in Schiller's *Wallenstein's Camp*, or a mob-scene, — but it must be a help to a higher purpose. The action is grouped about *a single controlling purpose;* in short, there must be *Unity of Action.* This restriction on the nature of the action is the first of the so-called *Three Unities;* and in the observance of this rule all great dramatists agree. For it is not at all necessary that the action should consist *of one event,* as some have understood the rule. Many events may go together; but each — not necessarily in a conscious way — must have its share in the development of the central dramatic purpose. Nor does unity of action compel a unity of person. Thus the dramatic unity of *King Lear* is not broken by the introduction of Gloster, Edmund and Edgar with their subordinate action. Several heroes are allowable in a play, provided only that they do not so change places or importance that one part of the play differs in spirit and purpose from the other.

The second and third "unities" are by no means of equal importance with the first, nor are they so generally acknowledged. Thus (2) the Unity of *Time.* The structure of the Greek drama was of such a nature as to call for far stricter treatment in this regard than is demanded by the modern drama. But the French critics of Louis XIV.'s time made the classical standard their own, and scoffed at Shakspere as a barbarian because he disregarded the second and third unities. It was Lessing, the great German critic and man of letters, who finally drove the French school from their dictatorship in dramatic composition. True, some observance of the spirit of these rules is to be desired in all dramatists. The strict rule forbade the supposed

time of the play to cover more than twenty-four hours. So boldly did the modern drama transgress this rule that in 1578 George Whetstone (in his *Promos and Cassandra*) complained that the playwright "in three hours runs through the world, marries, makes children men, men to conquer kingdoms, murder monsters, and bringeth gods from heaven and fetcheth devils from hell." In the *Winter's Tale* we have some similar liberties. The Greek drama took for its time the central moment of the action; and by narration in dialogue brought out the preceding steps that led up to the main situation. The result is announced by a messenger, — *e.g.*, the death of the protagonist, or chief actor. In other words, the Greek tragedy goes at once to the catastrophe. In the modern drama we begin with the elements of the catastrophe or, if in a comedy, of the entanglement, and let the action and the characters develop under our eyes. The modern play has less intensity, but more human interest.

The third Unity, that of *Place*, demanded that the events should occur in one and the same place. This is what Hamlet (II. 2) calls "scene individable." Undoubtedly this rule sprang from the peculiar construction of the Greek stage, which was not at all adapted to change of scene. But in modern drama the Unity of Place is practically disregarded — except in certain comedies and farces; and Shakspere especially changes his scenes with the greatest freedom. Sir Philip Sidney in his *Defence of Poesie* laughs at this ceaseless shifting of scene and the inadequate stage machinery to help the illusion. The Germans take a middle course, keeping the same scene as long as possible, but changing it when absolutely necessary.

So much for the Three Unities. It is folly to insist on the literal observance of these rules; but it is important to heed their spirit. Every playwright should be regulated by the spirit of unity, first of all in *action*, but also to some extent in time and place.

Further rules are laid down for the drama, — *e.g.*, that *the action should be complete in itself*. It must stand out clearly as a dramatic whole. To make the action complete, there must be, as parts of the organic whole, *causes*, *development* of these causes, a *climax*, or height of the action; — then the *consequences* and general *conclusion*. The technical division into *five acts* is simply a convenience, and is taken from the Latin plays; Horace says, *A. P.* 189: *Neve minor neu sit quinto productior actu.* The further division into scenes is more with regard to persons (especially in German and French plays), while the acts regard the action or plot. We may name the real divisions of a play as follows: 1. *The Exposition*; 2. *The Tying of the Knot*; 3. Conclusion, — *The Untying*. Prologue, epilogue, etc., are mostly outside the action of the play; although *cf.* "the prologue in heaven" in *Faust*, and, in another fashion, the prologue to Ben Jonson's *New Inn*. We noted also the *Dumb-Show* in *Gorboduc*.

