. Ep. 7. Quoquo scelesti.

6. *Sacred:* Carmen sæculare.

(See a judicious essay on Horace in *Blackwood's Magazine*, April, 1868.)

806. Many **Latin hymns** occurring in the Breviary are lyrics of superior merit. In style they present four chief species; of each we shall mention some examples:

1. *The tender:* Salvete flores. Jesu dulcis memoriæ. Jesu decus angelicum. Jesu corona virginum. Salutis humanæ sator.

2. *The noble and grand:* O sola magnarum. Vexilla Regis. Lustra sex. Pange lingua. Verbum Supernum (the stanza "se nascens dedit socium," etc., so pleased Rousseau that he would have given all his poetry to be its author). Cœlestis urbs.

3. *The devout:* O sol salutis. Stabat Mater. Veni Creator. Ave Maris Stella.

4. *The festive:* Aurora cœlum. Te Joseph celebrent. Sanctorum meritis.

807. Here is Caswall's translation of St. Bernard's "Jesu Decus Angelicum":

"O Jesu! Thou the beauty art
Of angel worlds above;
Thy name is music to the heart,
Enchanting it with love.

" Celestial sweetness unalloyed !
Who eat Thee hunger still ;
Who drink of Thee still feel a void
Which naught but Thou canst fill.

" O my sweet Jesu ! hear the sighs
Which unto Thee I send ;
To Thee mine inmost spirit cries,
My being's hope and end !

" Stay with us, Lord, and with Thy light
Illume the soul's abyss ;
Scatter the darkness of our night,
And fill the world with bliss.

" O Jesu ! spotless Virgin flower !
Our life and joy ! to Thee
Be praise, beatitude, and power
Through all eternity."

Translations of all the hymns mentioned above are found in the *Lyra Catholica* and in the translation of the Breviary by the Marquis of Bute. (See also Newman's *Verses on Various Occasions* and the *Hymns and Poems* of Father Faber.)

808. We add an example of an ode which assumes the form of a **sonnet:**

"The Blessed Virgin.

" Mother ! whose virgin bosom was uncrost
With the least shade of thought to sin allied ;
Woman ! above all women glorified,
Our tainted nature's solitary boast ;
Purer than foam on central ocean tost ;
Brighter than eastern skies at daybreak strewn
With fancied roses, than the unblemished moon
Before her wane begins on heaven's blue coast ;
Thy image falls to earth. Yet some, I ween,

Not unforgiven the suppliant knee might bend,
As to a visible power, in which did blend
All that was mixed and reconciled in thee
Of mother's love with maiden purity,
Of high with low, celestial with terrene ! "

—*Wordsworth.*

809. Some of the most perfect odes in existence are found in the **choruses of the Greek and the French tragedies.** Sir Bulwer-Lytton renders the beginning of a chorus in *Œdipus at Colonos* as follows :

Strophe I.

" Well did Fate thy wanderings lead,
Stranger, to this land of fame,
Birthplace of the generous steed,
Graced by white Colonos' name.
Frequent in the dewy glade,
Here the nightingale is dwelling ;
Through embowering ivy's shade
Here her plaintive notes are swelling.
Through yon grove, from footsteps pure,
Where unnumbered fruits are blushing—
From the summer sun secure,
Screened from wintry whirlwinds rushing ;
Where, with his fostering nymphs, amid the grove,
The sportive Bacchus joys to revel or to rove."

Antistrophe I.

" Bathed in heaven's ambrosial dew,
Here the fair narcissus flowers,
Graced each morn with clusters new,
Ancient crown of mightiest Powers ;
Here the golden crocus blows,
Here exhaustless fountains gushing
Where the cool Cephisus flows
Restless o'er the plains are rushing ;

Ever as the crystal flood
Winds in pure, transparent lightness,
Fresher herbage decks the sod,
Flowers spring forth in lovelier brightness.
Here dance the Muses, and the Queen of Love
Oft guides her golden car through this enchanting grove."

