

# AESCHYLUS

AGAMEMNON  
CHOEPHOROE  
EUMENIDES

RENDERED INTO ENGLISH VERSE

BY  
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TO  
C. C.



**AGAMEMNON**



# AGAMEMNON

*Argos: The Atreidæ's Palace.*

## WATCHMAN.

I have made suit to Heaven for release  
A twelvemonth long from this hard service, here  
At watch on the Atreidæ's roof to lie  
As if these arms were paws and I a dog.  
I know the nightly concourse of the stars  
And which of the sky's bright regents bring us storm,  
Which summer ; when they set, and their uprisings.  
Once more on guard I look for the signal brand,  
The flash of fire that shall bring news from Troy  
And bruit her fall : so absolute for hope  
Is woman's heart strong with a man's resolve.

And, now the dewy, vast and vagrant night  
Is all my lodging, never visited  
By dreams ;—for Fear, not Slumber, stands fast by,  
So that sound sleep may never latch my lids ;  
And would I sing or whistle, physicking  
The drowsy sense with music's counter-charm,  
Tears in my voice, my song soon sinks to sighs  
For the changed fortunes of this house, no more,  
As whilome, ruled and wrought with excellence.

Oh, that the hour were come for my release !  
 Oh, for the gloom's glad glow of herald-fire !

*The Beacon shines out on Mt. Arachne.*

Brave lantern ! Out of darkness bringing bright  
 Day ! Jolly dance and jocund revelry  
 To all broad Argos for this fair windfall !  
 Oho ! Below there ! Ho !  
 Mount, Agamemnon's wife, starlike from sleep,  
 Ascend, and wake the palace with thy rouse !  
 For by this fiery courier Ilium  
 Is taken ! Heigh ! but I will trip it first !  
 This is king's luck, but it shall vantage me !  
 This bully brand hath thrown me sixes three !

Oh, good to cherish my King's hand in mine  
 When he comes home and the household hath a head !  
 But not a whisper more ; the thresher-ox  
 Hath trampled on my tongue. And yet these walls  
 Could tell a plain tale. Give me a man that knows,  
 And I'll discourse with him ; else am I mute  
 And all my memory oblivion.

*Exit.—Enter Chorus.*

CHORUS.

Nine years have fled on Time's eternal wings  
 And now the tenth is well nigh flown,  
 Since the Atreidæ, of this two-fold throne,  
 By grace of God, the double-sceptred kings—  
 Prince Menelaus, Priam's adversary,

And Agamemnon—from our coast  
 Weighed anchor with a thousand ships,  
 Mustering the valour of the Argive host.  
 Their hearts were hot within them, from their lips  
 Thundered the battle-cry,  
 Like eagles' scream, when round and round they row,  
 High o'er their nest in solitary woe,  
 Because their eyasses are ta'en,  
 And all their watch was vain,  
 And all their labour lost.

But One above, Apollo, Pan or Zeus  
 Shall, at the voice of their despair,  
 Pitying his co-mates of the cloudless air,  
 Send the Destroying Angel, that pursues  
 With penal pangs the feet that have transgressed.  
 And so One mightier, Zeus of Host and Guest,  
 The sons of Atreus 'gainst false Paris sent ;  
 And, for a wife of many husbands wooed  
 Ordains War's tourney in long-drawn prelude,  
 Knapping of spears, knees in the dust down-bent,  
 For Greek and Trojan, ere His wrath be spent.  
 Now, as it may, the quarrel goes ;  
 Fate shapes the close ;  
 None shall appease with cups or fire to faggot laid  
 For sacrifice unburnt the stubborn wrath unstayed.

We, with old limbs outworn,  
 Were left behind, unworthy of the fray ;  
 A staff our stay,  
 Our strength a babe's newborn.  
 For pith of young bones potent over all  
 Is eld's compeer, a puny chief ;  
*There* is no room for Ares, stark and tall :  
 And with the yellowing leaf  
 Life's last must tread the three-foot way ;  
 A babe, a dream stolen forth into the day.

But thou, Tyndareus' daughter, Queen  
 Clytaemnestra, what's this stir ?  
 What news ? What harbinger  
 Hath thine intelligencer been,  
 That thou hast passed the word for sacrifice ?  
 No altar, none, in all the City's liberties,  
 Whether to God of Sky or Earth or Street  
 Or Entry vowed,  
 But is ablaze with gifts.  
 And, from all quarters, even to the abyssm  
 Of night, the dazzling cresset lifts  
 An odorous cloud,  
 Exceeding pure and comforting and sweet,  
 With holy chrism  
 Of nard and frankincense anointed o'er ;  
 The richest unguents of the royal store.  
 If there is aught  
 Thou canst or may'st declare,  
 Speak on, and be physician to my thought,  
 Which oft is sick, and oft  
 When Hope from these brave altars leaps aloft,  
 Biddeth good-bye to Cark and Care.

Now am I minstrel and master  
 Of music to chant the Lay  
 Of the Token, the Mighty Wonder,  
 That met them on their way,

These two kings ripe in manhood.  
 I am old, but in me bloweth strong  
 The wind of God, the rapture  
 That girds me with valiance for song.

Tell then, my tongue, of the omen  
 That sped 'gainst the Teucrian land  
 The Achæans' twi-throned chieftains,  
 With spear and vengeful hand.

Lords of the Youth of Hellas,  
 Right well did they agree,  
 And the king of the birds these sea-kings  
 Bade launch and put to sea.

Lo, a black eagle sheen ; and, lo,  
 With him an eagle pied,  
 By the King's tents, in royal show  
 Lit on the spear-hand side.

A hare their meat, all quick with young,  
 Ta'en, her last doublings o'er.  
*Be Sorrow, Sorrow's burden sung,*  
*But crown Joy conqueror !*

Thereat the wise war-prophet  
 Right well applied his art ;  
 Knowing the sons of Atreus  
 Were men of diverse heart,

In the pair that devoured the trembler  
 He read by his deep lore  
 A symbol of the royal twain  
 That led the host to war.

And thus he spake : “ Long leaguer,  
 “ But Priam's city shall fall  
 “ At last, her cattle and commons  
 “ Butchered without her wall ;

“ Come there from Heaven no wrath-cloud's lower  
 “ To dull with dark alloy  
 “ The mighty bit that's forged with power,  
 “ The host that bridles Troy.

" For wrung with ruth is Artemis,  
 " White flower of maidenhood,  
 " Wroth with her Father's wingèd hounds,  
 " That shed the trembler's blood,  
  
 " Poor doe, that limped with wombèd young :  
 " That meat she doth abhor.  
 " *Be Sorrow, Sorrow's burden sung,* •  
 " *But crown Joy conqueror !*  
  
 " Fair One, as thy love can bless  
 " Little whelps as weak as dew  
 " Of the ravening lioness ;  
 " And at breast all beastlings small  
 " Shield through forests virginal ;  
 " Wingèd weird that fair doth show,  
 " And yet darkly worketh woe,  
 " To some happy end ensue !  
 " And, O Healer, hear my prayer,  
 " Lest in wrath the Goddess rouse  
 " Baffling winds that will not change,  
 " All the Danaan fleet laid by ;  
 " Speeding that unlawful, strange,  
 " Unfestal feast, that rite accursed,  
 " Of a quarrel inly nursed,  
 " To a true man perilous,  
 " The abhorred artificer.  
 " For, behold, within the house  
 " Coiled and fanged Conspiracy  
 " Turns to strike with forkèd tongue,  
 " Mindful of her murdered young."

So thundered the voice of Calchas,  
 From birds with doom in their wings,  
 Encountered by the marching host,  
 Telling the Fate of Kings.

Tuned to the prophet's bodeful tongue,

Let your song sink and soar.

*Be Sorrow, Sorrow's burden sung,*

*But crown Joy conqueror !*

Zeus—whosoe'er He be, Whose state excels  
 All language syllables,  
 Knowing not so much  
 As whether He love that name or love it not ;  
 Zeus—while I put all knowledge to the touch,  
 And all experience patiently assay,  
 I find no other name to heave away  
 The burden of unmanageable thought.

The sometime greatest wrangler of them all  
 Hath wrestled to his fall ;  
 His day is done,  
 He hath no name, his glory's lustreless.  
 He that doth all outwrestle, all outrun,  
 Hath whelmed the next that rose up huge and strong.  
 But if Zeus' triumph be thy victory-song,  
 Thou shalt be founded in all Soothfastness.

He maketh men to walk in Wisdom's ways ;  
 In Suffering He lays  
 Foundations deep  
 Of Knowledge. At the heart remembered Pain,  
 As of a wound that bleeds, waketh in sleep.  
 Though we reject her, Wisdom finds a road.  
 Then 'tis a gift untenderly bestowed  
 By Thronèd Spirits that austere reign.

So with the Elder Captain of the power  
 Achæan in that hour ;  
 No blame he cast  
 On prophet or seer, but bowed him to the blow ;

What time they had no meat to stay their fast,  
 And all their ships lay idle, straitened sore,  
 Where betwixt Chalcis and the hither shore  
 The tides of Aulis battle to and fro.

Strong winds from Strymon ill inaction brought,  
 Lean fast and layings-up of little ease,  
 With waste of ships and tackle ; yea, there wrought  
 In men's minds wilderment of weltering seas ;  
 Day like to day, and hour on changeless hour  
 Fretted of Argive chivalry the flower.

But when was mooted to the Chiefs a way  
 To work a calm more dread than tempest is,  
 And clarion-voiced the Prophet in that day  
 Thundered, unpityingly—"Artemis"—  
 The Atreidæ with their sceptres smote the earth,  
 Nor could keep back their tears ; and thus in birth

The Elder spake, and gave their sorrow vent :  
 "It were a heavy doom to disobey ;  
 "And heavy, if my Child, the ornament  
 "And glory of my house, I needs must slay,  
 "A Father's slaughterous hands foully imbrued,  
 "Hard by the altar, with her maiden blood."

"What choice is here, where all is ill ?" he cried ;  
 "Am I to leave the vessels to their fate ?  
 "Am I to lose the friends with me allied ?  
 "Lo, now a sacrifice which shall abate  
 "Storm-winds with blood of victim virginal  
 "Law sanctions ; they press hard ; then God mend  
 all !"

But, once he let Necessity make fast  
 Her yoke, no longer chafing to be galled,

His altered spirit, leaning to the blast,  
 Swept on, unblest, unholy, unappalled.  
 For a false wisdom first,  
 Being indeed a madness of the mind,  
 Tempts with a thought accursed,  
 And then enures to wrong the wretch of human kind.  
 Not backward now, but desperately bold,  
 The slayer of his Child behold,  
 That arm'd Vengeance woman's rape chastise,  
 And storm-stayed ships sail free for that rich  
 sacrifice.

To those stern judges, absolute for war,  
 Her prayers were nothing, nor her piteous cry,  
 " Father, father," pleading evermore,  
 Nor womanhood nor young virginity :  
 But after uttered prayer  
 He bade who served the sacrifice be bold ;  
 In her long robe that flowed so fair  
 Seize her amain, and high above the altar hold  
 All laxed and drooping, as men hold a kid ;  
 And, that she might not curse his house, he bid  
 Lock up her lovely lips and mew the sound  
 Of her sweet voice with curb of dumbing bridle  
 bound.

Her saffron robe let fall,  
 She smote her slayers all  
 With eye-glance piteous, arrowily keen ;  
 And, still and fair as form in picture seen,  
 Would speak. Oh, in her father's hall,  
 His guests among,  
 When the rich board  
 Was laden with good cheer,  
 How often had she sung ;  
 And when the third thank-offering was poured,

With girl's voice virginal and clear  
 Her father's pæan, hymned with holy glee,  
 Had graced how often and how lovingly !

Thereafter what befell  
 I saw not, neither tell ;  
 Only, the craft of Calchas cannot fail ;  
 For Justice, casting Suffering in the scale,  
 Her balance-poise imponderable  
 With Knowledge trims.  
 What's far away  
 Thou'l know when it is nigh ;  
 But greet not Sorrow, till she swims  
 Full into ken, nor make fool's haste to sigh ;  
 She comes, clear-seen with morning-ray.  
 And yet I look to see a happier hour,  
 As doth the wishful Queen, our Apia's lone watch-tower.

*Enter Clytaemnestra.*

My duty, Clytaemnestra, brings me here,  
 And that just awe which is his consort's right  
 When the king's throne stands empty of its lord.  
 'Twould ease my old heart much might I but know  
 The meaning of these sacrificial fires.  
 Are they for good news had, or hope of good ?  
 I ask, but, if thou art not free to speak,  
 I am no malcontent, I cavil not.

### CLYTAEMNESTRA.

You know the saw, " Good Night bring forth Good  
 Morrow " ;  
 Well, here is happiness surpassing hope :  
 The Argive power hath taken Priam's city.

*Cho.* Have taken—troth, thy words have taken wing ;  
I think my unfaith scared them.

*Clyt.* Troy is taken ;  
Troy—do you mark me ?—in the Achæans' hands.

*Cho.* Oh, joy ! too sweet, too sudden ! It draws tears  
From these old eyes.

*Clyt.* Indeed, they speak for thee ;  
They vouch a loyal heart.

*Cho.* But is it true ?  
And hast thou any proof ?

*Clyt.* Oh, proof enough—  
Or we are gulled by God.

*Cho.* Whether art thou  
In credulous mood under the power of dreams ?

*Clyt.* 'Tis not my way to noise abroad a nothing  
That nods to me in sleep.

*Cho.* Then has a tale  
Wing-swift made fat your hope ?

*Clyt.* You rate me low,  
You reckon me a giddy girl.

*Cho.* How long  
Is't since the town was taken ?

*Clyt.* This same night  
That's now in travail with the birth of day.

*Cho.* Who was the nimble courier that could bring  
The news so quickly ?

*Clyt.*                    Hephæstus ; his light  
Shone out of Ida ; onwards then it streamed,  
Beacon to beacon, like a fiery mail,  
Posting the news. Ida to Hermes' Ridge  
In Lemnos ; thence steep Athos, Zeus' own hill,  
Caught from the isle the mighty brand. Uplift  
It decked the broad deep with a robe of light,  
Journeying in strength, journeying in joy. It smote,  
All golden-glancing, like the sun in Heaven,  
Makistos' warder-towers. Whereat the watch,  
Nothing unready, nothing dazed with sleep,  
Over Euripus' race its coming told  
To far Messapion's sentinels. And they  
Sent up from crackling heather old and dry  
Answering glare, that flashed the tidings on.  
In speed unspent, in power undimmed, it sailed  
Across Asopus' plain, like bright moon-beam ;  
Then on Cithæron's precipice woke fresh  
Response of missive fire. The men on guard  
Hailed that far traveller and denied him not,  
Kindling the mightiest flare of all. It leaped  
Gorgopis' Lake ; swept Aegiplanctus ; bade  
No dallying with its rescript, writ in fire.  
Instant shook out a great, curled beard of flame,  
Luxuriant, that flung a glow beyond  
The cape that looks on the Saronic Gulf.  
Then down it dropped ; on near Arachne's crag  
Its long flight stayed ; till on this palace-roof  
Of Atreus' line yon ray of glory fell,  
Of Ida's parent beacon not unsired.  
This is my torch-race and the ordering of it ;  
Rally on rally plenished with new fire.  
And he's the winner who ran first, and last.

Here's proof for you, here is your warranty,  
The which my husband sent me out of Troy.