The Exposition is mostly contained in the first act. The second, third, and sometimes the fourth, develop the action up to a climax. This is what Aristotle calls the tying of the knot. Lastly, in the fifth comes the *denouement*, the untying. Here great skill is required. Says Mr. Ward, "the climax concentrated the interest; the fall must not dissipate it." And here we note that this close or catastrophe *must always be a consequence of the action.*

In tragedy, the conclusion (mostly a *death*) is foreshadowed through the whole play; in comedy, the conclusion (mostly a *wedding*) is a sudden surprise. Thus in *Othello*, we feel that the hero's jealousy must lead to some great evil, and overwhelm him.[1] While, on the other hand, we cannot always call the marriage of heroine with hero something totally unexpected, still we are surprised to find what seemed insuperable barriers to such a consummation suddenly removed.

Again, *the action ought to be probable.* Here belongs the famous dictum: *prefer probable impossibilities to improbable possibilities.* The impossible is permitted if it harmonizes with the action. Thus we may introduce ghosts, fairies, and so on; though in Shakspere's time ghosts were by no means commonly regarded as impossibilities.

Consistency of character and fitness of the actors to the action need not be insisted upon. Here is Shakspere's greatest triumph. Instead of mere types of character like the lady's-maid and valet of French comedy, his men and women are flesh and blood, who do not merely follow a set model, but stand as ideals of their sort: we can say *Romeo* — and a distinct personage leaps before the mind. Emerson has finely said of this wonderful power of Shakspere in creating characters: "What office, or function, or district of man's work has he not remembered? What king has he not taught state? . . . What maiden has not found him finer than her delicacy?

[1] The climax and the conclusion must, of course, be held apart. In *Othello* the conclusion is Othello's death; the climax is where he becomes sure of his wife's guilt. "Why did I marry?" he cries in his first doubt; then, with certitude, comes to sheer violence.

What lover has he not outloved? What sage has he not outseen?" — The Greek drama concentrated itself upon the action, and drew its characters in more shadowy outline: they were not so much individuals as Shakspere's men and women were.

Finally, the *surroundings* of the action must be consistent. They need not be chronologically faithful — else *Lear* and *Julius Cæsar* would be condemned; but they must not make a violent contradiction with the general action.

§ 7. TRAGEDY.

Tragedy presents a mortal will at odds with fate. This conflict and the final overthrow of the individual make up a tragic drama. There must be a central character (or there may be more than one, — a group). The motive of this character may be either *mistaken* or *criminal* (*Othello* — *Macbeth*); but the end is in either case tragic.

The effect upon the spectator is, as Aristotle said, to produce in the mind *pity* and *terror*; — sympathy for the victim, fear that a like fate may overtake us. This emotion excites the mind, "purges" it of smaller and unworthy thoughts, and so works a *katharsis*, a purification. It leaves one in "calm of mind, all passion spent."

When all this danger is only apparent, when we see that only every-day blunders, without lasting consequences, are at work, we feel no pity, no terror; we are amused: — it is a *Comedy*.

The name Tragedy is an accident. The Greek drama began with a mere chorus, or dithyrambic refrain,

sung at the feasts of Dionysos, and the singers were dressed in goat-skins: hence (probably) tragedy (= "goat-song," from *tragos*, a goat). To such a chorus was added some one who chanted epic poems; this person *acted* more or less, and addressed his chant to the leader of the chorus, who answered singly or with the whole chorus: so, little by little, the tragedy (or drama) was developed. Æschylus and Sophocles added more actors. The modern tragedy is far more complex than the ancient; and there is also a charming trait in Shakspere's tragedies which was unknown to the sterner drama of Greece, — the gleam of hope, of a new dawn, following on the night of ruin and despair. Thus in *Hamlet*, as a German critic has pointed out, we have young Fortinbras, who will doubtless "set right" the times that Hamlet found so "out of joint." So with Richmond in *Richard III.*, with Malcolm in *Macbeth*; in *Romeo and Juliet* it is the reconciliation of the rival houses. And yet the Greeks, too, recognized in their way that a true tragedy always ends in the triumph of the good over the evil. The hero may perish, but his death brings about good in the end. The tragedy purifies emotion, chastens the impulses, teaches men to accept the order of things and to believe that all is for the best: —

> "Men must endure
> Their going hence, even as their coming hither:
> Ripeness is all."