§ 2. *The Psalms.*

810. No profane lyric poetry equals the **lyrical portions of Holy Scripture.** The principal of these are the Psalms, the Canticle of Canticles, the Magnificat of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Benedictus of St. Zachary, the Canticle of Moses after crossing the Red Sea. The canticle of Mary, the sister of Aaron, mentioned in the book of Genesis (xv. 21), is thus developed by Moore in imitation of Moses' Canticle:

" Sound the loud timbrel o'er Egypt's dark sea!
Jehovah has triumphed!—His people are free!
Sing,—for the pride of the tyrant is broken,
His chariots, his horsemen, all splendid and brave;
How vain was their boasting! The Lord hath but spoken,
And chariots and horsemen are sunk in the wave.
Sound the loud timbrel o'er Egypt's dark sea!
Jehovah has triumphed!—His people are free.

" Praise to the Conqueror, praise to the Lord:
His word was our arrow, His breath was our sword!
Who shall return to tell Egypt the story
Of those she sent forth in the hour of her pride?
For the Lord hath looked out from the pillar of His glory,
And all her brave thousands are dashed in the tide.
Sound the loud timbrel o'er Egypt's dark sea!
Jehovah has triumphed!—His people are free."

811. **The Psalms contain** the loftiest inspiration concerning God and the mysteries of His grace to men; concerning the life and death of our Blessed Saviour, the praises and the rewards of virtue, the humiliation and ruin of the proud sinner, the mercies of the Lord, the wonderful history of His chosen people; David's own eventful life, with its faults, its trials, and its unfailing hope. (See Archbishop F. P. Kenrick's introduction to his translation of the Psalms.)

§ 3. *Elegies.*

812. **An elegy,** as explained above, is an ode expressive of sorrow, but the name is often extended to signify any ode that expresses gentle emotions. Being a composition of a temperate character, it admits no boldness of metre, thought, or language, nor any sudden transitions or *saltus lyrici.* Its style is easy, equable, careful, finished. Gray's "Elegy in a Country Church-Yard" is probably the most perfect elegy in the English language. The selections quoted above under epistles (788, 789, 790) are of the elegiac kind.

813. We add here two brief selections containing much thought in few words:

"The Lost Love.

" She dwelt among the untrodden ways
Beside the springs of Dove;
A maid whom there were none to praise,
And very few to love.

" A violet by a mossy stone,
Half-hidden from the eye!
Fair as a star, when only one
Is shining in the sky.

" She lived unknown, and few could know
When Lucy ceased to be;
But she is in her grave, and oh!
The difference to me!"—*William Wordsworth.*

814. "HISTORY OF A LIFE.

"Day dawned; within a curtained room,
Filled to faintness with perfume,
A lady lay at point of doom.
Day closed; a child had seen the light,
But, for the lady fair and bright,
She rested in undreaming night.
Spring rose; the lady's grave was green;
And near it, oftentimes, was seen
A gentle boy with thoughtful mien.
Years fled; he wore a manly face,
And struggled in the world's rough race,
And won at last a lofty place.
And then he died! Behold before ye
Humanity's poor sum and story:
Life—Death—and all that is of Glory."

—*Barry Cornwall.*

815. Among the ancient classic poems, the "Tristia" of Ovid are the most celebrated elegies; to these there is nothing superior in their kind among modern lyrics. See in particular book i. 1, 3, 5; b. iii. 1, 10, 12, 13; b. iv. 10. With b. iii. 13 compare Job ch. iii. (see Rollin's *Belles-Lettres*, vol. ii.) Many of the Psalms are elegiac in character; in particular Ps. vi., xvi., xxi., xxvii., xli., xliii., l., lxxviii., lxxxvii. Such are also the "Lamentations of Jeremias." Of most of these pieces there exist poetic translations in English. Ps. cxxxvi., "Super flumina Babylonis," is translated by Mrs. Hemans, Byron, Barrow, Trumbull, Aubrey de Vere, and others. We subjoin a version, never yet published, from the pen of a departed friend, the Rev. L. Heylen, S.J.:

"BY THE WATERS OF BABEL.

"By the waters of Babel in sadness
The lone captives sat silent and wept,
As they mused on the days of their gladness
When their feasts in lost Sion were kept.