*Cho.* Lady, I'll to my prayers ; but satisfy  
My wonder first ; then I will thank the Gods :  
Tell me, as thou know'st how, the tale again,  
Again and more at large.

•

*Clyt.* The Achæans hold  
Troy Town to-day ; and there is heard within  
Her walls, methinks, sounds that are ill to mix.  
Pour oil and eisel in the selfsame crock  
And they will part unkindly. Even so,  
Two voices are there, each distinguishable,  
Both vocal of diversities of fate.  
Here there are fallings-down about the dead,  
Dead husbands and dead brothers ; here are sires  
Unchilled now, old, sad, and free no more,  
Lifting the voice of grief for their best-beloved.  
And there night-straggling Rapine sits him down  
In after-battle weariness, and breaks  
His fast on what the town affords ; not now  
Quartered by rote, but as fortune of war  
Deals each ; in the homes of Troy, the captive-  
homes,  
They lie at ease : not under frosty stars,  
In dew-drenched bivouacs, how blest shall be  
Their sleep, no guard to mount, all the night long !  
Now, if they order them with reverence  
To the Gods of the fallen city and her shrines,  
They shall not spoil to be again despoiled.  
Let them not lust after forbidden prey ;  
For it importeth much they come safe home,  
Now that their course bends hither. If they come  
Free from offence to Heaven, the wound yet green  
For those that we have lost shall dress itself

In smiles to welcome them ; except for Fate ;  
 Except there fall some sudden stroke of Fate.  
 Well, now I have possessed you of my thoughts ;  
 A woman's thoughts, but one who would have good  
 Mount to her triumph, without let or stay.  
 Much hath matured right well, and 'twere to me  
 A delicate joy to gather in the fruit.

*Cho.* Lady, thou surely hast a woman's heart  
 But a man's sense withal. I doubt no more,  
 Nor longer will defer my thanks to Heaven ;  
 For all the toil and the long strain of war  
 There hath been dealt right noble recompense.

*Exit Clytaemnestra.*

King Zeus, and Night, the friendly Night,  
 Our Lady of the Stars, that dropped,  
 With slow evanishing of light,  
 A veil that Troy's tall towers o'ertopped,

Till, tangled in the fatal fold,  
 The strong were as the weak and small,  
 When Thraldom her deep drag-net trolled  
 And Ruin at one draught took all.

Because these mighty works He wrought  
 'Gainst Paris, who so sore transgressed,  
 I bend, I bow in solemn thought  
 To Zeus, the God of Host and Guest.

Long time he bent his bow, nor sped  
 A random shot that deals no scars,  
 Of feeble length, or overhead  
 Ranging among the untroubled stars.

Now may men say  
*"Zeus smote them"*; from the deed  
 On to the doom so plain God's footprints lead,  
 Thou canst not miss thy way.  
 Now shines the event,  
 His rescript graven in its accomplishment.

There is a place  
 Inviolably fair;  
 There is a Shrine thou shalt not enter; there  
 Thrones the Immaculate Grace.  
 "Tush! Enter, tread it down," quoth one unwise,  
 "What list the Gods your lovely Sanctities?"

Blasphemer! Shall not Death,  
 Death by the Sword of God,  
 Still the bold heart and stop the violent breath?  
 Have not the bloody feet of Havoc trod  
 Those marble mansions in the dust  
 Where Glory swelled and overflowed  
 Beyond the comely Mean and just?  
 Oh, give me Wisdom, with such Wealth in store  
 As I ~~may~~ safely hold, I will not ask for more.

He hath no ramp where he may turn  
 That, drunkenly, in mere despite  
 And wanton pride the seat of Justice stern,  
 Even to the grunsel-edge eterne,  
 Dings down and tramples out of sight.

To force the plot  
 That her dam, Death, hath hatched,  
 Temptation cometh, that foul witch unmatched;  
 Whoso resisteth not  
 Her dangerous lure,  
 There is no herb of grace can work his cure,

Nor any shift  
 To hide the gleaming woe ;  
 When that pale spot, that did so faintly show,  
   With ever widening rift  
   Of ruinous light,  
 Glares to the gazing world, malignly bright.

Then, as your pinchbeck brass  
 The ring of gold assays,  
 The rub of doom, with many a fateful pass,  
   The black that specks his soul bewrays.  
 Then is he judged ; and God is none  
 Will hear his prayer ; yea, heaven lays  
 On all his friends the evil done,  
   When in his hey-day chase, a madcap boy,  
 He hunts the gaudy bird that shall his realm destroy.

Such was Childe Paris when he came,  
 Upon a day with Sorrow rife,  
 To the Atreidae's house and smutched their fame ;  
   Yea, for fair welcome left foul shame,  
 And stole away the wedded wife.

She left her land in evil hour  
 On shore and ship grim war's deep hum,  
 And desolation was the dower  
 She took with her to Ilium,  
 When she went lightly through the gate  
 And broke the bond inviolate.  
 And voices in the palace cried,  
 " Woe's thee, high house ! My princes, woe !  
 Thou deep-sunk bed, whose down doth show  
 Where love-locked limbs lay side by side ! "  
 And there were twain that nothing spake,  
 But sat aloof, in mute heart-break,  
 Of all their honour disarrayed,

Mourning too deeply to upbraid.  
 A phantom court, a phantom king,  
 The loveless ghost of Love-longing :  
 She beckons him yet, she bids him come  
 Over the sea to Ilium.  
 The fair, the large-limbed marbles to her lord  
     Are loveliness abhorred ;  
 This penury, sans eyes love's soul made bright,  
     The end of all delight.

And then the dream-bliss comes, the lure  
 That bids us to her with a lie :  
 Ah, when we think our heaven secure  
 We are the fools of phantasy.  
 The fleeting vision will not stay ;  
 Even in his arms it steals away  
 Featly, on brisk, obedient wings  
 That wait upon the paths of Sleep.  
 These sorrows in the courts of kings,  
 And worse, like shadows cower and leap  
 Where the household altar burns.  
 But there's a general sorrow ; yea,  
 In every home all Hellas mourns  
 The mustering of the war-array ;  
 Her time of heaviness is come  
 For them that sailed to Ilium.  
 And there is much in the tragic years  
 To melt her heart and move her tears.  
 Him whom they loved and bade go forth men know—  
     A living soul ; but, oh,  
 There cometh back to home and Hellas shore  
     His dust, the arms he bore.

Ares on foughten field sets up his scales ;  
     Bodies of slain men, stark and cold,  
     · These are this merchant-moneyer's bales,

The which in faggot-fires at Ilium turned  
 To finer dust than is the sifted gold  
 And worth more tears, he sends  
 Back to the dead men's friends ;  
 For them that fell too light a freight,  
 For them that mourn a grievous weight,  
 All in a clay-cold jar so civilly inurned.

And they mourn them, and praise them ; and sadly  
 one saith,

“ Ah, what a soldier was this !  
 And he died nobly, dealing death ” ;  
 And ever a mutter of surly breath—  
 “ For a woman that was not his.”

And so, with public sorrow blent,  
 Is heard the voice of discontent,  
 That loved ones perish and sad hearts pine  
 To right the wrongs of Atreus' line.

And some there be of shapely limbs and tall  
 That come no more, but lie beneath the wall,  
 There they possess the land for which they fought,  
 Coffined in Ilium's earth that loved them not !

A people's voice on the deep note of wrong  
 Grates harshly, it becomes a curse ;  
 Nor shall Destruction tarry long,  
 It falls, as with loud thunder leaps the levin.  
 Something remains behind of dark, adverse  
 And night-involved, and I  
 Listen forbodingly ;  
 And in this black, unquiet mood  
 I call to mind, men deep in blood  
 Shall not live out their days, hid from the sight of  
 Heaven.

Yea, for a season man's thoughts wax bold,  
 And he draweth lawless breath ;  
 But anon the dark Furies from Hell's hold  
 Chafe and change his tinsel gold  
 To the huelessness of death.

And there's no help where dead men lie ;  
 Great glory hath such jeopardy ;  
 Zeus' eye-glance scathes, his lightning scars  
 The soaring peaks that touch the stars.

Give me the ease of an unenvied lot ;  
 To be hailed " Conqueror " delights me not ;  
 But let me ne'er so far from Fortune's favour fall  
 As live life's abject and my master's thrall.

1. Rumour runs fast through every street,  
 As fire the tidings bloweth ;  
 If true—or a divine deceit—  
 Where is the man that knoweth ?
2. Oh, who so fond, in wit so lame,  
 That kindling through him flashes  
 News, that one gust can fan to flame,  
 Another turns to ashes ?
3. All's fair that takes a woman's eye ;  
 A breath—a spark—she blazes ;  
 But swift, and passing swift, to die  
 The glory Woman praises.

*Chorus Leader.* Soon shall we know this torch-race,  
 these relays  
 Of bickering brands and rallies of red fire,

If they be true ; or like the stuff of dreams  
 Delight comes dazzling to delude our sense.  
 A herald hastens hither from the shore  
 All branched about with olive-boughs. The dry  
 And droughty dust, mire's twin-born sister, tells  
 He hath a voice ; his message he'll not vent  
 In flame, with smoke of fire from hill-top pines ;  
 But either cry aloud our joy's increase,  
 Or else—but I am out of love with words  
 That contradict our hopes. May this fair show  
 Find fair addition ; and, who wills not so,  
 But for his country's ruin maketh suit,  
 Of his misprision reap the bitter fruit.

*Enter a Herald.*

### HERALD.

O parent earth ! Sweet Argos ! Past are the years,  
 Ten weary years—dawn breaks—and I am home.  
 Some hopes have parted since, but this hope holds.  
 I never thought to have in this Argive earth—  
 A fathom of ground to be my wished-for grave.  
 A blessing on thee, earth ; on thee, bright sun,  
 And Zeus, our High Lord, and the Pythian King  
 No more to loose on us his arrow-blasts.  
 Wast wroth enough along Scamander's bank ;  
 Now be our Saviour, our Physician be,  
 Kingly Apollo ! Greetings to the Twelve  
 Great Gathering-Gods ! To Hermes, my Defence,  
 Herald of Heaven whom earthly heralds worship.  
 Heroes, whose blessing help our setting forth,  
 Receive these remnant ranks, the spear hath spared !  
 And you, high house of kings, halls ever dear,  
 Majestic thrones, Godheads the sun salutes,

If in old time returning majesty  
 Your bright looks graced, beam now on a royal man  
 After long years restored. Day after night  
 To you, to us and all in presence here,  
 Comes Agamemnon King. Oh, greet him well,—  
 For it becomes you well—that hewed down Troy  
 With the great cross-axe of Justice-dealing Zeus ;  
 Broke up her soil and wasted all her seed.  
 Such grievous bondage fastened on Troy's neck  
 Cometh the King, old Atreus' son first-born ;  
 A happy man ! Of all men now alive  
 Most worthy to be had in honour. Not  
 Lord Paris, nor the guilty city, dare  
 Boast they dealt us measure more bountiful  
 Than we requited unto them with tears.  
 Judged guilty both of rape and larceny,  
 His spoil is forfeit ; he hath harvested  
 The total ruin of his father's house.  
 So Priam's sons pay twofold for his crimes.

*Cho.* Joy to thee, herald of the Achæan host !

*Her.* My joy is at the full ; now let me die ;  
 I'll not complain to the Gods, death comes too soon.

*Cho.* I see how 'tis with thee : love of thy land  
 Proved a sore exerciser of thy heart.

*Her.* So sore, that now mine eyes are wet with tears  
 In joy's revulsion.

*Cho.* Then 'twas a sweet distemper.

*Her.* Was it so sweet ? You must expound me  
 that  
 Or I shall never master it.

*Cho.*                            'Twas love  
For love, longing for longing.

*Her.*                            You would say  
That all your heart went with the army, all  
Our thoughts were turned towards home.

*Cho.*                            Ay, oftentimes  
I groaned aloud for dim disquietude.

*Her.* But why so ill at ease ? Why such black  
thoughts  
About the war ?

*Cho.*                            Pardon me ; I have found  
Long since silence lays balm to a bruised heart.

*Her.* Why, the princes gone, were there ill-doers  
here  
Ye stood in dread of ?

*Cho.*                            In so much that now—  
Said ye not so ?—'twere joy to die.

*Her.*                            In truth  
We have done well ; but take it all in all,  
A man may say that, as the years went by,  
We had our good times and our bad times. Who,  
Except the Gods, lives griefless all his days ?  
Our sorry lodging and our seldom rest—  
And we lay hard—with all our miseries,  
Would furnish forth a tale—why is there aught  
Costs men a groan we knew not every day ?  
These were sea hardships ; but 'twas worse ashore.  
There we must lie down under enemy walls.  
The sky dropped rain, the earth did ceaselessly

Distil from the low-lying fields her damps  
 And rotting mildews, drenching our coats of hair,  
 Which soon grew verminous. Or what of winter  
 That froze the birds, so perishingly cold  
 It came from Ida blanketed in snow ?  
 Or the hot months, when on his noon-day bed  
 Windless and waveless, sank the swooning sea ?  
 Why moan all this ? 'Tis past ; and for the dead  
 Is past the need ever to rise again.  
 Or, why tell o'er the count of those cut off,  
 Or call to mind that to survive is still  
 To live obnoxious to calamity ?  
 Farewell, a long farewell, to all misfortune !  
 For us, the remnant of the Argive power,  
 Gain conquers, and no grief that good outweighs.  
 Therefore, in this bright sun, over broad seas  
 And the wide earth flying on wings of Fame,  
 Well may we make our boast, " Takers of Troy,  
 " Hard won, but won at last, the Argive power  
 " To the Gods of Hellas nailed these trophies up  
 " To be the glory of their temples old."  
 Then shall men hear, and sing our country's laud  
 And her great captains', and extol the grace  
 Of Zeus that wrought these things. Sir, I have  
 done.

*Cho.* This wins me ; I deny no more ; for age  
 Still leaves us youth enough to learn.

*Enter Clytaemnestra.*

But this  
 Touches the house and Clytaemnestra most,  
 Though its largesse withal enriches me.

## CLYTAEMNESTRA.

Oh, ages since I raised my jubilant shout,  
 When the first fiery messenger of night  
 Told Ilium was taken, and her stones  
 Rased, ruined and removed. And one of you  
 Did gird me then, saying, "Dost think Troy sacked  
 "Because men set a match to wood ?—By God,  
 "A woman's heart is lightly lifted up."  
 So they supposed me crazed ; and still I made  
 Oblation ; and a general cry of joy—  
 Most womanly !—rent the air ; and in the shrines  
 They fed sweet spices to the hungry flame.  
 And now I will not hear thee more at large ;  
 I shall know all from the king's lips. There's much  
 Asks swift despatch, that my most sacred lord  
 May have noblest of welcomes. Sweet the day,  
 Sweetest of all days in a woman's life,  
 When for her husband she flings wide the gates  
 And he comes back from service, saved by God !  
 Take back this message ; that he come with speed,  
 For his land loves him ; tell him he will find  
 A true wife waiting when he comes, as true  
 As her he left ; the watch-dog of his house,  
 Loyal to him, but savage to his foes ;  
 In nothing changed ; one that has broke no seal,  
 Nor known delight in other's arms, nor felt  
 The breath of censure more than she has dipped  
 Cold steel in blood. [Exit.]

*Her.*                    Strange how she boasts ! Is't not  
 Though charged with truth, and something over  
 charged,  
 Scarce decent in a high-born lady's mouth ?