Lowell ably sums up the difference between classical and modern tragedy: "the motive of ancient drama is generally outside of it, while in the modern . . . it is within."

§ 8. IMITATIONS OF THE GREEK TRAGEDY.

The noblest English example of these is Milton's *Samson Agonistes*. The time is limited to twenty-four hours; there is a Chorus; the catastrophe is announced by a messenger. In our day, Swinburne has closely followed a Greek model in his *Atalanta in Calydon*, and in his *Erechtheus* — the latter a splendid piece of work, with elaborate arrangement of the chorus (in Strophe, Antistrophe, and Epode), and a pure and lofty diction.

§ 9. COMEDY.

Tragedy sets forth the triumph of the general over the particular, of law over individuals. In Comedy, it is the individual who triumphs over the complications of life. — But the term "Comedy" needs definition; the above will not explain all the uses of the word.

Dante called his great work a comedy, and simply meant that it was not a tragedy, that it had no *unhappy* ending. *Cf.* Chaucer's use of the word "tragedy." The name Comedy is not absolutely clear as to its origin. Probably it was derived from the songs sung by bands of men who thus celebrated the Dionysian feasts. In these songs, people and customs were held up to ridicule. From the Greek word for such a festal procession or band, we have the name Comedy. A chorus was joined to these single songs, and thus the Greek Comedy was begun. English Comedy, on the other hand, sprang from the Moral Plays, passing first into the Interludes, and also aided by the models of classical as well as modern Italian Comedy, — but especially by Plautus and Terence. These, in their turn, had imitated the later Grecian Comedy.

Comedy takes a cheerful view of things. The sense of *perplexity*, so common in our lives, is rendered sorrowful by tragedy, mirthful by comedy. In one case, tears; in another, laughter, is what "purges" the mind. — In tragedy we hold as doomed and guilty even those who innocently mistake. In comedy we are tender toward human frailty. Falstaff is a coward: as Dowden says, he is "a gross-bodied, self-indulgent old sinner, devoid of moral sense and of self-respect, and yet we cannot part with him."

Comedy lies either in the *characters*, or in the *situation*, or in both. The best is where both are blended in a mellow atmosphere that has no kindred with sorrow, nor yet with uproarious laughter. Such a comedy is found in *As You Like It* or in *Twelfth Night*. — The comedy that relies entirely on situation is called a *Farce*. — English comedy since Shakspere has been handled with great success by Congreve, by Goldsmith, and by Sheridan; but at present seems utterly dead. Most of our modern plays are adapted from the French.

Under Comedy are often included plays which really are not comic, and yet are not tragic, for the ending is happy. *A threatened danger* is at last averted, but not until near the end of the play. This sort is sometimes called *Tragi-Comedy*, which is an absurd name. Shakspere and Fletcher's *Two Noble Kinsmen* has an ending at once sorrowful and happy: one hero is killed, the other is finally married to the heroine. The Germans call the drama which is neither tragedy nor comedy *Versöhnungsdrama*, the reconciling drama; this we consider below. — Comic scenes are often woven into tragedy; and, *vice versa*, though rarely, tragedy is

found in some one scene of a comedy. But we shall find that such a mixture is successful only when some particular end of the plot is to be served.

