

The modern doctor's dissertation has in many cases taken unto itself the form and comeliness as well as the portliness of the comfortable octavo, so that in outward appearance it differs not from other books. But usually the contents are the same in kind and degree, if not in quantity, as those of the more modest unbound pamphlets of the author's own publication. So Dr. Charles E. Whitmore's "The Supernatural in Tragedy" comes out, with the imprimatur of the Harvard University Press, as a respectable volume of 370 pages, including an index. It takes all tragedy for its material, that is, all the tragedy of "Greece, Italy, France, and England in both ancient and modern times," and shows how the supernatural appears in this portentous body of literature. Such a task involves the outlining of many plots, than which nothing is more painful reading, and in the work before us it is accomplished without the slightest charm of style. The various forms of the supernatural are considered, such as Fate, devils and angels, witches and ghosts, and certain manifestations of nature with supernatural suggestions such as storms and the sea, and these are treated as intrinsic, that is, with influence upon character, and as decorative, that is, for purely passing effect. A marked series of stages is seen in Greek tragedy, from the surpassing skill of Æschylus through the subordination of the supernatural in Sophocles into the declining and conventionalized treatment of Euripides. The mediæval sacred drama is treated at great length, disproportionately so, considering the relative dramatic and æsthetic value of the supernatural in this drama. The whole period of Elizabethan drama is given only about twenty pages more. One might question, too, whether more is not made of the supernatural in "Julius Cæsar" in regarding the ghost as the dominant agent in the downfall of the conspirators, as if Cæsar's spirit were to be considered in the same light as the ghost in "Hamlet." "Some modern aspects" of the supernatural are taken up in the periods of the Restoration and the eighteenth century, and in the modern revival in England and the works of Ibsen, D'Annunzio, and Maeterlinck. The Greek spelling, as "Klytæmestra," "Aischylos," etc., provides the needed pedantic touch.

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