On the willows that shaded the border
Our loved harps sad and voiceless were hung—
Ne'er in chains to the tyrant's proud order
Shall the hymns of our freedom be sung.
May my withered right hand lose its motion,
May my tongue to my parched palate cleave,
If, forgetting my childhood's devotion,
I rejoice whilst thou, Sion, shalt grieve!
Lord, remember the dark desolation
Of the city of peace in her fall,
And the boasting of Edom's fierce nation
To leave not a stone of her wall!
Back upon thee, proud Babylon's daughter,
May the woes that afflict us be thrown!
And thrice blessed be the hands, red with slaughter,
That shall dash thy crushed babes on the stone!"

ARTICLE IV. DRAMATIC POETRY.

816. **Dramatic poetry** is that in which events instead of being narrated are acted on the stage. It comprises two kinds, tragedy and comedy. *Tragedy* deals with the grave and affecting events of life; it arouses the more earnest passions, especially pity, terror, and deep admiration for heroic virtue. *Comedy* is employed upon the lighter incidents of life, the humors, follies, and pleasures of men; it brings into play the gentler passions, especially ridicule.

§ 1. *Tragedy.*

817. Tragedy has passed through great changes of character. We shall first explain **the tragedy of the Greeks. Æschylus** conceived the plan of expressing by dramatic dialogues, interspersed with music, dance, and song, the control of fate and the will of God over the destinies of men. His conceptions are singularly grand, his language highly poetical, and his choruses frequent and magnificent,

but his plans are exceedingly simple. A few bold touches sketch his facts and his characters. A. W. Schlegel's *Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature* give a clear account of what is called the *trilogy of the Oresteia—i.e.*, the history of Orestes dramatized in three of Æschylus' tragedies, "Agamemnon," "Electra," and "The Furies" (lecture vi.)

818. **Sophocles**, while exhibiting the overruling power of fate, pays more attention to the varied actions and passions of men. His taste in matters of detail is very delicate. See, for instance, his "Œdipus at Colonos" and his "Antigone." (See also Schlegel, lecture vii. on his "Ajax"; and Felton's *Ancient and Modern Greece*, vol. i. course i. c. xii.)

819. **Euripides** has less of ideal elevation, deals much more in human character, passions, and incidents. His "Medea" represents an uncommonly bold and unyielding woman, whose wicked passions, not fate, are the clue of the story.

820. The dramas of the ancients were represented on a scale of magnificence in scenic decorations, costumes, and choruses, and with a concourse of people unrivalled in our day. Athens was then in the zenith of her literary glory. (See Felton, *ib.*, vol. i. course ii. c. xii.)

821. The lectures of A. W. Schlegel treat the entire subject of the dramatic art with great learning and good taste. On the tragedy of the Greeks the most learned work, a rich mine of information, is *Le Théâtre des Grecs*, by P. Brumois, S.J. (1688).

The **Latins** had no great tragedians whatever; they merely translated the Greeks.

822. **French tragedy** arose after the English, but it was modelled on the Greek, and therefore we shall consider it in close connection with the ancient drama. **Corneille** was the Æschylus of France; his "Le Cid" was his first masterpiece: "as beautiful as 'Le Cid'" became a common expression for perfect beauty. He did not court popular favor by flattering the softer passions, but he raised his audience to admire true honor and heroism. His "Horaces" and "Cinna" exalt classical, his "Polyeucte" Christian virtue. His later works are less commendable.

823. **Racine** is refined, like Sophocles. Unlike Corneille, he exhibits the frailties of human character and the play of the more tender passions. His "Andromaque" is a touching picture of maternal love (1667). Next came his "Britannicus," "Bérénice," "Mithridate," "Iphigénie," and "Phèdre." He appears to have been ashamed of the excesses of lawless love as exhibited in this last drama, and for twelve years he abandoned tragedy. He returned to it as a religious poet, and produced his masterpieces, "Esther" and "Athalie," both worthy of careful study; the latter is unsurpassed as a production of classical taste. Voltaire attempted to remodel the French stage. His plays, while they have brilliant scenes at times, are as defective as they are pretentious. (See Schlegel, lect. xx.)