Comedy is the grand field for "poetical justice." The miser is tricked, caught in his own snare; the proud is brought low; honest merit is crowned; true love — though it never runs smoothly — comes to a happy union; and even the fool is made happy. In fact, Shakspere's clowns often teach us the lesson that a fool's wisdom is about as near the mark as the world's wisdom. In *Lear*, this is a tragic and bitter lesson; but in *As You Like It*, we acknowledge the truth of it in a laugh. — The comedy is the tragedy *with all elements of danger removed.* We feel this from the beginning; we do not weep, but laugh. Like the tragedy, therefore, comedy has its exposition, development, climax, and conclusion. Instead of death and ruin which close the tragedy, we have in the comedy, as the curtain falls, the group of characters all united and happy. Even the villain, after he has been soundly punished for his wickedness, often turns over a new leaf, and announces resolutions of prodigious virtue.

As to the *form*, tragedy is fond of verse; — comedy inclines to prose. The tragedy is full of resounding lines, is further removed from the ways of real life, — uses more elaborate diction, figures and general construction. The comedy — notably in Congreve, Goldsmith and Sheridan — tends to be *brilliant*, especially in the direction of rapid and sparkling dialogue. There is also much of this word-fencing in Shakspere.

§ 10. RECONCILING-DRAMA.

The name Tragi-Comedy is, as we said, absurd. No play can be at once tragedy and comedy. To be sure, life is made up of the two elements, and the drama is a copy of life; but, as Lessing pointed out, only Infinity could be spectator of this infinite variety, and man is bound to take a definite point of view — either the comic or the tragic. Dryden (*Essay on Dramatic Poetry*) says sharply but truthfully: "There is no theatre in the world has anything so absurd as the English Tragicomedy. . . here a course of mirth, there another of sadness and passion, and a third of honor and a duel: thus in two hours and a half we run through all the fits of Bedlam." And he goes on to say that mirth, the result of comedy, is incompatible with compassion, the end of tragedy: the two results destroy each other. — Dryden, in principle, is perfectly right. And we shall find, in spite of a superficial mingling of comic and tragic in some of Shakspere's plays, that each play has a uniform spirit and tendency running through every scene. Thus in *Hamlet*, the clown's joking by the grave awakens no real mirth: it deepens the sense of tragedy.

But there is nevertheless a third sort of drama. It is not made up of tragic and comic elements, but it is a *harmony*, a reconciling of the two. The tragic conflict is softened to a triumph of earnest will over heavy obstacles; the wantonness and wilfulness of comedy are dignified into serious purpose. So *Henry V.* is made by Shakspere to represent a serious and lofty purpose that gains its object; but the cheerfulness of life is also admitted. Another example is Goethe's

Iphigenie. Carriere further names, under this head, *The Merchant of Venice, Cymbeline,* and *Measure for Measure.* In these a threatened danger is averted, partly through Providence, partly through the energy of the characters themselves. In these plays, too, we have some of Shakspere's noblest women put in the forefront of the action: — Portia, Imogen and Isabella. — With Goethe's *Faust,* finally, we reach the *subjective drama.* It is the development of a human soul: not tragedy, not comedy, — but the subjective drama, teaching the lesson of incessant individual struggle to higher stages of life and action, — "evermore to strive towards the highest existence."[1] This poem comes as near as a poem well can to perfect reconciliation of tragedy and comedy: it is a drama of the human soul wrestling with all the problems of life.

§ 11. OTHER FORMS OF THE DRAMA.

Not strictly dramatic, but tending in that direction are such forms of poetry as the *Idyll.* The Idyll is mainly literary — for reading, not for acting. It is originally a dialogue of shepherd and shepherdess, or of similar characters, and has a strong epic flavor [*cf.* I. § 5]. A charming example of the dramatic Idyll in its highest form is the famous Fifteenth Idyll of Theocritus. Then there are *Eclogues* — much like the last, except that Eclogues are confined to shepherds and their friends, while the Idyll just noted had for characters a couple of city dames, and contained a song and abundant action. The *Eclogue* is quiet and rural. In English we have Spenser's *Shepherd's Calender.*

[1] "Zum höchsten Daseyn immerfort zu streben." *Faust,* II. Act I.