*Cho..* Well, she has done ; you heard her, and I  
 think

You understood her ; noble rhetoric  
 For wise interpreters. But, tell me, herald,  
 Comes Menelaus with you ? Is he safe,  
 Our realm's dear majesty ?

*Her.* What's fair and false  
 Is soon enjoyed ; 'tis fruit that will not keep.

*Cho.* I would give much, couldst thou speak fair  
 and true ;  
 For true and fair dissevered and at strife,  
 The secret is soon out.

*Her.* Why, not to glose  
 And lie to thee, we have no trace at all  
 Of the man or the ship whereon he sailed.

*Cho.* Alack  
 And did he put to sea from Ilium  
 In sight of all ? Or, caught in the track of storm  
 That jeopardied the fleet, part company ?

*Her.* Dextrously thou aimst ; indeed you sum  
 great grief  
 In little space.

*Cho.* And other mariners—  
 Do they report him dead or living ?

*Her.* None  
 Knows, nor can certainly resolve our doubts,  
 Save Helios, the nurturer of all life  
 Through the vast world.

*Cho.* Tell me, how rose the storm  
 And how it ended, with the wrath of Heaven ?

*Her.* So fair a day we must not with foul news  
 Distain ; we owe the Gods far other service.  
 No ; when with looks abhorred a herald brings  
 Calamitous news, or armies overthrown ;  
 When the general heart aches with one wound, and  
 each

Bleeds for his own, by thousands made accursed,  
 Scourged from their homes by Ares' double lash,  
 Two-handed havoc, couplings of bloody death,  
 Well may he sing Eriny's Song, poor man,  
 Bowed down to earth 'neath that sore load. But  
 when

All's well, and he comes bringing joyful news  
 To a land that maketh merry, well at ease,  
 How mix things good and ill, speak of this storm  
 That, not without Heaven's wrath, smote the  
 Achæans ?

Water and Fire forgat their ancient quarrel  
 And sware a league together ; and, to prove  
 How well they kept it, brake the Argive power.  
 Upon a night there rose a naughty sea ;  
 And presently the roaring Thracian gale  
 Drave ship on ship. Tossed by the horned typhoon,  
 With spray of salt-sea sleet and drumming rain  
 In that wild piping they were lost to view.  
 And, when the bright sun rose, the Aegean wave  
 Was lilyed o'er with drowned men and wreck of ships.  
 But our taut hull a Power privily  
 Conveyed away, or interceded for us.  
 A God it was, no man, that took the helm.  
 Fortune, our Saviour, stationed her aboard  
 Of grace, so that at anchor in the swell  
 We shipped no seas nor swung upon the rocks.  
 And from the watery abyss of Death  
 Preserved, incredulous of our good hap,  
 In the white dawn, sad food for thought we found,

So sudden was the blow, our men so spent,  
 Our fleet so shattered. And, if any of them  
 Is alive to-day, certes, they give us up  
 For lost, as we think them.

Hope for the best.

And yet of Menelaus your first thought  
 Must be that he is sore distressed. Howbeit,  
 If any ray of the sun bring note of him,  
 His leaf unwithered and his eye unclosed,  
 There is a hope, that by some artifice  
 Of Zeus, not minded yet to destroy his house,  
 He may come home again. Now you have heard  
 My story, and may warrant all is true.

[Exit.]

### CHORUS.

Tell me who it was could frame  
 So unerringly her name ?  
 Was't not one we cannot see,  
 Prophet of Futurity ?  
 Did not Fate his tongue inspire,  
 Calling on her naming day  
 Her, world's strife, and world's desire,  
 Bride of Battle, " Helena " ?  
 Helen ! Ay, Hell was in her kiss  
 For ships and men and polities,  
 When, from behind her amorous veil,  
 She sallied forth with proud, full sail,  
 And Love's dallying wind blew fair,  
 That Iris to earth-born Zephyr bear.  
 Then followed after, in full cry,  
 As hounds and huntsmen take the field,  
 Of gallants a fair company,  
 That pressed their suit with lance and shield.

Over the blue, undimpled wave,  
 That told not of her oar-blade's track,  
 Hard upon Simoeis' strand they drove,  
 All overhung with leafy wood ;  
 And she whose hands are red with blood,  
 Eris, was master of the pack.

Wrath, that can nor will remit  
 Nothing of its purpose, knit  
 Bonds that Ilium shall find  
 More than kin and less than kind.  
 And, for an example, lest  
 Men in ages yet unborn  
 Break the bread and foully scorn  
 Sanctities 'twixt host and guest,  
 Zeus, who guardeth hearth and bed,  
 Hath in anger visited  
 Them that led the merry din,  
 Over-bold to welcome in  
 With revel high and Hymen's strain,  
 Sung of all the marriage-kin,  
 Bride and groom and bridal train.  
 But the tide of Fate had turned  
 'Gainst Priam's city, ere she learned  
 A new song of sadder measure,  
 Marrying her complaining breath  
 To the dirge of dismal death,  
 Where is neither love nor pleasure.  
 Then was Paris "evil-wed,"  
 When long years she mourned her dead,  
 And their blood was on his head.

Once on a time there lived a man, a herd ;  
 And he took home, finding it motherless,  
 To be his foster-child, all fanged and furred,  
 A lion-cub, a little lioness.

Still wishful of the warm and milky dug,  
 It was a gentle beast while tender yet ;  
 Made friends with children, they would kiss and hug  
 The baby limbs, and 'twas the old folks' pet.

Many a time and oft the wean, bright-eyed,  
 Like to a child-in-arms they carried ;  
 And, when for meat the lion-belly cried,  
 'Twould cringe and fawn and coax them to be fed.

Then it grew up ; and from what race was sprung  
 Proved, when as recompense for care and keep  
 (Ravage let loose the folded flocks among)  
 It made a supper of the silly sheep.

Then was the homestead soaked in blood ; and they  
 That dwelt there, mastered by this unmatched ill,  
 Knew they had bred a Mischief born to slay,  
 A priest of Havoc sent them by God's will.

When first she came to Ilium Town  
 The windless water's witchery  
 Was hers ; a jewel in the Crown  
 Of Wealth that sparkles soft was she ;  
 An eye to wound with melting fire,  
 The rose of ravishing desire.

But wearing now an altered grace  
 Love's sweet solemnities she soured  
 In Priam's house a hated face,  
 A curse with settled sorrow dowered ;  
 On Zeus the Guest-God's word swift-borne  
 Erinys that makes brides to mourn.

I know how well the saying wears,  
 Stricken in years, but still held wise,

That boundless Wealth is blest with heirs  
 And Grandeur not unchilded dies ;  
 Boon Fortune's bud and branch is she,  
 The hungry-hearted Misery.

False doctrine ; though I stand alone,  
 I hold that from one wicked deed  
 A countless family is sown,  
 And, as the parent, so the seed. •  
 But Justice hands fair Fortune on  
 And godly sire hath goodly son.

Yea, that old beldame, Pride  
 Who to her lustful side  
 Draws evil men, anon, or else anon,  
 When Fate with hand of power  
 Beckons the destined hour  
 Brings forth young Pride, her Mother's minion;  
 Daughter of Darkness, sabled-hued  
 As the Tartarean pit, for vengeance armed and  
 thewed.

A Power no stroke can fell,  
 Nor stubborn warfare quell,  
 A hag, a goblin, an unholy form,  
 The Soul of hardihood,  
 Swift to shed guiltless blood,  
 Dark Angel of Destruction's whirling storm,  
 She dances on the roofs of kings,  
 And by her shape men know from what foul loins she  
 springs.

Oh, in the smoky air  
 Of poor men's homes, how fair,  
 How like a star the lamp of Justice shines !  
 Justice, that most approves

The faithful life, that moves  
 In the fixed path her Providence assigns ;  
 And, constant to that strict control,  
 Forceful as Fate, pursues the orbit of his soul.

But, where in Splendour's halls,  
 Gold glitters on the walls,  
 And on men's hands is filth and foul offence,  
 With looks averse and cold  
 She quits the gates of gold,  
 And hails the hut of humble Innocence.  
 Wealth's coin of spurious die,  
 Usurping Sovereignty,  
 No image bears whereto she bends ;  
 She guides and governs all, and all begun she ends.

*Enter Agamemnon, with Cassandra and his train,  
 seated in chariots.*

Hail to thee, monarch ! Conqueror of Troy !  
 Offspring of Atreus ! How shall I content  
 Thy spirit in thy triumph and thy joy ?  
 Rise to the height of honour's argument,

And yet a chastened gratulation give ?  
 There are of rogues enough, ay, and to spare,  
 Who in the shows of things are pleased to live,  
 And thrive on falsehood as their native air.

There's little faith in man ; scarce one that breathes  
 But with misfortune will heave up a sigh ;  
 And yet the cruel sting sorrow unsheathes,  
 'Fore God, his tender parts it comes not nigh.

And other some, be sure of this, O king,  
 Can simulate a joy they do not feel ;

Come with forced smiles and fulsome welcoming ;  
And crafty faces cruel thoughts conceal.

But him whose business is with droves and herds  
The gipsy's arts can captivate no whit ;  
Not easy duped with warrantable words  
And protestations fair in water writ.

Sir, in all honesty, when thou didst ~~arm~~  
In Helen's cause, to save her launch thy ships,  
My portrait of thee lacked the Muses' charm,  
And "Wisdom's helm," I said, "a madman  
grips."

" She doth consent thrice o'er, the wanton ! Why  
For her make sacrifice of heroes' blood ? "  
Now from the bottom of my heart I cry,  
" Grief, thou wast welcome, since the end is good."

Howbeit, Time hath something yet to say  
(Though now he clap a finger to his lip),  
Touching this land, when you were far away ;  
Who well, who ill, discharged his stewardship.

### AGAMEMNON.

To Argos and her Gods let me speak first,  
Joint authors with me of our safe return  
And of that justice I did execute  
On Priam's city. Not by the tongues of men,  
But by their deaths have the Gods judged our cause,  
Nor haltingly, 'twixt two opinions, cast,  
For Ilium's overthrow, their suffrages  
Into the urn of blood : the other Hope

Drew nigh, but not a pebble dropped. And now  
 Her smoke discovereth her ; death's whirlblasts live ;  
 Her ashes dying with her gasp her wealth  
 In unctuous evanishings away.

Long should our memory be and large our thanks  
 To Heaven, for humbled pride and rape revenged ;  
 A kingdom for a wench ground up sand-small ;  
 Whenas the broody horse hatched out her young,  
 Our basilisk, our Argive bucklemen,  
 Vaulting to earth, what time the Pleiads sank ;  
 And Argos' Lion, ravening for meat,  
 Leapt tower and wall, and lapped a bellyful  
 Of tyrant blood.

So have I opened me  
 Unto the Gods.—And yet I call your words  
 To mind ; your counsel squares with my own  
 thoughts.

How rare it is in nature, when a man  
 Can spare his friend, if he stands well with Fortune,  
 Ungrudging honour ! Nay, himself grown sick  
 In his estate, jealousy lays to his heart  
 A poison that can make his burden double ;  
 He ~~hath~~ his own griefs, yet must heave more sighs  
 To see a neighbour happy ! Ah, I know  
 That which I speak ; I am too well acquaint  
 With friendship's glass, the reflex of a shadow ;  
 I mean my professed friends. There was not one  
 Except Odysseus, the most loth to sail,  
 That like a horse of mettle pulled his weight,  
 And whether he be dead or alive, God knows.  
 Enough of this. We purpose presently  
 To call a Council touching the state of the realm  
 And the service of the Gods. What's sound, we shall  
 Take measures to perpetuate, but where  
 There's need of physic, we shall in all kindness

Use cautery or the knife, till we have rid  
The land of mischief.

Now let me pass within ;  
And in my high house, mine own hearth, stretch out  
My right hand to the Gods, that sent me forth  
And brought me safely home. So victory  
That followed in my train attend me still.

•

*Clytaemnestra comes to meet him.*

### CLYTAEMNESTRA.

Good citizens, our Argive seigniory,  
I think no shame to speak of the dear love  
I bear my lord. Our blushes wear not well ;  
They pale with time, and I need little schooling  
To tell you life to me was weariness  
Those years when he beleaguered Ilium.  
Merely to sit at home without her lord  
Is for a woman to know fearful sorrow.  
Scarce hath one crack-voiced kill-joy cried his news  
Than comes his fellow, clamouring far worse.  
An if this mould of manhood, where he stands,  
Had gotten wounds as many as Rumour digged  
Channels to be the conduits of his blood  
And help it home, he were as full of holes  
As, with your leave, a net. Had he but died  
As often as men's tongues reported him,  
Another triple-bodied Geryon,  
Three cloaks of earth's clay—not to pry too deep  
And talk of under-strewments—three fair cloaks  
Of clay for coverlid—thrice over dead  
And buried handsomely as many times—

Conceive his boast—three corpses, a grave apiece !  
 Well, but these crabbed rumours made me mad ;  
 And many times the noose was round my neck,  
 Had not my people, much against my will,  
 Untied the knot. And this will tell you why,  
 When looked for most, Orestes is not here,  
 Lord of our plighted loves to him impawned.  
 You must not think it strange. Your sworn ally,  
 Strophius the Phocian, hath charged him with  
 The nurture of the child, foreshadowing  
 A double jeopardy ; yours before Ilium,  
 And here, lest many-throated Anarchy  
 Should patch a plot ; since 'tis a vice in nature  
 To trample down the fallen underfoot.  
 This was his argument, and I believe  
 Honestly urged. For me the fount of weeping  
 Hath long run dry, and there's no drop left. Oh !  
 These eyes, late watchers by the lamp that burned  
 For thee, but thou kept'st not thy tryst, are sore  
 With all the tears they shed, thinking of thee.  
 How often from my sleep did the thin hum  
 And thresh of buzzing gnat rouse me ! I dreamed  
 More sorrows for thy sake than Time, that played  
 The wanton with me, reckoned minutes while  
 I slept. All this have I gone through ; and now,  
 Care free I hail our mastiff of the fold,  
 Our ship's great mainstay, pillar pedestalled  
 To bear a soaring roof up, only son,  
 Landfall to sailors out of hope of land !  
 These are the great additions of his worth !  
 And, I pray God 'tis no offence to Heaven  
 To make them heard. We have had many sorrows,  
 And would provoke no more.

Dear Heart, come down ;  
 Step from thy car, but not on the bare ground ;  
 Thy foot that desolated Ilium,

Thou royal man, must never stoop so low !  
 Spread your rich stuffs before him, girls ; make haste !  
 That he may walk the purple-paved way  
 Where Justice leads him to his undreamed home.  
 My sleepless care shall manage all the rest  
 As Justice and the Heavenly Will approve.

*Ag.* Offspring of Leda, keeper of my house,  
 You match your much speech to my absence, both  
 Are something long ; the rather that fine words  
 Come best from others' lips. Woman me not,  
 Nor like an eastern slave grovel before me  
 With your wide-mouthed, extravagant exclaim.  
 Away with all these strewments ! Pave for me  
 No highway of offence ! What can we more  
 When we would deify the deathless Gods !  
 But Man to walk these sacramental splendours,  
 It likes me not, and I do fear it. No,  
 Honour me as the mortal thing I am,  
 Not as a God ! A foot-cloth, that will pass ;  
 But think how ill will sound on the tongues of men  
 These veilings of the precincts ! God's best gift  
 Is to live free from wicked thoughts ; call no man  
 Happy, till his contented clay is cold.  
 Now I have told thee how I mean to act,  
 And keep my conscience easy.

