

she accepts what seems worse than death for the sake of benefits to her race which are altogether doubtful;—

‘my soul is faint—

Will these sharp pains buy any certain good?’

But Antigone is greater than Fedalma. There was no father, no Zorca, at Antigone’s side, urgently claiming the sacrifice,—on the contrary, there was a sister protesting against it; Antigone’s choice was wholly free; the heroism which it imposed was one of doing as well as suffering; and the sole reward was to be in the action itself.

§ 15. The character of Creon, as Sophocles draws it in this Creon. play, may be regarded in somewhat different lights. It is interesting, then, to inquire how the poet meant it to be read. According to one view, Creon is animated by a personal spite against both Polyneices and Antigone; his maxims of state-policy are mere pretexts. This theory seems mistaken. There is, indeed, one phrase which might suggest previous dissensions between Creon and Antigone (v. 562). It is also true that Creon is supposed to have sided with Eteocles when Polyneices was driven into exile. But Sophocles was too good a dramatist to lay stress on such motives in such a situation. Rather, surely, Creon is to be conceived as entirely sincere and profoundly earnest when he sets forth the public grounds of his action. They are briefly these. Anarchy is the worst evil that can befall a State: the first duty of a ruler is therefore to enforce law and maintain order. The safety of the individual depends on that of the State, and therefore every citizen has a direct interest in obedience. This obedience must be absolute and unquestioning. The ruler must be obeyed ‘in little things and great, in just things *and unjust*’ (v. 667). That is, the subject must never presume to decide for himself what commands may be neglected or resisted. By rewarding the loyal and punishing the disloyal, a ruler will promote such obedience.

Creon puts his case with lucidity and force. We are reminded of that dialogue in which Plato represents Socrates, on the eve of execution, as visited in prison by his aged friend Crito, who comes to tell him that the means of escape have been provided, Compari-
son with
Plato’s
Crito.