824. The Greek and French tragedians admitted in the course of their dramas no scene which did not affect the final issue of the piece—the **catastrophe**, as it is called: *i.e.*, the overturning of the hero's fortune (*κατά*, *στρέφω*, to overturn). The exclusion of all foreign matter is called the **unity of action.** The action itself embraced no events but such as might occur in one day; this is **unity of time.** And as the Grecian stage was, as a rule, never deserted during the whole play, every scene was laid on the same spot; this is **unity of place.**

825. The **chorus** consisted of a band of persons who were supposed to have been present at the occurrences represented. They were actors, or rather spoke and sang like one actor in the drama, uttering the voice of

wisdom, counsel, moderation, religion, etc. Their unfailing presence on or near the stage was a source of great embarrassment to the poet, for it was not probable that opposing parties should plot in presence of the same witnesses. The chorus was thus an encumbrance as well as an ornament. From time to time they sang an ode suggested by the play, thus relieving the attention of the spectators. Hence originated the division of a play into **acts**, usually five in number.

826. **The great French tragedians,** with their natural love of regularity, were very particular about **the three unities** just explained. In the course of an act the place, with them, could not be changed, because the scenes were all connected with each other, so that the stage was never vacant except at the close of an act. When a new actor enters or any one retires they count it another **scene**; and they require that each scene shall flow naturally from the preceding, no actor coming or going without apparent reason for so doing. Their tragedies thus exhibit the most perfect regularity, but the poet is constantly shackled by such restrictions.

827. Both Greeks and French confine their tragedies to serious events, to what is grave, terrible, and pathetic; rigidly excluding all that is comical or too familiar. This is a leading feature of **classical** as distinct from **romantic** taste. The English idea of tragedy is very different from all this. Shakspeare (born 1564) originated it independently of Grecian models. His genius created the romantic tragedy, which is as different from the classic as a magnificent and wild landscape is from a beautiful and regular garden.

As in a landscape we may have vast plains, towering mountains, deep gorges, frightful precipices, interspersed with delightful vales, clear lakes, and refreshing fountains,

all mixed in wild confusion, so we have in Shakspeare the most varied grandeur mixed with scenes of tender pathos, loud merriment, buffoonery, extravagance, all in endless profusion.

"The ancient art of poetry," says Schlegel, "rigorously separated things which are dissimilar. The romantic delights in indissoluble mixtures and contrarieties; nature and art, poetry and prose, seriousness and mirth, recollection and anticipation, spirituality and sensuality, terrestrial and celestial, life and death, are by it blended together in the most intimate combination" (Lect. xxii.)

828. **Shakspeare** displayed a wonderful fertility of invention. He created highly dramatic scenes, intricate plots full of interest, and characters so grand, so distinct, so varied, so true to nature, and so consistent that no poet has ever surpassed him. His language has a power of its own; every sentence is a coin destined to circulate, and stamped with the mark of his particular mint. He generally observes unity of action, which is the essential unity of dramatic poetry; but he totally disregards the minor unities of time and place. Some of his dramas include the transactions of many years and the scenes of distant lands. He carries this liberty to the extent of license, with no slight detriment to probability and naturalness.

829. **An English play** is divided into acts and scenes, but these terms with us have not the same meaning as with the French. **An act** may consist of detached scenes laid in various lands and at various times; and **a scene** embraces all that is done in close succession at a given place, provided the same leading personages remain on the stage.

830. On one important point classic and romantic poets are agreed, both classes making tragedy the realm, chiefly if not solely, of the powerful passions—of pity and terror, of admiration for exalted virtue and detestation of crime

and villany. In this respect tragedy is **favorable to virtue.** Aristotle says of it that it "purifies the passions of men by means of pity and terror." The pernicious influence which the stage is justly accused of usually exercising results from abuses not essential to it, but unfortunately too common; the passions, instead of being purified, are perverted by it, especially the passion of love. Beaumont and Fletcher in particular are shockingly immoral. All the old tragedians, Shakspeare included, indulged in gross vulgarity. Modern tragic poets are more polished, but often more corrupting withal.