*Clyt.* Tell me this,  
 And speak thy mind to me.

*Ag.* My mind's made up ;  
 I'll not rase out mine own decree.

*Clyt.* Would'st thou,  
 Faced with some fearful jeopardy, have made  
 A vow to Heaven to do what now I ask thee ?

*Ag.* If some wise doctor had prescribed the rite,  
I would have vowed to do it.

*Clyt.* What dost thou think  
Priam had done, if Priam had achieved  
The victory that's thine ?

*Ag.* Oh, he had trod  
Your sacrilegious purples.

*Clyt.* Then fear not thou  
Man's censure.

*Ag.* In the general voice resides  
A power not to be contemned.

*Clyt.* Good luck !  
Unenvied never yet was fortunate !

*Ag.* This is a war of words, a woman's war ;  
And yet a woman should not take delight  
In battle.

*Clyt.* 'Tis a virtue that becomes  
Glory, in his triumphant hour to yield.

*Ag.* While we stand here at odds, wilt thou  
pretend  
Thou carest for a victory so won ?

*Clyt.* Nay, but thou shalt indulge me ; thy  
consent  
Leaves thee my master still.

*Ag.* Have thine own way,  
Since nothing else contents thee. One of you

Undo these latchets. Hark ye ; loose me quick  
 These leathern underlings : and when I set  
 My foot on yon sea-purples, let no eye  
 Throw me a dart of jealousy from far !  
 I am heartily ashamed to waste my stuff,  
 Walking on wealth and woof good money buys.  
 But I'll waste no more words. Lead in the lady ;  
 Be tender with her, for the Gods above  
 Look gently down when earthly power is kind.  
 None loves the bondman's yoke ; and she's the  
 flower  
 Of all our spoils, the army's gift, a part  
 Of my great train. Now, I'll contend no longer ;  
 Let me pass on under my palace-roof,  
 Treading your purples.

*He descends from his chariot.*

*Clyt.* There's the wide sea, and who  
 Shall drain it dry ? Purple ! There's more of it  
 In Mediterranean waves ; for ever fresh,  
 Worth silver ounces, the right juice to wring  
 Your royal robes withal. And, God be thanked,  
 We've plenty of them within ; we do not know  
 What 'tis to lack. I would have vowed to tread  
 Raiment in heaps, if oracles had bid me,  
 When I was at my wits' end to contrive  
 How to win back the half of mine own heart !

Now springs the root to life ; the climbing leaf,  
 Tile-high, against Dog Sirius spreads a shade !  
 And, in thy home-coming, our weather-wise  
 Winter reads signs of warm days fully come.  
 Yet, in God's wine-press, when the unripe grape  
 Is trampled out into the blood-red wine,

Then for the perfect man about the house  
 There comes a wintry coolness to his cheek.  
 Zeus, Zeus, Perfecter, perfect now my prayer,  
 And of Thine own high will be Perfecter !

*Agamemnon and Clytaenestra enter the Palace.*

### CHORUS.

Spirit of Fear, and all Unrest,  
 Will thy wings never tire ?  
 Song that waitest no man's hest,  
 Nor askest any hire,

Why this prophetic burden keep ?  
 What Ghost no power can lay,  
 Not like the cloudy shapes of Sleep,  
 Heaved with a breath away,

Haunts me with evermore despair,—  
 Sad phantom still unflown ;  
 And Courage high no more speaks fair,  
 Lord of my bosom's throne ?

The laggard years have told their sum,  
 The cables are outworn,  
 Since, to beleaguer Ilium,  
 Went up the host, sea-borne.

And now I see that host's return,  
 By witness of these eyes ;  
 Yet in my hand is no cithern ;  
 My soul accompanies

The song that Angry Spirits sing,  
 The dirge of Vengeance dread :  
 My confidence hath taken wing,  
 And my dear hope is dead.

But still 'gainst hope my prayer I press,  
 The event may yet belie  
 My fears, and bring to nothingness  
 My soul's dark prophecy.

Goodman Health for his great train  
 Findesth his bounds too small,  
 For the lazarus-house of Neighbour Pain  
 Leaneth against his wall.

Though calm the winds and smooth the wake  
 And Fortune's ship sail free,  
 There are Rocks she shall strike where no seas  
 break,  
 There are shoals of Misery.

Sailor, be yare ! Be wise !  
 Out of her deep hold heave  
 Of her rich merchandise  
 With rope and block and sheave.

So you shall save your craft,  
 Your ship shall founder not,  
 Though she be of great draught  
 And perilously fraught.

For the bounty of Zeus shall repair  
 The ravage of yesterday,  
 And a season's tilth with the furrowing share  
 Chase Famine and Want away.

But the blood of life once shed  
 Shall come to no man's call.  
 He that could raise the dead  
 And the flocking Shadows all,

Did not Zeus stop his breath  
 And bring him to his pause,  
 Lest who would heal the wound of death  
 Strike at Eternal Laws ?

Oh, we are straitened sore ;  
 If by strict rule dispensed,  
 Jealous of less or more,  
 Heaven's liberties be fenced,

What wish dare mortal frame ?  
 Else had my hot heart flung  
 All out, and put to shame  
 This inexpressive tongue.

Now I've no hope to unwind  
 The clew of Heart's desire ;  
 To think is pain when thought is blind,  
 The smoke of a soul on fire.

*Enter Clytaemnestra.*

### CLYTAEMNESTRA.

*Clyt.* How now, Cassandra ? I must have thee  
 too ;

Get in, since Zeus—oh, surely not in wrath !  
 Hath made thee one of us, asperged with all  
 Our lustral sprinklings, at our household altar  
 Stood in thy place with other bondwomen.

Step from thy waggon then and be not proud.  
 Alcmena's son, thou know'st, was sold for a price  
 And did endure to eat slave's barley-bread.  
 He that must call Wealth lord may bless his stars  
 When 'tis of honourable antiquity.  
 Who look for nothing and reap affluence  
 Are cruel masters, stand upon no law ;  
 But here thou shalt be used as use prescribes.

*Cho.* She waits thine answer ; being caught and  
 caged  
 Yield, if thou mean'st to yield ; but, it may be,  
 Thou'l not.

*Clyt.* Speaks she some barbarous babblement,  
 Some chittering swallow-talk, that she's so slow  
 To take my meaning ?

*Cho.* Lady, 'twere best submit ;  
 She offers all that thy extremity  
 Gives room to hope for : leave thy waggon-throne,  
 And follow her, poor princess.

*Clyt.* While she sticks  
 Fast at my door, I waste my precious time ;  
 The dumb beasts stand about the central hearth  
 Waiting the knife, and there's to be great slaughter,  
 Meet for a boon vouchsafed beyond our hope.  
 Make no more halt, an thou wilt bear a part.  
 Come, mistress, if you cannot murder Greek,  
 Make your hand talk and do your jargoning.

*Cho.* One should interpret for her, she looks  
 wild ;  
 A hunted deer new-taken in the toils.

*Clyt.* Mad, sirrah, mad, and listening to her own  
 Contrarious heart ; a captive newly caught,  
 Champing the bit, until her puny strength  
 She foam away in blood. Enough of this :  
 I'll waste no more words to be so disdained.

*Exit.*

*Cho.* My heart's too full of pity to be wroth.  
 Sad lady, leave thy car ; there is no way  
 But this, come down and take thy yoke upon thee.

### CASSANDRA.

Woe ! Woe ! Woe !  
 Apollo ! Apollo !

*Cho.* Why dost thou mourn for Loxias ? Is he  
 Natured like us to ask a threnody ?

*Ca.* Woe ! Woe ! Woe !  
 Apollo ! Apollo !

*Cho.* Again ! she doth affront the God ; not so  
 Must we draw nigh him, wailing, wailing woe.

*Ca.* Apollo ! Apollo ! God of the great  
 Wide ways of the world, my path is made strait !  
 Not twice shall I shun thee, my Foe and my Fate !

*Cho.* Ha ! Her own grief's her theme ; the God-  
 given Mind  
 Bondage can break not, no, nor fetters bind !

*Ca.* Apollo ! Apollo ! God of the Ways,  
 What road is this, thou darkener of my days ?  
 What house that bends on me so stern a gaze ?

*Cho.* Oh, this is the Atreidæ's royal home ;  
Ay, truly to their high house thou art come.

*Ca.* Horrible dungeon ! House of Sin !  
These stones have secrets, drenched in blood of kin !  
Out, human shambles, stifling halls,  
The red rain trickling down your walls !

*Cho.* A huntress-hound ! Yea, and by all that's  
ill,  
I fear this find will follow to a kill !

*Ca.* I know it, by this wailing cry,  
These shrieks of slaughtered infancy,  
Ta'en from their dam and roast with fire,  
Set in a dish, served up for their sire !

*Cho.* We know thou art a soothsayer ; natheless,  
It skills not now ; we seek no prophetess.

*Ca.* God, what's conspiring here ? What new  
And nameless horror cometh into view,  
To overtop and pale with bolder hue  
Ghosts of old crime that walk this bloody stage,  
Making Love weep and wring her anguished hands ?  
There is no physic can this ache assuage,  
And from this woe far off all succour stands.

*Cho.* Oh, they are published sorrows, griefs that  
have been;  
But I know not what these dark sayings mean.

*Ca.* Miscreant, what make you there ? Why dost  
thou brim  
Yon cauldron for thy lord ? On breast and limb  
The cool stream glitters. Ah, mine eyes grow dim ;

The dreadful consummation, the swift close,  
Makes my lips dumb, and stops my breath ;  
With such a ceaseless hail of savage blows  
A white arm flashes, doubling death on death.

*Cho.* This thick-occulted darkness grows more dense ;  
Riddles and runes, confounding sound and sense !

*Ca.* Oh, horrible !  
What's this ? A net as bottomless as hell ?  
A net—a snare—ha ! And what else is she  
That wound him in her arms in love's embrace  
And now conspires to murder him ! Dogs of the chase,  
Devils, still hungry for the blood of Atreus' race,  
Over the hideous rite shout, shout with jubilee !

*Cho.* What's this Avenger thou bidd'st shriek  
Within the house ? Night sinks  
Upon my soul to hear thee ; faint and weak,  
Drop by drop, the slow blood shrinks  
Back to my heart, to sickly pallor blenched ;  
So pales some fallen warrior, his life's ray  
Low down the sky in sallow sunset quenched ;  
Then with swift stride comes Death with the dying day.

*Ca.* (*With a piercing shriek*)—Ah-h-h-h ! look !  
look ! Keep  
The Bull from the Cow ! Hell-dark and deep  
As death her horn : she strikes ; and he is caught,  
Caught in his long robe—falling—falling—dead  
In the warm bath with murder brimming red !  
Oh, what a tale is here ! A damned plot  
With bloody treason bubbling in the pot !

*Cho.* I have small skill in oracles,  
 But something evil I divine ;  
 And troth, who ever heard that he who mells  
 With them learnt aught of good at grot or shrine ?  
 No ; all the answers prophet ever framed,  
 All his high-sounding syllables, when the seer  
 Speaks with the Voice of God, are evil, aimed  
 To exercise us in a holy fear.

*Ca.* O death ! O doom ! Mine own  
 In the cursed cauldron thrown !  
 Wherefore hast brought me here ! Ah, well I know  
 I am to follow whither he must go.

*Cho.* Thou art crazed, on gusts of God-sent madness borne !  
 Thyself the theme of thy sad esctasy !  
 There is nor law nor measure in thy strain ;  
 Like the brown nightingale that still doth mourn,  
 As if song sought but could not find relief ;  
 'Itys—Itys'—a never-ending cry,  
 Her life of sorrow telling o'er again  
 In her undying bower of fadeless grief.

*Ca.* Ah, happy nightingale !  
 Sweet singer ; little, frail  
 Form God gave wings to—sweet to live—sans tears !  
 For me the edge of doom ! How fast it nears !

*Cho.* Whence come these Heaven-sent transports,  
 whence come they ?  
 The meaning of thine anguish none of us knows.  
 Wherefore dost body forth in melody  
 These terrors that thou can't not put away ?  
 These notes, they pierce, they are exceeding shrill,

And bodily thy passionate utterance flows ;  
 Who made so strait thy path of prophecy  
 And taught thy tongue to utter only ill ?

*Ca.* Wooing of Paris, thou hast won us woe !  
 Wedding of Paris, thou hast made us weep !  
 Native Scamander, where thy waters flow,  
     I waxed to womanhood ;  
 Now by Acherontian gorges deep,  
 Or where Cocytus pours his wailing flood,  
     My boding heart foretells  
 I presently shall chant my oracles.

*Cho.* Oh, what is this dark meaning leaps to light ?  
 A child could understand thee, thy keen pangs  
 Stab through and through me, like the venomous bite  
 Of serpent's tooth, when he fleshes his fangs ;  
 And I am broken by the wailing cry,  
 So passing piteous is thine agony.

*Ca.* Oh, lost lost labour ! Low the city lies,  
 A wreck, a ruin ; rased are tower and wall ;  
 Vainly my father lavished sacrifice  
     With holocausts of kine,  
 Poor, pastoral beasts, that nothing stayed her fall !  
 Oh, heart of flame, Oh, fiery heart of mine,  
     Go, burn among the dead !  
 I come—I come—for me the net is spread.

*Cho.* Still harping on that chord of coming fate !  
 An Evil Spirit, bidding thee despair,  
 Sweeps through thy soul with insupportable weight,  
 And calls from thee this wild and wailful air,  
 Sorrow and Death making one melody ;  
 And, oh, I know not what the end shall be !

*Ca.* Now shall mine oracle no more look forth  
 Out of a dim veil like new-wedded bride,  
 But put on brightness as a wind that blows  
 Towards the sun's uprising, 'gainst the light  
 Hurl, like a hissing wave, a horror far  
 Huger than this. I'll riddle you no more.  
 Ye shall take up the chase and bear me out  
 Whilst I hark back upon the scent of crime.  
 Oh, there are music-makers in this house  
 That quit it never ; a symphonious Quire,  
 Yet ill to hear ; for evil is their theme.  
 Being in drink, the more to make them bold,  
 They will not budge, these Revellers of the race  
 Of Furies ; they sit late, their drunken rouse  
 The original sin ; ay, that incestuous beast,  
 Mounted on lust, that trampled his brother's bed.  
 Went that shaft wide, or have I struck the deer ?  
 Or am I but a lying prophetess  
 That raps at street doors, gabbling as she goes ?  
 Now give me the assurance of your oaths  
 I know the iniquity of this ancient house.

*Cho.* What's in an oath, though in all honour  
 sworn,  
 To help or heal ? But I do marvel much  
 That, bred beyond the seas, thou can't discourse  
 Of foreign horrors, alien to thy blood,  
 As if thou hadst stood by.

*Ca.* Prophet Apollo  
 Ordained me to this office.

*Cho.* Is't not true  
 He loved thee, though a God ?

*Ca.* There was a time  
 When I had blushed to own it.

*Cho.* We are nice  
When Fortune's kind, 'tis nothing singular.

*Ca.* He was a stormy wooer and wrought hard  
To win me.

*Cho.* Was't e'en so ? And came ye then,  
As is the way of love, to getting children ?

*Ca.* I did consent with Loxias and broke  
My promise.

*Cho.* Had'st thou then the divine gift  
Of prophecy ?

