

man might be tempted to do, though the sphere in which he moved were different. In the supernatural part of his piece I cannot but think that Æschylus has the advantage. The Grecian conceptions of Nemesis and the Alastor, the prophecies of Cassandra, seem to me more awful than the Gothic machinery of the witches, peculiarly adapted as it is to the country where the scene is laid. If Pagan ideas could produce so much, Christian ideas should have produced more. I am aware of the transcendent difficulty there is in embodying anything connected with our religion worthily in poetry: I merely say as a fact, that here the ancient dramatic art surpasses the modern. There can be no doubt however that the triumph of drawing the whole sublimity of a piece from human nature is higher than that which has recourse to mysterious supernatural powers to produce its effect. But it must not be forgotten that it is not merely on dramatic grounds that the Agamemnon is to be judged. Its lyrical parts, though intimately bound up with the catastrophe, have yet such surpassing power in themselves as to claim a large part of the admiration with which we regard the whole. It is not meant to deny that the existence of a Chorus is in itself a proof of a less perfect stage of the tragic art. Schlegel says it is meant to be the ideal spectator; but however well it may perform this function, and however necessary it may be that the function should be performed, a poet who can dispense with such a cumbersome engine and yet attain the desired object, by distributing the work to be done over the rest of the play, must be held to have made an advance as an artist. Still we ought not therefore to judge of a Greek tragedy merely by its dialogue, but regarding it as a poem, lyric as well as dramatic, to estimate the general sum of poetical power displayed. And viewing it in this light, as a product of an age when art was ruder, and human nature itself both developed in a rougher form and less completely apprehended, I