831. From a literary point of view Shakspeare is **at times deserving of severe criticism,** his comic wit degenerating into meaningless puns, his serious passions swelling into bombast. Besides, he is exceedingly irregular, and sometimes extravagant; he so mixes faults with beauties as to be a very unsafe model for imitation.

832. But he superabundantly atones for these defects by **unrivalled excellences,** several of which we have already mentioned. One we must explain more fully, as it is the characteristic perfection of dramatic poetry. It is thus described by Cardinal Wiseman in his last literary effort, a lecture on Shakspeare, intended to be delivered, by invitation, before the Royal Institution of Great Britain:

"Its essence [that of Shakspeare's dramatic art] consists in what is the very soul of the dramatic idea—the power to throw himself into the situation, the circumstances, the nature, the acquired habits, the feelings, true or fictitious, of every character which he introduces. This forms, in fact, the most perfect of sympathies. We do not, of course, use the word in that more usual sense of harmony of affection or consent of feeling. Shakspeare has sympathy as complete for Shylock or Iago as he has for Arthur or King Lear. For a time he lives in the astute villain as in the innocent child; he works his entire power of thought into intricacies of the traitor's brain: he makes his heart beat in concord with the usurer's sanguinary spite, and then, like some beautiful creature in the animal world, draws himself out of the hateful evil, and is himself again, and able, even, often to hold his own noble and gentle qualities as a mirror, or exhibit the loftiest, the most generous and amiable examples of our nature. And this is all done without study, and apparently without effort. His infinitely varied characters come naturally into their places, never for a moment lose their proprieties, their personality, and the exact flexibility which results from the necessary combination in every man of many qualities. From the beginning to the end each one is the same, yet reflecting in himself the lights and shadows which flit around him.

"This extraordinary versatility stands in striking contrast with the dramatic productions of other countries. The Greek tragedian is Greek throughout—his subjects, his mythology, his sentences play wonderfully indeed, but yet restrictedly, within a given sphere." —*Catholic World* for 1865, vol. i. p. 559.

833. There lived in England about the time of Shakspeare a number of brilliant **tragic writers,** such as Marlowe, Webster, Decker, Tourneur, Heywood, Middleton, Chapman, Ben Jonson, Marston, Massinger, Ford, Beaumont and Fletcher. (See a criticism of these in Whipple's *Essays,* vol. ii.)

834. **Spanish tragedy** was created about the same time as the English by two geniuses, Lope de Vega and Calderon, who have supplied their nation with dramatic works of the highest merit and suited to the purer morals of a Catholic people. De Vega resembles Shakspeare. Calderon is more like Racine; his priestly office did not cool his poetic ardor.

835. **To become acquainted with the great tragedians** it would be of little use to study such brief extracts as might here be given. Those who wish to apply themselves to this portion of literature should read a few, at least, of the great masterpieces; for instance, the "Agamemnon," "Electra," and "Eumenides" of Æschylus; the "Œdipus Tyrannus,"

"Antigone," and "Œdipus at Colonos" of Sophocles; the "Medea" and "Iphigenia in Aulis" of Euripides; Corneille's "Le Cid," Racine's "Esther" and "Athalie," Shakspeare's "Macbeth," "Hamlet," "Julius Cæsar," and "Coriolanus." Shakspeare's tragedies may be read to advantage with the judicious notes of Hudson or of Rolfe in their school editions, in which the most offensive passages are omitted or toned down. George H. Miles' comments on "Hamlet" find favor with many. But it must be allowed that even in most of the expurgated editions of Shakspeare there is much in plot and scene, if not always in expression, bearing on such vices as the apostle tells us should not even be named among Christians.

Happily we have some beautiful dramas of a very different kind, the reading of which can only benefit the student. Such are "The Hidden Gem" of Cardinal Wiseman; "The Dumb Orphan," "Sebastian," "The Family of Martyrs," etc.

836. It remains for us to add some further **precepts on the composition of tragedy:**

1. The *story* should be interesting and full of pathos.

2. The *characters* should be distinctly drawn, naturally presented, and made to act and speak consistently throughout the play. They need not be taken from history nor from public life, nor should they all be virtuous; mixed characters—that is, those partly good and partly bad—are the most natural.