*Ca.* Even then I told my people  
All that they had to suffer.

*Cho.* How could'st 'scape  
The wrath of Loxias ?

*Ca.* This was my doom ;  
That none to whom I spake believed on me.

*Cho.* But we have heard thee speak, and we  
believe  
Thy words are truth.

*Ca.* Ah-h,—God ! Again  
The pang—the rocking blast—the reeling brain,  
And the clear vision through the pain !  
Look there ! They sit—they have come home to  
roost  
These babes, the sorry semblance of sick dreams !  
Dead children, dead—butchered by their own kin !  
Their hands are full of meat ; their mess ; their own

Bowels and inward parts ; out on the sight !  
 The lamentable dish—their father supped !  
 For this, I tell you, one hath planned revenge ;  
 The craven lion tumbling in his bed  
 To keep it warm, woe's me, till he should come  
 Who is my master—oh, a slave am I !  
 The Sea-king, Ravisher of Ilium,  
 Knows not her false and slavering tongue, thrust  
 out,

Lewd bitch, to lick and fawn and smile and be  
 The secret soul of unforgiving hell !  
 Dare it, She-devil ! Unsex thyself, and be  
 His murderer ! O monster, bloody monster,  
 Thou hast no name ! Thou aspic, Amphisbœna,  
 Scylla of the Rocks, that is the seaman's grave !  
 Hell's Mother-Bacchant, vowing truceless war  
 Against thine own ! Deep in all guilt how loud  
 She shouted (as when the tide of battle turns),  
 Seeming to joy for her lord's home-coming !  
 Believe me or believe not, 'tis all one,  
 What is to be will come ; a little while  
 And you shall see it. Then you'll pity me,  
 And say that I was a true prophetess.

*Cho.* The babes' flesh served for the Thyestean  
 feast

I know, and shudder at the dreadful tale  
 In undisguised and naked horror told.  
 But as for all the rest my thoughts run wild  
 Clean from the course.

*Ca.* I tell thee thou shalt see  
 The death of Agamemnon.

*Cho.* Peace ! Oh, peace !  
 Fair words, unhappy lady !

*Ca.*  
Can mend my speech.

There's no art

*Cho.*  
But God forbid.

Not, if the thing must be;

*Ca.* Thou makest prayer to God,  
But they make ready to kill.

*Cho.* Name me the man !

*Ca.* Thou dost not understand me.

*Cho.* Troth, I know  
No way at all to compass the king's death.

*Ca.* And yet I speak good Greek, your tongue I  
know  
Too well.

*Cho.* So doth the Pythian oracle,  
Yet are his divinations wondrous dark.

*Ca.* Oh, misery !  
I burn ! I burn ! I am on fire with thee,  
Apollo ! Wolf-Slayer ! Woe is me !  
The lioness that wantoned with the wolf,  
The kingly lion being from her side,  
Shall take away my life ; for she hath sworn  
To add my wages to the hell-broth she  
Brews ; while she whets a dagger for her lord  
Means in my blood to pay my coming here.  
Why do I wear this motley ? Why these wands ?  
These wreaths about my neck for prophecy ?  
Your death for mine, vile gauds ! To Hell with you,  
And I will follow after ! Go, make rich

Another with damnation ! Look, 'tis Apollo  
 Strips off my godly robes ! I am to him  
 A spectacle, grinned on by friends and foes.  
 They called me stroller, beggar, mountebank,  
 Poor drab, poor half-dead starveling ; evil names  
 And ill to bear ! But that was not enough ;  
 The prophet who made me a prophetess  
 Has brought me here to die a violent death !  
 And, for my father's altar, waits for me  
 The block warm-reeking with the blood of him  
 That's butchered first ! But we'll not die un-  
 venged ;  
 We too shall have our champion, the child  
 For mother's murder born and sire's revenge.  
 A fugitive, a wandering outlaw, he,  
 To crown this fatal pyramid of woe,  
 Shall surely come ! The Gods have sworn an oath  
 His father's curse shall bring him back again !  
 Why do I shrink ? Why do I wail ? Since I  
 Have seen what hath befallen Ilium,  
 And Ilium's captors come to this bad end,  
 By the judgement of the Gods, I will go in  
 And meet my death. Ye Gates of Hell, I greet ye !  
 Pray God that I may get a mortal stroke,  
 Without a struggle, dying easily ;  
 A spurt of blood, and then these eyes fast-closed.

*Cho.* Lady of many sorrows, and in much  
 Most wise, thou hast discoursed at length ; but if  
 Thou hast indeed foreknowledge of thy death,  
 How canst thou walk as boldly to the grave  
 As goes to the altar the God-driven ox ?

*Ca.* Sirs, I must die ; delay can stead me not.

*Cho.* Yet death deferred is best.

*Ca.* My hour is come :  
To fly would nothing profit me.

*Cho.* Thou hast  
A patient and a valiant spirit.

*Ca.* You praise  
Not as men praise the happy.

•

*Cho.* Yet to die  
Nobly is to have honour among men.

*Ca.* Oh, father, father, I am woe for thee  
And all thy noble children.

*She moves to the door of the palace, but recoils.*

*Cho.* Ha !  
Why dost thou start ? What terror waves thee back ?

*Ca.* Foh ! Foh !

*Cho.* What's this offends thy nostrils ? Or is't  
the mind  
That's sick with fear ?

*Ca.* Pah ! The house smells of blood.

*Cho.* Nay, nay, it is the smell of sacrifice.

*Ca.* It reeks like an open grave.

*Cho.* No Syrian nard,  
God wot !

*Ca.* Hush ! I'll go in ; and there too I'll  
Wail for my death and Agamemnon's; what  
I had of life must be sufficient for me.

O Sirs ! Alack !

I am no bird that shrills a wild alarm  
Scared at a bush. Bear witness what I am  
Hereafter, when, for this my death shall die  
Another of my sex, another man,  
For one most woefully ill-mated, fall.  
And this I ask you on the edge of death.

*Cho.* Oh ! for thy doom foretold I am struck to  
the heart !

*Ca.* But one word more, or, rather, my last word,  
The dirge of mine own death. I pray the sun,  
Now in this last of light, that my avengers  
Pay home upon mine enemies the death  
I die—a slave despatched with one swift blow !

*She enters the palace.*

*Cho.* Oh, state of man ! Thy happiness is but  
The pencilling of a shadow,—Misery  
With a wet sponge wipes out the picture ! Ay,  
And this is the more pitiable by far.

Oh, maw and ravin of Prosperity !

Hunger, that lives of men can never appease !

There's none stands guard o'er gorgeous palaces,  
Bidding thee enter not, neither draw nigh !

Here is a man, the Gods in bliss alway

Gave Priam's Town for spoil, and he hath come,  
With divine honours, back to his own home.  
But if, for blood he shed not, he must pay,

If, for old crimes, he presently must die,  
 That of death's glory not a beam be shorn,  
 Who that hath ears to hear can boast him born  
 Under a star of scatheless destiny ?

*Ag.* *Within the palace.* Oh, I am wounded with  
 a mortal wound !

*Cho.* Hush ! Who is he that crieth out ? Who  
 shrieks  
 Wounded unto the death ?

*Ag.* Again ! O God !

### CHORUS.

Now by the crying of the king I know  
 The deed is done ; but what shall we do ?

1.    Oh,  
   Summon the citizens !
2.    Break in ! Break in !  
   And put to proof this corrigible sin  
   At the sword's point !
3.    There thou and I are one,  
   What is to do, let it be quickly done.
4.    It leaps to light ; now is their signal flown ;  
   This flourish sets oppression on its throne.

5. Yes, for, while we are trifling with the time,  
Procrastination the armed heel of Crime  
Treads under ; neither doth their sword-hand  
sleep !
6. My wit is out : who dares the dangerous leap  
Let him advise.
7. Ay, truly ; that's well said ;  
I have no art with words to raise the dead.
8. Are we, for the sake of a few sorry years,  
To crook the knee before these murderers ?  
Are they that shame the house to lead us ?
9. No !  
Better lie down in death than stoop so low !  
Death is not half so curst as tyranny.
10. Here's too much haste ; because we heard a  
cry  
Are we to argue that the king is slain ?
11. You're in the right on't ! Give not wrath the  
rein  
Until thou hast assurance of the deed.  
Hasard surmise and certitude are twain.
12. Why, then as most would have it let's proceed :  
And, first, ere fears to acted folly run,  
We'll know what hath befallen Atreus' son.

*The scene opens and discloses Clytaemnestra standing over the bodies of Agamemnon and Cassandra.*

### CLYTAEMNESTRA.

If I spoke much in terms of policy,  
 Why should I scruple to recant them now ?  
 If Love be a close traitor, shall not Hate  
 Dissemble too, environing her prey  
 In toils too high for Desperation's leap ?  
 This is the finish of an ancient quarrel,  
 Long brooded, and late come, but come at last.  
 I stand upon mine act—yea, where I struck.  
 And, I confess it, I did use such craft,  
 He could nor fly nor fend him against death.  
 I caught him in a net as men catch fish ;  
 No room, no rat-hole in his loopless robe.  
 I struck him twice ; and once and twice he groaned ;  
 He doubled up his limbs ; and, where he dropped,  
 I struck him the third time ; and with that stroke  
 Committed him to Zeus, that keeps the dead !  
 Then he lay still and gasped away his life,  
 And belching forth a stinging blast of blood  
 Spattered me with a shower of gory dew ;  
 And I was blithe as with the balm of Heaven  
 The young corn in the birth-time of the ear.  
 Wherefore, my very worshipful, good masters,  
 Be merry, an it like you—I exult !  
 Would you a decent draught to drench his corpse,  
 'Tis ready for him, and we'll stint no drop.  
 The bowl he filled with sorrow in his house,  
 Now he's come home, he shall suck out to the dregs.

*Cho.* Inhuman monster ! Oh thou wicked tongue  
 Wilt thou insult over thy murdered lord !

*Clyt.* I am no fool ; you cannot touch me there ;

This shakes me not ; I do but tell you that You know already. Whether you praise or blame Matters no jot. Look ! This is Agamemnon ; My sometime husband. Here's the hand that hewed him ;

Was't not well done ? Is't not a masterpiece Of Justice ? Ay, admire it how you will, This is the fashion of it.

*Cho.* Woman, hast eaten some evil root, Or brewed thee drink of the bubbling sea, That thou hast nerved thee for this rite ? A thousand voices shall hiss and hoot, A thousand curses thy soul shall blight, For the deed thou hast done this day ! Thou hast cut off, cast down, and thou shalt be Thyself a castaway, A thing exorcised, excommunicate, A monster, loaded with thy people's hate.

*Clyt* Now, in the name of Justice thou hurl'st down  
 Damnation and abhorrence on my head ;  
 But when need was, durst cast no stone at him,  
 Who, with no more concern than for a beast  
 Taken and slaughtered from a thousand flocks,  
 Slew his own child, the darling of my womb,  
 For witchery against the Thracian blow.  
 Ought'st not thou rather for his wicked deed  
 To have thrust him forth ? You hear what I have  
 done,  
 And scowl, the truculent justicer ! I'll tell you  
 This ; I am ready for your threats ; 'tis odds

But we'll cry quits ; or, if you better me,  
 Do you bear rule ; but, if that's not God's way,  
 Late learner though thou art, I'll teach thee wisdom.

*Cho.* Thou boastest much and art great to devise;

But when I see thee in thy fury, yea,  
 When thy heart is a plashing fount of blood,  
 I think what a foil to thy blazing eyes  
 Will be that crimson flush at flood  
 Sealing thy sockets in their own gore,  
 In the day of God, in that great day,  
 When thy scarlet sins run o'er ;  
 How comely then these gules will show,  
 When thy lovers forsake thee, and blow quits blow !

*Clyt.* Now hear the unswerving tenour of mine oath :

By Justice, that did fully venge my child,  
 By Ate and Erinys, whose he is,  
 Theirs by this sword, my onward-treading hope  
 Shall never stumble through the courts of Fear,  
 So long as there is fire on my hearth  
 Aegisthus lights ; so long as he's my friend,  
 My ample buckler, my strong heart's true shield.  
 He's dead that had his lust of her ; the dear  
 Of every Chryseid under Ilium ;  
 And so's this baggage of his, his fortune teller,  
 He hugged abed with him, sooth prophetess,  
 And trustiest strumpet, she that with him rubbed  
 The rowers' bench smooth. They have their wage ;  
 thou seest  
 How 'tis with *him* ; and she, that like the swan  
 Has dirged her last, lies with him, where he lies ;  
 And this poor chewet, nibbled in my bed,  
 Sets on my board rich diet's sanspareil.

*Cho.* Come, some quick death, but rack me not  
with pain,

Nor keep me long abed ;

Let me thy opiate drain

That brings the eternal sleep ! My lord is dead,  
And I care not for other company ;

My keeper graced with kingliest courtesy,  
Who for a woman warred on a far strand  
And now lies fallen by a woman's hand.

Oh, Helen, Helen, conscienceless and cursed !

How many souls of men under Troy's wall

Didst thou cut off from life and light !

Now thou hast done thy worst,

And in this blood, no water can wash white,  
With the most perfect, memorablest of all

The last rose in thy garland twined,

Thou corner-stone of strife ; thou woe of human  
kind !

*Clyt.* Call not on Death, cast down by what  
ye see,

Neither on Helen turn your wrath aside,  
As if none else were deep in blood but she ;  
Nor think, because for her our Danaans died,  
There is no other hurt past surgery.

*Cho.* Spirit that on these battlements, plumb-  
down,

Dost drop on iron wings,

To pluck away the two-fold crown

And double sceptre of the Tantalid kings,  
Thou didst raise up two Queens, and give the  
twain

Twin Souls, to deal my heart a deadly wound ;  
Now, like a carrion-bird perched on the slain,  
Thou sing'st thy song, to an ill descant crooned.

*Clyt.* Now is thy judgment just, when thou dost cry

To that cursed Spirit, that thrice-fatted Doom,  
A Lust Incarnate, Death that cannot die,  
That makes all Tantalids murderers in the womb,  
Athirst for fresh blood ere the old be dry.

*Cho.* 'Tis a Destroying Angel, angered sore  
Against this house ; a Spirit, great and strong  
And evil and insatiable, woe's me !  
That stands at Zeus' right hand, to Whom belong  
Power and Dominion, now and evermore.  
What do we, or what suffer, of good or ill,  
But, doing, suffering, we enact His Will ?  
Ay, without God, none of these things could be.  
King, my king, how shall I weep for thee ?

What shall my fond heart say ?

Thou liest in spider's web-work ; gaspingly  
In hideous death the fleet life ebbs away.

Woe, woe, that thou should'st bow thy head  
On this unkingly bed,  
By dagger-hand despatched and treason's felony !

*Clyt.* Nay, sink thy proud boast ;  
Call not this my deed ;  
Never suppose me Agamemnon's Spouse ;  
A spectre in my likeness drew the knife ;  
The old, the unforgiving Ghost,  
Not I that was this piece of carrion's wife.

And his assassination feed  
Black Atreus of the Bloody Rouse,  
The Revel Grim.  
She hath the altar dressed  
With brawn of manhood for the tender limb  
Of weanling infants taken from the breast.