Finally, there arose a regular *Pastoral Drama,* whose origin "was purely literary." Famous as models of this sort were Tasso's *Aminta* and Guarini's *Pastor Fido.* Love and Allegory were the main ingredients. In England there were two branches: — the *Mask* (already noticed) and the regular Pastoral Drama, of which the best examples are Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess* and Ben Jonson's *Sad Shepherd* (fragmentary). The splendid Mask of *Comus* soars above its fellows by reason not only of its exquisite versification and diction, but also of its lofty moral tone. Properly speaking, this sort of poetry should be only a dance-song with masks. But the masks give a *character* to each dancer—he must sing, or speak, in conformity with this character — and so comes the dramatic element.

Nowadays this Pastoral Drama is unknown. But *combined with music* it is still common enough. We mean, of course, *The Opera.* The opera, says Schlegel, is "the anarchy of the arts; since music, dancing and decoration, struggling to outrank one another, make up [its] real character." Recently, Wagner has tried to reconcile the best poetry — both in subject and treatment — with the best music. But in general the opera has no literary merit.

We need not consider at length the minor forms of dramatic poetry. Such are the *Tagelieder* (Provencal, *Alba*) or *Daybreak-Songs* of parting lovers, very popular among the troubadours and certain German Minnesänger: — for example, the bold figures and masterly diction of Wolfram. A specimen in English is the parting scene of *Romeo and Juliet,* III. 5. Similar is the *Serenade,* where lover and mistress sing alternate

stanzas: there is a pretty specimen by Sir P. Sidney. With more epic treatment, the same dramatic form is shown in R. Browning's *In a Gondola*.

Lastly, we have what may be termed *Mock-Tragedy*. All dramatic forms are used, but in broad burlesque. Carey and Fielding mocked the stilted tragic style of Lee and others in two amusing plays; — the title of Fielding's is "*The Tragedy of Tragedies*, or the Life and Death of Tom Thumb the Great. With the Annotations of H. Scribblerus Secundus." It is to be borne in mind that the fact of two persons talking to each other does not constitute a drama, is not even necessarily dramatic in any degree. Hence a dialogue, or exchange of opinions in verse, belongs to the didactic class, and is, as a rule, not even poetry (*cf.* Chap. I. § 4).

§ 12. OUTWARD FORM OF THE DRAMA.

We saw that Tragedy tends to verse, and Comedy (though not always) to prose. Further, the drama may avail itself of the *Chorus*, the *Monologue*, or the *Dialogue*. The first, as we saw, is much used in the classic, especially the *Greek* drama. In modern drama it is not common (*cf.* § 8); though here and there met with, — as in *Gorboduc*, where it is imitated from the tragedies of Seneca; or in *Henry V.*, where it is a chorus only in name, and simply helps to explain the action. The Monologue is more common. *Hamlet* is remarkable in this respect. But the great favorite is the Dialogue, which, in its rapid movement and shifting character, lends itself better to the purposes of imitated action than any other form of speech.

PART II.

STYLE.

CHAPTER IV.

POETRY, then, may treat its subject-matter as an Epic, — by narration: or as Lyric, — by addressing it, expressing certain feelings about it: or as Drama, — by letting it speak for itself.

We now ask whether there is anything noteworthy in the words and phrases by which poetry treats its subject; that is, we consider Poetical Style. In the third and last division of this book we shall treat the harmony of sounds, the laws of verse. So that of the three elements of poetry, we have considered the Thought, have yet to consider the Sounds, and now busy ourselves with Words — whether separately or in combination. Prof. Sylvester calls these elements Pneumatic, Rhythmic, and Linguistic.

The study of poetical style must be to some extent a study of words and their origin. Comparative Philology has shown us that all our words go back to descriptions of natural things, to pictures. With the currency of words, their pictorial suggestion wears away. They become mere counters for the game of conversation; thus *caprice* is now for most of us (though *cf. As You Like It*, III. 3. 6) a symbol of an abstract thought,