3. The *first act* must make us acquainted with the situation, excite interest, and introduce some of the leading characters. It is desirable that the play should explain itself without needing introduction or comment.

4. In the *second, third, and fourth acts* the plot thickens; the great point to be aimed at is to keep the passions alive: let there be no languor, no personages but such as are needed—and these should be put in interesting situations—no idle declamation. All must be action rather than discourse.

5. The *fifth act* contains the catastrophe, which is the surest test of the poet's genius. After the suspense has been carried to a great height in the preceding acts it is brought to a crisis in the fifth. The catastrophe should be brought about by natural means, in a plausible though quite unexpected manner. It should discard long speeches and idle declamation. It should be so clear as not to check passion by obscurity, so simple as not to embarrass the mind by intricacy. The end may be the success of the innocent, as in Racine's "Athalie"; but usually the impression of virtuous sorrow is left full and strong on the heart.

6. Throughout the play the greatest *probability* must be preserved: nothing must appear unaccountable, in order that curiosity may be fully satisfied.

7. *Poetical justice* requires that the actors meet with their just deserts, so that the lot of the virtuous appear on the whole far preferable to that of the wicked.

8. *Unity of action* is essential: it can never be dispensed with in tragedy, whether classic or romantic. The *unities of time and place* add to the probability of the story and to the symmetry of the poetic structure. They are beauties, but, like rhyme in verse, they may be discarded, provided they be replaced by greater beauties. Let no one imagine that irregularity is pleasing in itself to a well-ordered mind, especially in works of art: irregularity is inartistic.

837. It is a much-debated question **whether the classic or the romantic drama is to be preferred.** An analogous question would be whether a garden or a grand architectural structure is more beautiful than a delightful, varied landscape. This is a matter of taste. We appreciate both clas-

sical and romantic art; preference for the one or the other depends usually on early associations.

838. **Exercise.** Write a criticism of a tragedy. (See b. iv. c. v. art. ii. § 3.) Notice in particular: 1. What is known of its author? 2. Is the subject historical or fictitious? how far historical? 3. Narrate the story briefly. 4. Criticise the poem according to the eight precepts for tragedy just explained.

§ 2. *Comedy.*

839. The **ancient comedy** had not the regularity of the modern; it formed a complete contrast to the ancient tragedy, of which it was a wild parody. Tragedy delighted in harmonious unity, comedy in chaotic exuberance, seeking out the most motley contrasts and the unceasing play of cross-purposes. The action of an ancient comedy might be as fantastic as possible, if only it could place a series of comic incidents in a glaring light. Man is shown by it, not in all his nobility, but in all his frailties and often in all his baseness. Many consider the old comedy as only a beginning of the comic art; but Schlegel defends it as distinguished from the later comedy in kind rather than in point of perfection. It was a school of scandal, as is evident from its only representative whose poems are extant, Aristophanes. (See Schlegel, lectures xi., xii.) Felton's *Ancient and Modern Greece* contains an interesting analysis of Aristophanes' "Ecclesiazousæ," or comedy on 'Women's Rights,' the agitation of which question appears to be an old vagary (vol. i. course i. c. xii.)

Later Greek comedy was more like our own; it was less licentious than earlier comedy, but still very objectionable.

840. **Modern comedy** has a regular plot; it requires unity of action; it sometimes observes the minor unities of time and place and the proper connection of the successive scenes. It requires, above all, great probability in the representation. Unlike tragedy, it requires the scene to be laid in the present time and as much as possible in our own country, "to catch the manners living as they rise." The Latin poets Plautus and Terence, successful in other respects, made the mistake of attempting little more than translating Menander and other Greeks. The reason why we should prefer home scenes is that comedy aims at correcting frailties and follies by ridicule; but there is no advantage to be derived from ridiculing the defects of foreign nations.

841. There are **two kinds of comedy,** that of *character* and that of *intrigue.* In the latter, the plot is more artfully kept up; in the former, character is the chief object of attention. Molière's "Misanthrope" and "Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme" ("The Upstart") are excellent examples of this kind. But the comedy of character should connect its scenes by some kind of plot, and the other species must not neglect the exhibition of characters. It is best to unite both sources of interest in as high a degree as possible. Care should be taken not to exaggerate the peculiarities of character beyond what is natural or at least plausible.