*Cho.* Go to : that thou art innocent of this blood  
 What witness will avouch ? Though, it may be,  
 That Old Destroyer wove with thee the mesh.  
 This bloody deluge, like an on-coming sea  
 That may not halt until it makes the flood,  
 Rolls its rough waves, with kindred-murder red,  
 Till Justice lave the rank corruption bred  
 Of that foul, cannibal roast of childish flesh.  
 King, my king, how shall I weep for thee ?

What shall my fond heart say ?

Thou liest in spider's web-work ; gaspingly  
 In hideous death, the fleet life ebbs away !

Woe, woe, that thou shouldst bow thy head  
 On this unkingly bed !

By dagger-hand despatched and treason's felony !

*Clyt.* Is he guile-free ?

Hath he not slain

His own, even my branch, raised up from him,  
 Iphigeneia, wept with all my tears ?

Ah, to the traitor, treachery !

He hath discharged in blood his long arrears ;

The measure he dealt is meted him again.

Then, let his big voice, in the dim

Darkness of Hell,

Sink low and sadly breathed ;

He hath his just quietus ; this great quell

Ripostes his stroke, who first the sword unsheathed.

*Cho.* Now like a weary wrestler

My fainting heart contends ;

Now that the house is falling,

Where shall I find me friends ?

But, oh, I fear, to whelm it

Red Ruin roars amain ;

For the first shower is over,  
The early, morning rain.

Yea, Fate that forgeth Sorrow  
Now a new grindstone sets ;  
There, for fresh hurt, her dagger  
The Armourer, Justice, whets.

Oh, Earth, Earth, Earth ! Would God I had lain  
dead,  
Deep in thy mould,  
Ere on his silver-sided pallet-bed  
I saw my lord lie cold !  
Oh, who will bury him, dirge him to his rest ?  
Wilt thou sing his death-song,  
Murderess of thine own man ; wail and beat breast  
For thy most grievous wrong ?  
Mock his great spirit with such comfort cold ?  
Oh, for a voice to sound  
The hero's praise, with passionate weeping knolled  
Over his low grave-mound !

*Clyt.* Let that alone ; it matters not to thee :  
For by our hand he fell, he dropped down dead,  
And we will dig him deep in earth. Let be ;  
We'll have no wailers here ; but, in their stead,  
His child, Iphigeneia, with soft beck,  
Where the rapid waves of the Ford of Sorrows hiss,  
Shall come ; and fling her arms about his neck,  
And greet her loving father with a kiss.

*Cho.* So taunt meets taunt ; but Judgment  
Is bitter hard to gain.  
Now spoiled is the despoiler,  
Now is the slayer slain.

For Zeus abides upon His Throne,  
 And, through all time, all tides,  
 The Law that quits the Doer,  
 The changeless Law abides.

Who will cast out the accursed stuff,  
 Bone of thee, breath of thy breath ?  
 Thy very stones, thou bloody house,  
 Are bonded in with Death !

*Clyt.* Now is thine oracle come to the fountain-head  
 Of bitter Truth. As God lives, I would swear  
 Great oaths to that cursed Spirit, Whose ghostly  
 tread  
 Haunteth the House of Pleistenes, to bear  
 What's past endurance, and take heart of grace  
 To pluck these rooted sorrows from my mind,  
 Would he avaunt, and harry some other race  
 With the Soul of Murder that seeks out his kind.  
 Then, with that Horror from this house cast forth  
 Which mads their blood with mutual butchery,  
 Oh, what were all its golden treasure worth ?  
 A poor man's portion were enough for me.

*Enter Aegisthus, with his guards.*

### AEGISTHUS

Oh, day of grace, meridian of Justice !  
 Now may I say the Gods are our Avengers  
 And from on high behold the crimes of earth ;  
 For now I have my wish ; I see yon man,  
 Wound up in raiment of Erinys' woof ;  
 The shroud that shrives his father's handiwork.

Atreus, his sire, who here bear rule, because  
 His power was challenged, did his father's son  
 Thyestes, my dear father—dost thou mark me ?  
 Outlaw and ban from home and kingdom both.  
 Himself, poor man, a suitor for his life,  
 Recalled from exile, found fair terms enough ;  
 No death for him, no staining with his blood  
 This parent soil. But, for his entertainment,  
 Atreus, this man's cursed father, with more heat  
 Than heart towards mine, with a pretended stir  
 Of welcome—oh, a high-day of hot joints !  
 Dished up for him a mess of his own babes.  
 The hands and feet he chopped and put aside ;  
 The rest, minced small and indistinguishable,  
 Served at a special table. So he ate  
 Knowing not what he ate ; but, purge thine eyes,  
 And own 'twas sauced with sorrow for his seed.  
 And, when he saw what wickedness was done,  
 He groaned ; fell back, and spewed the gobbets up,  
 Clamouring damnation down on Pelops' line.  
 Yea, kicking over board and banquet, cried,  
 " So perish all the house of Pleisthenes ! "  
 And with that push great Agamemnon fell.  
 My grudge in this employed some stitchery ;  
 I was my poor sire's third son and sole hope ;  
 And he thrust me out with him ; in cradle-clothes ;  
 But I grew up and Justice called me home.  
 Outside these walls I grappled with yon man,  
 Yea, had a privy part in the whole plot.  
 And for all this I am content to die  
 Now that in Vengeance' toils I see him snared.

*Cho.* Aegisthus, I hold him a caitiff who  
 Insults o'er sorrow. You do stand confessed  
 A murderer ; you say you sole conspired  
 This sorry deed. I say to thee, thou too

Shalt not escape damnation ; they shall cast  
Stones at thee ; ay, heap curses on thy grave !

*Aeg.* You drudge, you Jack that paddles in the  
bilge,

Say you e'en so, your betters on the bench  
Of guidance and command ? Your study is  
Humility, old man, and you will find  
'Tis hard for dullard age to mind his book :  
But even for old prison and hunger-pinch  
Are rare physicians. Hast no eyes for that ?  
Kick not against the pricks lest thou go lame.

*Cho.* You woman that brings infamy on men  
Fresh from the field ; ay, bolted safe indoors  
Cuckolds a king and plots to strike him down.

*Aeg.* This shall be father to a world of woe !  
Oh, Orpheus had a voice, but not like thine :  
For, where he carolled, jocund Nature danced !  
Plague on thy howlings ! Thou shalt dance to them  
Whither thou wouldst not, and, by God, once caught  
We'll put some tameness in thee.

*Cho.* You, "my lord,"  
You to be king in Argos ! Plotting murder,  
But not the man to do it !

*Aeg.* Was not the wife  
The readiest way to gull him ? Was not I  
Smoked and suspect, his ancient enemy ?  
It shall go ill with me, but this man's gold  
Shall make me master. He that fights the rein  
Shall feel the bit, and I will make it heavy !  
No corn-fed colt for me ! Hunger that keeps  
House with the hateful dark shall humble him.

*Cho.* Why was thy craven soul not man enough  
To slay him in fair fight ? Why did a woman,  
Wherewith the land reeks and her Gods are sick,  
Kill him ? Orestes yet beholds the light,  
And he shall come in happy hour, and be  
The master and destroyer of you both.

*Aeg.* Wilt rave, wilt rant, wilt fall to deeds ?  
Why, then,  
Blockhead, thou shalt learn wisdom ! Forward, men !  
Come, stir, good fellows ! Faith, you need not  
trudge  
Far for this fray.

*Cho.* Out swords !

*Aeg.* As God's my judge,  
My sword to yours, I fear not death, not I.

*Cho.* Not ? Then we take the omen, thou shalt  
die !

*Clyt.* Sweetheart ! I charge thee, do no villainy !  
Nay, do no more ! What's sown is yet to reap ;  
It is a harvest where the corn stands deep,  
And we must carry home full loads of care.  
Without our blood, here's trouble and to spare !  
Good gentlemen, I pray you, to your homes !  
Bend to the hour, when fraught with Fate it comes,  
Lest worse befall ye. That which we have done  
'Twas fated we should do. Therefore, begone !  
Ah, might this prove the end-all of our woe ;  
How happy should we be to have it so !  
So heavy on us is the bloody spur  
Of a dread Spirit, Destiny's minister  
Here is a woman's counsel, will ye heed

*Aeg.* And shall these crop all rankness tongue  
can breed ;  
Drive their own fortune to the hazard ; brook  
No rein ; call no man master ?

*Cho.* When I crook  
The knee to evil you may call me hound ;  
I am no son of this free Argive ground.

*Aeg.* I'll be revenged upon ye yet.

*Cho.* Not so  
If Fate bring back Orestes.

*Aeg.* Tush ! I know  
The exile's wallet is with hope well-lined.

*Cho.* Enjoy thy fortune do ! Is not Fate kind ?  
Go on in sin ; wax fat ; make the strong power  
Of Justice reek to heaven ; this is thine hour.

*Aeg.* Wild words, but they are reckoned to thy  
score.

*Cho.* Ay, strut and crow, a cock his dame before !

*Clyt.* Nay, never heed their howlings ! Masterdom  
And kingly state are ours, come what may come.  
So in the palace thou and I will dwell  
And order all things excellently well.

[*Exeunt.*

**CHOEPhOROE**



# CHOEPHOROE

*Argos : the Tomb of Agamemnon.  
Orestes and Pylades.*

## ORESTES.

O Chthonian Hermes, Steward of thy Sire,  
Receive my prayer, save me, and fight for my  
cause ;  
For I am journeyed back from banishment,  
And on this mounded sepulchre I call  
On my dead sire to listen and give ear.

This lock to Inachus for nurture ; this  
For mourning.

Father, I was not by to wail thy death  
Or with stretched hand despatch thine exsequies.

What's this ? Look you ; what company of women  
With such ostent of sable stoles attired  
Moves on its way ? What trouble's in the wind ?  
Hath some fresh sorrow fallen on the house ?  
Or bring they these libations for my father,  
As my heart tells me, to appease the Shades ?  
It cannot be aught else ; there is my sister,  
Electra, walking with them, and she wears

A woeful look. O Zeus, give me to venge  
 My father's murder, fight upon my side.  
 Pylades, let's withdraw ; I would fain know  
 What may this woman's supplication mean.

*They withdraw, and the Chorus enter, with Electra,*

### CHORUS.

Forth from the house they bid me speed  
 With graveyard-cups to pour and these ill-tuned  
 Ungentle hands quick-throbbing drum-beat sent :  
 These cheeks in tender witness bleed,  
 A fresh-turned fallow with a gleaming wound ;  
 And my heart's bread is evermore lament.

I tore my robe of fair tissue  
 And the poor rags, methought, with anguish cried,  
 Being too linen-soft and delicate  
 To be so wronged ; or as they knew  
 They wrapped a breast where laughter long had died,  
 Or wailed a new malignancy of Fate.

For terror wild with lifted hair  
 Wrung from the soul of sleep, dark dream-adept,  
 In the dead hour of night a cry aghast :  
 A shriek it was, a shrill nightmare  
 That broke from the bower, and where we women  
 slept  
 In heaviness and sullen anger passed.

And they whose judgment can expound  
 The meaning of such dreams let a great cry,  
 The word of power that doth God's word engage :

"Underneath the earth's dark ground  
Are grieving spirits wroth exceedingly ;  
And 'tis against their murderers they rage."

And now with gifts wherein is no remedē  
I come these woes to ward ;  
For, oh, Earth-Mother, thus in her sore need  
Woos pardon and peace a woman God-abhorred.  
How dare I breathe that word ? Where shall be  
found

Ransom for blood that's drenched the ground ?  
O hearth Calamity enwraps ;  
O royal siege swift Ruin saps ;  
What sunless glooms of Night inhearsed,  
By human horror held accursed,  
Darkeneth thee, thou house of pride  
For the deaths thy masters died ?

The sovran awe uncombated, unquelled,  
That through the general ear  
Smote on the common heart, hath now rebelled ;  
And yet, God wot, there are who fear.  
Our infirm flesh boon Fortune deifies ;  
The man, grown God, high God outvies.  
But Judgment swings through her swift arc  
And censuring all doth poise and weigh :  
And she can set a soul in light,  
Or on the confine of the dark  
The lingering agony delay ;  
Or whelm with elemental night.

Blood, and more blood ; 'tis drunk of the dark  
ground ;  
This earth, that bred it, kneads it in her clay,  
Till it become, indissolubly bound,  
A Power, that shall itself arise and slay !

Até with no hot haste to Vengeance spurs,  
 Though tireless in pursuit, once entered in ;  
 Still she adjourns ; the Day of Doom defers,  
 Till there be full sufficiency of Sin.

Who hath unlatched the door of chastity,  
 Enforcing there the bridal bliss embowered,  
 Shall never turn again the golden key ;  
 And ravished once is evermore deflowered.

So, though all strains be affluent to one end,  
 Lucid and sweet to wash away the stain  
 Of blood from guilty hands, they do but spend  
 Their onward-flowing clarity in vain.

But I—the hard constraint of heaven  
 Environing my city ; driven  
 From home, my portion slavery—  
 If good or evil they debate  
 Must smother up my bitter hate  
 And be the mute of sovereignty.  
 And yet behind my veil I weep  
 My rightful master's wasted days,  
 And this hush sorrow on me lays  
 The ache of winter's frozen sleep.

### ELECTRA.

Bondmaids, the household's rule and regimen,  
 Since in this office ye are postulants  
 With me, I pray you counsel me herein.  
 What shall I say when these kind cups I pour ?  
 How find fair words to vow them to my sire ?  
 'Love's gift to love',—Shall I commend them so ?

' Husband from wedded wife ? ' Oh, not from her,  
 Not from my mother ; I should want for that  
 A tongue of brass ; I have no form of prayer  
 To pour these offerings on my father's grave.  
 Or shall I come with customary terms  
 And ask a blessing on their heads that sent  
 These garlands ; for fair deeds fair recompense ?  
 Or, in dishonouring silence, as my father  
 Perished, drain out the drench for Earth to drink,  
 And get me hence ; like one that casts out filth  
 Fling the crock from me with averted looks ?  
 Resolve me, friends, that you may share my blame ;  
 We live in a community of hate ;  
 Hide not your heart's deep thoughts for any fear ;  
 The thing determined waiteth for the free  
 And him that's at another's beck and nod.  
 Know you a better way acquaint me with it.

*Cho.* Awful as altar is thy father's tomb ;  
 And at thy bidding I will speak my mind.

*El.* Speak by that awe thou ow'st his sepulchre.

*Cho.* Pour on ; but ask good things for all leal souls.

*El.* Which of my friends be they ? how shall I name them ?

*Cho.* Thyself, and, after, all that hate Aegisthus.

*El.* Then shall I offer prayer for thee and me ?

*Cho.* I see thy heart instructs thee how to pray.

*El.* And add no name beside ?

