

the inscrutable powers which control their fate. It is as a study of the human heart, true for every age, not as a protest against tendencies of the poet's own, that the *Oedipus Tyrannus* illustrates the relation of faith to reason.

§ 14. The central figure of the drama is brought into clearer relief by the characters of Teiresias and Creon. Teiresias exists only for the god whom he serves. Through him Apollo speaks. As opposed to Oedipus, he *is* the divine knowledge of Apollo, opposed to human ignorance and blindness. While 'the servant of Loxias' thus stands above the king of Thebes, Creon stands below him, on the humbler but safer ground of ordinary humanity. Creon is shrewd, cautious, practical, not sentimental or demonstrative, yet of a fervid self-respect, and with a strong and manly kindness which comes out in the hour of need<sup>1</sup>. It might be said that the Creon of the *Oedipus Tyrannus* embodies a good type of Scottish character, as the Creon of the *Antigone*—an earlier sketch—is rather of the Prussian type, as it is popularly idealised by some of its neighbours. Teiresias is the gauge of human insight matched against divine; Creon, of fortune's heights and depths, compared with the less brilliant but more stable lot of commoner men. 'Crave not to be master in all things; for the mastery which thou didst win hath not followed thee through life'—are his words to Oedipus at the end; and his own position at the moment exemplifies the sense in which 'the god ever gives the mastery to the middle state'<sup>2</sup>.

§ 15. There is no external evidence for the time at which the *Oedipus Tyrannus* was first acted. Internal evidence warrants the belief that it was composed after the *Antigone*, and before the *Oedipus Coloneus*. The probable limits thus indicated might be roughly given as about 439—412 B.C. More than this we cannot say. Modern ingenuity has recognised Pericles in

Supposed references to contemporary events.

<sup>1</sup> Lest it should be thought that in the note on p. 106 the harsher aspect of Creon's character is unduly prominent, I may observe that this note relates to vv. 512—862, and deals with Creon only as he appears *there*. The scene which begins at v. 1422—and more especially vv. 1476 f.—must of course be taken into account when we offer, as here, a more general estimate of the character.

<sup>2</sup> παντὶ μέσῳ τὸ κράτος θεὸς ὤπασεν, Aesch. *Eum.* 528.