842. The **style** should be pure, elegant, and lively, seldom rising above that of ordinary conversation; never vulgar.

843. Though comedy, like satire, is **intended for the correction** of human frailties, it has been, as a rule, so handled by ancient and modern poets as to be more injurious to the ordinary reader than beneficial. Among the ancients the "Captivi" of Plautus is a piece entirely free from immodesty. His other comedies, as well as those of Terence, are often scandalous. Of Menander we have nothing left except some fragments in Terence's translations.

844. **Shakspeare** is the pride of our literature in comedy as well as in tragedy. He lived, unfortunately, in an age which was most licentious; and though he is less grossly offensive to modesty than many of his contemporaries, still his pieces would need much purgation before they could be made edifying reading for those not familiar with vice.

Article V. Accidental Variations of Poetry

845. Any poetical composition whatever may be classed under one or other of the four species of poetry so far explained. Still, it is usual in rhetorical treatises to take particular notice of some varieties of poetic composition which have peculiar features of their own besides the properties of the species to which they belong. The principal of these varieties are *Pastoral poetry* and the *poetry of the Holy Scriptures.*

§ 1. *Pastoral poetry.*

846. **Pastoral poetry** is that which is intended to exhibit a life of simple and natural happiness, or, as others express it, the simple happiness of a country life. Poems of this character may be narrative or descriptive, dramatic, lyric, or didactic. Whatever species they belong to, they have certain features of their own to which it is proper to call particular attention.

847. The following are the **principal features of pastorals:**

1. The *emotions* excited are of the gentler kind, such as arise in the beholder from the contemplation of innocence, quiet, candor, and freedom from great anxiety.

2. The *characters* introduced must be amiable in their simplicity; neither too refined nor too rude; of lively but not excessive sensibility; possessed of some ambition, and at times of some cunning, but never vicious; more or less quick of parts, but not too learned. Shepherds and farmers are usually represented, but Theocritus and Moschus introduce also soldiers and inhabitants of cities.

3. The *subjects* are the joys, the cares, the troubles of country life, with its various incidents.

4. The *style* must be sweet and gentle, elegant and melodious. The ornaments must be suitable to the subjects and the characters, and be drawn from the scenes and associations of a country life. Brief and neat descriptions are great ornaments.

848. **Theocritus,** a Sicilian, was the father of pastoral poetry; his Idyls (*εἰδύλλιον*, a little picture) are very tender, full of naïveté, and expressed in gently-flowing language. Not all his idyls are pastorals, and not all deserve high commendation. **Virgil** has mostly reproduced the beauties of Theocritus in a Latin version, and often improved on the original. Unlike his Greek model, he never descends to what is low or common. His four books called "Georgics" (*γεωργικός*, agricultural) are a didactic treatise on agriculture. His most charming pastorals are his "Eclogues" (*ἐκλογή*, a choice piece), in particular his first, fourth, fifth, and eleventh.

849. The fourth of Virgil's Eclogues is remarkable for the beauty of its imagery and for the nobility of its thoughts. It describes the expected coming of a Saviour of mankind under the image of a divine child, who is to restore the golden age. Pope has translated this eclogue, blending with it many images taken from the prophecy of Isaias concerning the Messias. It is the most beautiful of Pope's translations, and the grandest pastoral poem in the English language. Shenstone has written a pastoral ballad in four parts, from which we quote a brief passage:

"My banks they are furnished with bees,
Whose murmur invites one to sleep;
My grottoes are shaded with trees,
And my hills are white over with sheep.
I have seldom met with a loss;
Such health do my fountains bestow—
My fountains, all bordered with moss,
Where the harebells and violets grow.

"Not a pine in my grove is there seen
But with tendrils of woodbine is bound;
Not a beech is more beautiful green
But a sweetbriar entwines it around;
Not my fields in the prime of the year
More charms than my cattle unfold;
Not a brook that is limpid and clear
But it glitters with fishes of gold."