- Cho.* Remember yet  
Absent Orestes in thine orisons.
- El.* Oh, well admonished ! Excellently said !
- Cho.* Mindful of them that did the deed of blood,—
- El.* What then ? pray on and I'll pray after thee.
- Cho.* Ask that on them, carnal or ghostly, come—
- El.* Doomster or doom's executant ?
- Cho.* A stern Avenger ; 'twill suffice ; ask nothing more.
- El.* Is that a holy thing to ask the Gods ?
- Cho.* Nay, how should it not be a holy thing With evil to reward an enemy ?
- El.* Great Herald of the Heights and Deeps, be thou  
My helper, Chthonian Hermes ; cry for me,  
And bid the Spirits of the Depths give ear,  
That are the Stewards of my father's house.  
Cry to the Earth that brings forth life and then  
Of all she nursed receives again the seed.  
I will pour these libations to the Shades,  
Saying, " O Father, have compassion on me  
And on Orestes ; how shall we bring him home ?  
We are sold for a price ; yea, she that gave us birth  
Hath dispossessed us, taken to her bed  
Aegisthus, with her guilty of thy blood.  
I'm but a slave ; banished Orestes hath

No portion of thy substance ; with thy labours  
 They go apparelled in their insolence.  
 I pray, not knowing how it shall befall,  
 Orestes may come home : hear me, my father !  
 And for myself I ask a purer heart  
 Than hath my mother and more innocent hands.  
 This for ourselves ; but on our enemies  
 I pray Avenging Justice may rise up  
 And hew them down, even as they hewed thee.  
 And so, betwixt my prayers that ask good things  
 Stands this, that imprecates evil on their heads.  
 For us send benedictions, by the help  
 Of Heaven and Earth and Justice Triumphant.”  
 Now I pour out these cups, which you must wreath  
 With customary crownets of your cries,  
 Chanting the dismal pæan of the dead.

### CHORUS.

Fall, perishable tears, with plashing sound ;  
 Fall for our fallen lord ;  
 And, while the abominable cup is poured,  
 The rite confound ;  
 The good avert,  
 And, to the miscreant’s hurt,  
 The evil bring to pass,  
 And, though death dull thy soul and deaf thine ear,  
 Hearken, O King ; majestic shadow, hear !  
 Alas ! Alas ! Alas !  
 Oh, for the armed deliverer ;  
 The wielder of a mighty spear ;  
 The archer that shall bend against the foe,  
 Till horn meet horn, the Scythic bow,  
 Or, foot to foot and face to face,  
 Beat caitiffs to the earth with huge, self-hafted mace !

*El.* Dark Earth hath drunk her potion ; in his grave

My father hath it now. But hear what's strange  
And passing strange.

*Cho.* Speak, I implore thee ! Speak !  
For, oh, my fearful heart is wildly stirred !

*El.* Here is a lock of hair ; laid on the tomb.

*Cho.* Whose ? What tall youth's ? Or what  
deep-girdled girl's ?

*El.* Why, only look ; it is not hard to guess.

*Cho.* I'm an old woman, and shall youth teach  
me ?

*El.* There's none would shed a hair for him  
but I.

*Cho.* Yea, foes are they should mourn with  
shaven head.

*El.* 'Tis like ; a feather of the self-same wing—

*Cho.* Whose hair is't like ? I am on thorns to  
know.

*El.* 'Tis very like the hair of mine own head.

*Cho.* Not young Orestes' gift in secret brought ?

*El.* It is a tendril of that vine, I swear.

*Cho.* It is ? But how dared he adventure  
hither ?

*El.* 'Twas sent, this shearling of his filial love.

*Cho.* That's no less worth my tears to think  
that he

Will never again set foot in his own land.

*El.* To me it is the surging of a sea  
Bitter as gall ; an arrow through my heart.  
These tears are but the thirsty thunder-drops  
Escaped from unwept deluges ; the flood  
Is yet to come. Who else that's native here  
Could show the fellow to this goodly tress ?  
Nor was it clipped by her that murdered him ;  
'Tis not my mother's : what a name is that  
For her that hates her own and denies God !  
But howsoe'er by this and that I vow  
This shining jewel is my best beloved,  
Orestes' own, I am beguiled by hope.  
Oh me !

Would it had sense ; a voice to make report  
That I be shook no longer to and fro,  
But roundly bid to curse and spew it from me,  
If 'tis indeed shorn from a murderer's head ;  
Or that 'twould prove its kin and with me mourn,  
This grave's bright ornament, my father's pride.  
But, when we call upon the Gods, they know  
By what great storms, like mariners at sea,  
We are tossed and whirled. And, if they mean to save,  
Then from small seed a mighty stem may grow.  
Ha ! Here are footprints ! here is double proof !  
Look ! They are like ! They tally with mine own !  
Nay, there's a pair,—each in outline distinct !  
He hath been here with some companion !  
Heel, length of tendon, all agrees with mine.  
The hope within me struggles to be born,  
And I am crazed until it come to birth.

## ORESTES

*(disclosing himself)*

Henceforth pay fruitful vows to the good Gods  
For answered prayer.

*El.* Wherefore stand I now  
So high in heaven's favour ?

*Or.* Thou hast sight  
Of that which thou didst pray so long to see.

*El.* Know'st thou whom my soul craves of all  
the world ?

*Or.* I know thy heart is woe for Orestes.

*El.* How have my prayers prospered ?

*Or.* Here am I ;  
No further seek ; for I am all thou lov'st.

*El.* Sir, art thou come to take me in a snare ?

*Or.* An if I do, I plot against myself.

*El.* I fear you mean to mock my misery.

*Or.* I jest at mine, if yours can make me merry.

*El.* Art thou indeed Orestes ?

*Or.* You are slow  
To know me when you see me face to face ;  
And yet this snip of hair could give you wings ;

And when you looked upon it you saw me ;  
 A footprint of your make was proof but now.  
 Come, put the shorn tress to the shaven head ;  
 Look at this stuff ; 'tis of your loom ; your spathe  
 Smoothed it ; you broidered this brave brede of  
 beasts.

Refrain thy heart, lest joy unhinge thy wits :  
 For our dear kin are our most mortal foes.

*Cho.* Thou darling of thy father's house ; sole  
 hope  
 Of saving seed, watered with many tears !  
 Now show thy mettle ; win back thine own home.

*El.* ~~Thou~~ eye that centres all sweet thoughts ;  
 four selves  
 Composed in one ; for there is none but thee  
 Left to call father, and the tender love  
 That was my mother's, ere she earned my hate,  
 Yearns all to thee ; and all I felt for her  
 Twin-sown with me and pitilessly slain ;  
 And ever my true brother ; my one name  
 Of awe ; may Power and Justice be with thee  
 And Zeus, the greatest of the trinity.

*Or.* Zeus, Zeus, be perfect witness of these woes.  
 Lo, the young eagles desolate : their sire  
 Dead in the tight-drawn knot, the twisted spire  
 Of a fell viperess. Orphans are we  
 And faint, unfed ; unable for the prey  
 Our father took and to our eyrie bear—  
 So stand I in thy sight ; so standeth she,  
 The sad Electra ; fatherless children both ;  
 And either's home is outcast homelessness.  
 The young of him, Thy sacrificial priest,  
 A mighty honourer of Thine, if Thou

Cut off, what hand will such rich guerdon give ?  
 And if the eaglets Thou destroy, there's none  
 To send and show Thy tokens among men ;  
 This royal stem if it be quite consumed  
 Steads not Thy altars when fat bulls are slain.  
 Tend it ; and out of nothingness exalt  
 A house that seemeth rased even with the ground.

*Cho.* Oh, you salvation of your father's house,  
 Hush ; or some rogue, sweethearts, will hear of this  
 And with his pick-thank tongue carry the tale  
 To our cursed masters, whom I pray to God  
 I may see fry in bubbling pinewood blaze !

*Or.* Great Loxias' word shall never ~~play~~ me false,  
 That bade me hold upon my perilous way,  
 Entoning high, and horrors freezing cold,  
 To make hot livers lumps of ice, forth-telling,  
 If I tracked not my father's murderers  
 As they tracked him, nor took my full revenge  
 With brute, bull-fury gold cannot allay :  
 My life must answer for it, charged with all  
 Afflictions that can rob us of our joy.  
 Of death in life, earth's sop to malice old,  
 He with dread voice in our frail hearing told ;  
 As, foul serpigoes cankering the flesh,  
 Gnawing the native wholesomeness away,  
 Till all be furred with the white leprosy.  
 Next, of the Haunting Furies, conjured up  
 To take full vengeance for a father's blood,  
 Seen in the dark, with horrible amaze  
 Of eyes at stretch and twitch of tortured brows ;  
 And that black arrow winged by pining ghosts  
 Of murdered kindred, madness and wild fear  
 Shaped on the night to harry and hound him forth,  
 Raw with the excommunicating scourge.

He tastes not of the loving cup ; none spills  
 With him the red wine in the banquet-hall ;  
 The sightless spirits of his father's wrath  
 Forbid him every altar ; none will house  
 Nor lodge with him ; all sweet civilities  
 Denied, and no man he may call his friend,  
 He dies at last, death in each part of him,  
 A mummied wretch, embalmed in rotteness.  
 Well,—should I hearken to these oracles ?  
 If I do not, the deed is yet to do.

All impulses concur to one great end :  
 A God's commands, grief for my father, loss  
 Of all that I am heir to, shame and scorn  
 That that most famous breed in all the world,  
 High hearts that humbled Troy, my noble Argives,  
 Should knee it, like knaves, to a pair of women ;  
 For he is not a man ; or if he be  
 The man he is he passing soon shall see.

*Cho.* Ye Mighty Destinies, march on,  
 God with you, till the goal be won  
 Where Justice' face is set.

' To tongue of gall the bitter word,'  
 Loud is the voice of Vengeance heard,  
 When she exacts the debt.

' To dagger-hand the dagger-law,'  
 ' The doer quit,'—tis an old saw  
 Whose salt hath savour yet.

*Or.* O father, father of our woe !  
 How can I serve thee now by word or deed ?  
 From this far world what homing wind shall blow  
 Where the Eternal Anchors hold thee fast ?

There thy long day is night :  
 And at this gate of death where thou hast passed,  
 Our grief that are of Atreus' royal seed  
 Is all thou hast of glory and delight.

*Cho.* Child, the proud spirit of the dead  
Succumbs not to the ravening tooth of fire.  
Their passions work, when life is fled :

The mourner's wail  
Discovers him that did the wrong.  
And lamentation for a murdered sire  
A hunter is, that rallies to the trail  
All dogs that e'er gave tongue.

*Or.* Harken then, father, our lament,  
While at thy mounded tomb our salt tears flow ;  
An alternating song, of sad concert,  
Dirged by thy children ; suppliants that crave  
Access to thee ; banned, both, from thy high hall,  
Met at the common refuge of thy grave.—  
What's here of good ? Where's aught that is not  
woe ?  
And is not Doom the master of us all ?

*Cho.* But God can touch the broken strings  
To melody divine ;  
And for this unrejoicing round,  
The burden of sepulchral ground,  
In the high banquet-hall of kings  
Blithe song bring in new wine.

*Or.* Oh, if 'neath Ilium's wall,  
Gashed by some Lycian spear,  
Father, thou hadst fall'n in fight,  
Then hadst thou left thy house great praise,  
And to thy children in the public ways  
Honour in the eyes of all.  
Then thine had been a sepulchre  
Builded of many hands beyond the sea,  
And easy would our burden be,  
And all its weight of earth how light !

*Cho.* And in the Kingdom of the Dark,  
 Welcome wert thou to souls that nobly died ;  
 A lord of majesty and mark,  
 The cupbearer  
 Of Hell's vast Thrones; for while thou yet hadst  
 breath  
 Thou wast a King ; and, in that Kingdom wide,  
 Next them that the huge orb of Fate upbear,  
 Their rod and sceptre Death !

*El.* No, not on Troy's far plain  
 Would I have thee lie, interred,  
 Where Scamander's waters flow,  
 With meaner men that fell to the spear,  
 But ~~none~~ <sup>oh</sup>, none, that was thy peer.  
 Death should have first thy murderers slain ;  
 And, haply, we had heard  
 Some far-off rumour of their dying,  
 And never ate the bread of sighing  
 Nor tasted of this cup of Woe.

*Cho.* Thy tongue, child, tells of things more worth  
 Than any weight of gold,  
 Or aught of fabled bliss that's told  
 Of that far bourne beyond the bright North Star.  
 So may'st thou range in fancy uncontrolled ;  
 But our hard hands scourge this unfeeling earth,  
 And at the massy gate fast shut of old  
 The summons knocks where our sole helpers are.  
 They lift not white hands at heaven's judgment-  
 bar  
 Who triumph now, under God's malison ;  
 Yea, and by this the children's cause is won.

*Or.* Oh, 'twas fledged, that word, it clave  
 The dull ear that sleeps in the grave.

Zeus, O Zeus, if Thy command  
 Conjures from the Deeps below  
 Ghostly Vengeance, footing slow,  
 Stretching forth an arm to gripe  
 Sinful soul and felon hand,  
 Evil lendings, fully ripe,  
 Loan and interest shall have.

*Cho.* Oh, to rend the air with a shout  
 When in their blood they lie,  
 The woman and her mate !

What wing of Deity  
 Hovers about me and about ?  
 I cannot hide this huge unrest ;  
 My spirit passionate  
 Doth like a straining vessel breast  
 The bitter blast of hate !

*El.* And when will Zeus, the strong Godhead,  
 Grasp the bolt with grapplings dread  
 To cleave their climbing crests amain ?  
 May firm affiance keep our land ;  
 I sue for nothing at God's hand  
 But that after oppression long  
 Justice walk the world again.  
 Hear, Earth ; and all the Chthonian throng  
 Throned in the darkness of the dead !

*Cho.* It is the Law ; when man's blood falls  
 Man's blood shall pay full cess :  
 With 'Haro ! Haro !' Murder calls  
 God's fell Erinyes,  
 And in some late succeeding age  
 For souls slain long ago  
 Fresh horrors mount the bloody stage  
 For blacker deeds of woe.

*Or.* Oho ! O heigh ! Ye dim Dominions !  
 Prinedoms of Death ! Ye potent malisons  
 Of murdered men ! Behold and see  
 Of Atreus' noble tree  
 The poor, the pitiful, the last  
 Scantling, from home and kingly state outcast !  
 Hear us, O Zeus, for we have none but Thee !

*Cho.* I listen and tremble ; thy cry of dole  
 Fevers my heart ; anon  
 Faint for wan hope am I ;  
 It thickens my blood, it clouds my soul,  
 Thy passing piteous cry !  
 But when the fit is gone,  
 And ~~my~~ fixed heart is firm to dare,  
 Pain stands far off ; and calm and fair  
 And cool the brightening sky.

*El.* How move the dead ? How prosper in our  
 plea ?  
 Oh, what can wring them like our misery !  
 This cloud that overhangs  
 Our house, these parent-pangs ?  
 Traitor ! She could fawn and glose,  
 But she can never cheat us of our woes ;  
 We are her children and have wolfish fangs.

*Cho.* I beat to the sound of the Arian dirging,  
 Yea, to the Kissian wailer's cry ;  
 With wild hands lifted high and high,  
 Clashing and clutching and tossing and surging ;  
 Faster, faster, never ending ;  
 A tempest of blows on my head descending ;  
 And the noise, like a hammer, dinned through my  
 brain ;  
 A passion of Sorrow, a tumult of Pain !

*El.* Oh, mother, deep in all  
 Damnation ! Oh, remorseless enemy !  
 A king borne out to unkind burial,  
 No liegeman by !  
 A husband thrust in his grave, and none  
 To wail or weep or chant an orison !

*Or.* Ha ! Did she use him so spitefully ?  
 She shall aby full dearly her despite !  
 With Heaven to help and hands to smite,  
 I'll slay her in her blood and die !

*Cho.* Hacked like a thief, by her that felon-wise  
 Graved him ; in her cold malice, that his doom  
 Might insupportably thy days consume,  
 These were thy father's last death-agonies.