§ 2. *The Holy Scriptures.*

850. We have occasionally in the course of this work referred to passages of **the Sacred Scriptures,** and compared the language of the Holy Spirit with the most perfect productions of human genius. An impression may thus have been produced upon the minds of pupils that there is some kind of equality between the works of God and the works of man. It is proper here to add a word of caution against so erroneous an inference. The beauty and sublimity of Holy Writ are far more elevated above the poems of Homer, Dante, and Shakspeare than the productions of these great geniuses above the daily conversation of ordinary mortals.

851. In all the literary works of men there is a constant effort to rise above the level of common thoughts. The word of God, on the contrary, appears to stoop down in order to bring truths of infinite grandeur within the comprehension of our little minds. Hence result two **characteristics of Holy Writ**—*simplicity* and *majesty.*

852. The *thought* is ever **majestic,** and so vast that the more we meditate upon any utterance of God the more meaning we find in it. (See, for an example, Father Coleridge's comments on the "Magnificat," "The Nine Months," c. ix.)

The *expression* in Holy Scripture is usually **simple,** except when God wishes to rebuke the pride of man, or when the prophet or the psalmist labors, as it were, to give utterance to thoughts and sentiments too vast for human language.

853. We shall give a few **examples:**

1. **God rebukes the pride of man** in language full of power and majesty:

"Behold, I come against thee, O Tyre: and I will cause many nations to come up to thee, as the waves of the sea rise up. And they shall break down the walls of Tyre, and destroy the towers thereof: and I will scrape her dust from her, and make her like a smooth rock. She shall be a drying-place for nets in the midst of the sea: because I have spoken, saith the Lord God; and she shall be a spoil to the nations. Her daughters also that are in the field shall be slain by the sword: and they shall know that I am the Lord" (Ezechiel, xxvi. 3-6).

See also Job, chapters xxxviii. and xxxix., in which God rebukes the arrogance of Job's friends; these chapters are sublime in thought and language.

854. 2. In the first and second chapters of Genesis God reveals the events of **the Creation** in terms of the utmost simplicity:

"God made two great lights: a great light to rule the day, and a lesser light to rule the night; and the stars" (i. 16).

Ecclesiasticus, speaking in his own person, though, of

course, under the influence of inspiration, exclaims in terms full of magnificence:

"The firmament on high is His beauty, the beauty of heaven with its glorious show. The sun when he appeareth showing forth at his rising, an admirable instrument, the work of the Most High. At noon he burneth the earth; and who can abide his burning heat? As one keeping a furnace in works of heat: the sun three times as much, burneth the mountains, breathing out fiery vapors, and shining with his beams, he blindeth the eyes. Great is the Lord that made him; and at His words he hath hastened his course. . . . The glory of the stars is the beauty of heaven: the Lord enlighteneth the world on high" (xliii. 1–10).

855. 3. Compare the simple language in which the **passage of the Red Sea,** in Exodus (xiv.), is described by Moses as the historian of the Lord, and the magnificence with which the same facts are set forth in the canticle of Moses (*Ib.* xv.), as also in the Psalm, "Attendite populo meus" (Ps. lxxvii.)

856. 4. Lastly, the history of **Christ's sacred Passion** is told by the Evangelists in language touching, indeed, but exceedingly simple—*e.g.*:

"They crucified Him there; and the robbers, one on the right hand and the other on the left. And Jesus said: Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. But dividing His garments, they cast lots" (Luke xxiii. 33, 34).

Now compare with this passage the sublime language of the Prophet Isaias, chapter liii.

857 As might be expected from the preceding reflections, we find that **the poetical portions** of the Holy Scriptures are chiefly the Psalms, the Book of Job, a great portion of the prophetical writings, in particular the "Lamentations of Jeremias," also some passages scattered through the historical books. "The Canticle of Canticles" and the didactic portions of Holy Scripture are likewise full of poetry.

Though not written for the purpose of pleasing literary critics, still our bountiful Lord has scattered through the Sacred Volumes the same profusion of beauty and grandeur which is so conspicuous in all the works of His Omnipotence.

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