*El.* They would have none of me ; humbled  
 and chidden,  
 Like a pestilent hound, a cur unwhipped,  
 Closeted up in the castle-crypt ;  
 There in the kennelled darkness hidden  
 Freelier flowed my secret weeping  
 Than ever careless laughter leaping  
 When the world was gay and my heart was light.  
 Brother, my wrongs in thy memory write !

*Cho.* Let that thy courage brace,  
 Like steel-drilled marble, mortised and made one  
 With thy calm heart's unshaken base.  
 What's done is done :  
 But stick not till Expectancy behold  
 The sequel : on ; be firm as thou art bold.

*Or.* Father, be with us ! Father, thee I call !

*El.* And I with heavy heart and streaming eyes !

*Cho.* And all our many voices sound as one !

Rise, oh, rise,

And feel the sun :

Be with us 'gainst the common enemy of all !

*Or.* Plea shall encounter Plea, Power grapple  
Power !

*El.* The righteous cause, ye Gods, judge  
righteously !

*Cho.* I listen, and I shudder while ye pray :

~~Destiny,~~

Abides alway,

But prayer can hasten on the inevitable hour !

*Or.* Oh, heritage of Grief ! Incarnate Woe !  
Oh, Bloody Hand of Doom that jars the strings !  
Now is the voice of melody brought low !

*•El.* Oh, how they grate, these harsh chords  
Sorrow wrings !

*All.* Pang on pang, and throe on throe !

*Or.* Within there is no styptic for this wound,  
And the wide world is powerless to aid ;  
By our own hands our safety must be found,

*El.* Fury with fury, blood in blood be stayed.

*All.* This is our hymn to the Gods Earth-bound.

*Cho.* Hear, ye Earth-dwellers all, that have

Power and bliss beyond the grave !  
The seed of Childhood succour and save !

*Or.* Father, by thy unkingly death, grant me  
In thy high house lordship and mastery !

*El.* Take away my rebuke, let not men say,  
‘ Behold,  
Aegisthus’ chattel, marketed and sold ! ’

*Or.* Then, as our fathers used, feasts shall be  
spread  
For thee ; else at the banquets of the Dead  
Among the steaming bakemeats thou shalt pine.

*El.* And of my rich dower, plenished from thy  
store,  
To thee refreshing draughts my cup shall pour ;  
First of all sepulchres I will honour thine.

*Or.* Earth, grant our sire our combat sore to see !

*El.* Give, Persephassa, beauteous victory ! .

*Or.* Think, father, of the bath, thy life-blood  
dyed.

*El.* Think of the cunning net, the deep and wide !

*Or.* In gyves, no smith e’er hammered, caught  
and bound !

*El.* Veilings of Shame about thee, treason-wound !

*Or.* Doth not that sting thee, rouse thee from  
thy bed ?

*El.* Wilt not lift up thy well-beloved head ?

*Or.* Bid Justice rise and battle for thine own ;  
Or let us close with them, as thou wast thrown,  
If thou wouldst quell their might that dealt thee  
doom !

*El.* Hear this last cry, my father, hear and save !  
Lo, the young eagles gather at thy grave ;  
Pity the man-child and the woman's womb !

*Or.* Let not this seed of Pelops be destroyed !  
For then, in spite of Death, thou art not dead.

*El.* Children are voices that shake off the lethe  
Of drowsy Death ; yea, floats, whereby the thread  
And thin-wove line of Being is up-buoyed  
Above the swallowing gulfs that yawn beneath.

*Or.* Hear for thy sake the voice of our despair ;  
Thou sav'st thyself if thou receive our prayer.

*Cho.* Right well have ye discoursed your argument,  
Fit homage to an evil fate unmourned.  
And now, since thou hast nerved thee for the act,  
Dare it, and put thy Fortune to the touch.

*Or.* So shall it be ; 'tis nothing from my course  
To ask the meaning of these cups, and why  
Her after-scruple tends a cureless sorrow.  
Is Death a simpleton that she dares make  
Such poor amends ? What shall I think of these  
Sorry bestowals for her huge offence ?  
Why, if a man should lavish all he has  
For one least drop of blood, 'twere labour lost.  
I prithee, if thou can'st, enlighten me.

*Cho.* Son, I was there ; she was so shook with dreams  
 And terrors of the night, her wicked heart  
 So scared, she tremblingly despatched these cups.

*Or.* Told she her dream ?

*Cho.* She did ; ' Methought ' she cried  
 ' I was delivered of a viper ! '

*Or.* Well,  
 Finish thy story.

*Cho.* Then, as 'twere a child,  
 She hushed and wrapped it up in cradle-~~clothes~~.

*Or.* And what meat craved the dragon-worm  
 new hatched ?

*Cho.* She gave it her own breast, ay, in her dream.

*Or.* Did she so ? Then I warrant her paps are sore.

*Cho.* It milked her, and sucked out the curded blood.

*Or.* There was a meaning in this vision.

*Cho.* She cried in her sleep and started broad awake.

And all the palace-lamps, that hung blind-eyed  
 In darkness, blazed up for the mistress' sake.  
 And, presently, she sends these loving-cups ;  
 She thinks them surgery for distempered thoughts.

*Or.* O parent earth, sepulchre of my father,  
 Answer my prayer and make this dream come true!  
 In my interpretation all coheres.  
 For, look you, if the asp came whence I came,  
 If it was wound in swaddling clothes, and gaped  
 With mumbling mouth about the breast that  
 nursed me,  
 And mingled mother-milk with curded blood,  
 By this, and by her shriek that saw the dream,  
 Then, as she gave suck to a devilish thing,  
 She dies in her blood ; and I am dragon-fanged  
 To kill her as the dream would have me do.

*Cho.* Oh, good ; your reading of it contents  
me well ; •  
 And Heaven fulfil it ; but give us first some clew :  
 Which shall be actors here and who look on.

*Or.* In sooth, a simple story : she must within,  
 And it shall be your charge to cloak my plot.  
 So, as their treason slew a royal man,  
 They may be tricked and the same noose they rove  
 Strangle themselves, even as Loxias spake,  
 Apollo, Prince and Prophet ne'er found false.  
 My guise a traveller, all my traps complete,  
 With Pylades here I'll to the palace-gates,  
 As a friend of the house,—trusty—oh, true as steel !  
 And he and I will talk Parnassian,  
 Mimic the parle of Phocis for the nonce.  
 'Tis like enough their varlets will not smile  
 A welcome, there's such devilment within.  
 No matter ; we will wait ; and passers-by  
 Will say ' How comes it Ægisthus denies  
 A stranger, if he be not gone abroad ? '  
 But once across the threshold of the court,  
 And if I find him on my father's throne,

Or he come anon and look me in the face,  
 Hell gapes for him, down drop his dastard eyes,  
 Ere he can quaver ' What's your country ? ' I  
 Will spit him on my sword a carcase for crows.  
 And then Eriny, that stints not her cups,  
 Shall quaff full healths of slaughter unallayed.  
 Go, sister ; have an eye to all within,  
 That nothing in our business go agley.

(*To the Chorus*)

And see that ye offend not with your tongue ;  
 Speak, or say nothing, as occasion serves.

(*To Pylades*)

Hither to me : second me with thine eye ;  
 Put mettle in my heart and point my sword.

*Exeunt Orestes and Pylades.*

## CHORUS.

The tribes of earth are fierce and strong ;  
 And in the arms of ocean throng  
 The monster enemies of man :  
 From highest heaven's noonday throne  
 Flashes and falls the thunderstone  
 On four-foot beast and feathered clan ;  
 Yea, and remember the hurricane  
 With his cloak of wrath outblown.

But the pride of man's spirit what tongue can tell,  
 Or woman's unruly desires, that fell  
 And hungry flock that feed on death ?  
 These lawless yearnings of the blood  
 That master wanton womanhood  
 Corrupt sworn truth with venal breath  
 And break the bond that comforteth  
 Man and beast in field and flood.

Is that a fetch of thought beyond thy wing ?  
 Learn of the plot that ill-starred Thestias fired,  
 And her own child's untimely death conspired,

Casting into the flame

The rusty brand, of his nativity

Prime comrade and coeval, numbering

His minutes, from that hour when with a cry

Forth from her womb he came

To the last day appointed him to die.

Or wist ye not of the girl-murderess

Whose infamy yet lives in legend old ?

That for a carcanet of Cretan gold,

King Minos' gift, by foes

Suhorned, delivered up a well-loved head ?

Stealing from Nisus the immortal tress,

What time—Oh, heart of dog !—in his noon-bed

Breathing he lay in deep repose ;

And Hermes drew him down among the dead.

But since old sorrows I recall

That suck no balm from honeyed shower,

Pour out to brim the cup of gall

• The sanguine wine of wedlock sour.

Oh, bid them from thy hall

And bid them from thy bower

These dark imaginings of woman's wit

Against her warrior,

Whose mien the foe with darkness smit,

The majesty of war.

Bright shines the hearth were no fierce passions  
 throng

And woman's valour when she shrinks from wrong.

So in the roll of antique time

Her primacy black Lemnos bears ;

Her shame is cried in every clime ;  
 And all that horror dreads or dares  
 Of that cursed Lemnian crime  
 The sable likeness wears.  
 She feels the ache of God's most grievous ban :  
 And her despiséd race  
 Under the general scorn of man  
 Is gone to their own place.  
 That which displeases God none holds in awe ;  
 What cite I here that contradicts His law ?

There is a sword, whose biting thrust  
 God's Law drives home ; plunged to the hilt  
 Clean through the naked heart ; for guilt  
 Lies not down-trodden in the dust  
 That men may trample as of right  
 On all that's holy in God's sight.

Now Justice' anvil standeth fast ;  
 The Armourer, Doom, beats out her blade ;  
 Within is privily conveyed  
 A Child that quits the bloody past ;  
 That true-born Child Erinyes brings ;  
 Dark are her deep imaginings.

*Before the Palace. Orestes and Pylades. Chorus.*

### ORESTES.

Boy ! Boy ! Do you hear me knock ? What, boy,  
 I say !  
 Who's there ? Open, if in Aegisthus' halls  
 Be welcome for a stranger.

## DOORKEEPER.

Ay, have done !  
 I hear ye. What's your country, and whence  
 come you ?

*Or.* Announce me to your masters ; I bring news  
 Meant for their ear. And set about it quickly ;  
 For now the chariot of night comes on  
 Darkling ; it is the hour when travel casts  
 Anchor in hostelries and roadside inns.  
 Let one of charge and consequence come forth,—  
 Some worthy dame,—or, stay, a man were best ;  
 For then nice manners need not overcast  
Frank speech ; a man is to his brother man  
 Open in converse, free without offence.

*Clytaemnestra appears at the Palace-door with Electra.*

## CLYTAEMNESTRA.

Sirs, what's your will ? Here is such entertain-  
 ment  
 As fits my house ; warm baths, an easy couch  
 For tired limbs, and looks of honest welcome.  
 But if there's graver business to despatch,  
 That's men's concern and they must hear of it.

*Or.* I come from Phocis ; I am a Daulian ;  
 And on the road with mine own merchandise  
 To Argos here, which is my journey's end,  
 A man to me unknown, as I to him,  
 Met me, enquired my way and told me his ;  
 Strophius the Phocian, as appeared anon.  
 ' Sir ' quoth he, ' since you are travelling to Argos,

Do me the service to inform his parents  
 Their son Orestes is no more ; forget not ;  
 And whether they decide to have him home,  
 Or leave him ours for ever, bury him  
 In his adopted land, bring word again.  
 Meantime, his urn clips in its brazen round  
 The ashes of a man right nobly mourned.'  
 That was his message ; whether chance-delivered  
 To whom it concerns, who may herein command,  
 I cannot tell ; but they whose son he is  
 Must surely be apprised of it.

*Clyt.*    Oh me !  
 How are we stormed upon, broke, breached,  
 despoiled !  
 Unmastered curse of our unhappy house  
 How wide thy range ! Things out of reach thy bolt  
 Brings down from far, and thou dost pluck from me  
 To the last hair all, all, that I hold dear !  
 And now Orestes ; he that thought to plant  
 His foot out of the mire of muddy death,  
 The hope that physicked this debauch of blood,  
 Pricked in thy roster answers to his name.

*Or.* Would I had better news to recommend me  
 To my so honourable entertainers  
 And grace their proffered welcome. What can warm  
 The heart like kindness betwixt host and guest ?  
 And yet it had been wicked to my thinking  
 Not to discharge an office laid on me  
 Both by my pledged word and your courtesy.

*Clyt.* Oh, not for that will we scant your deserts  
 Or make you the less welcome to our house.  
 Another had brought these tidings, if not thou.  
 But it is time that day-long travellers

Find full suppliance for the weary road.

(*To Electra*)

Do you bestow him in the men's guest-chambers,  
His company and all his retinue.

Let them be treated as becomes our house ;  
And be it done as you shall answer it.

*Electra, Orestes and Pylades enter the Palace.*

These news we will impart unto our lord ;  
And he and I, with help of our good friends,  
Take counsel touching this calamity.

*Clytaemnestra follows.*

*Cho.* Content ! Content ! Oh, when shall we,  
Dear'st handmaidens, fully lustily  
Orestes' triumph-song resound ?  
Majestic earth ! Thou cliff high-shored,  
Whose shadow sleeps on the longships' lord,  
Give ear and send us present aid !  
Now is the hour of combat knolled,  
~~And~~ Parley, with the tongue of gold,  
In guile unguessed moves darkly dight,  
And Nether Hermes cloaked in Night  
Shall watch this grim and bloody round  
Fought to the death with naked blade.

*The Nurse is seen passing within.*

The mischief works ! His hand is in, our guest !  
Orestes' nurse, all tear-bedabbled. Hist !  
Where steps Kilissa at the dark entry,  
Unsalaried Sorrow all her company ?

*The Nurse comes to the door.*

## NURSE.

Why, I am bidden by my lady run  
 And fetch Aegisthus ; she'll have this confirmed ;  
 And man to man before it has time to cool  
 They are to piece it out. Among her slaves  
 She wears a knitted brow, but in her eyes  
 Lurks laughter for this finish and fair close  
 Of her much care ; though 'tis of care compact  
 For us, this traveller's tale that cleft my heart.  
 Ah, God, when he has heard it, probed and proved,  
 How will his spirit dance for joy.

Heigh-ho :

Sorrows bygone, ill with worse ill confounding,  
 The long, sick agonies of Atreus' line,  
 Did, in the coming of them, wring my heart.  
 But none of them were half so grievous-heavy,  
 And I found patience to bear them all.  
 But my dear Orestes, spendings of my soul,  
 Whom I took from his mother's womb, nursed in  
 my lap,  
 And at his peevish piping broke my rest,  
 And was so patient with him, trudge and drudge,  
 And get no thanks. 'Tis but a witless thing,  
 We have to nurse, no whelp more whimsical.  
 It can't speak plain, a weanling in long clothes ;  
 Woot drink ? woot eat ? make water, woot ?  
 God made  
 The little belly a law unto itself.  
 I would divine his wants, and oft as not  
 Go wrong ; and fall to washing dirty napkins,  
 Laundress and nurse too, all for my sweet babe.  
 Oh, turn and turn about, I plied both trades  
 When I took Orestes from his father's arms.  
 Alack, and now they tell me he is dead ;

And I must get me to this dunghill dog  
Will take my tidings with a greedy ear.

*Cho.* How did she bid him come,—in what array?

*Nurse.* How? Say't again: I do not understand thee.

*Cho.* Or with his bodyguard or unattended?

*Nurse.* She bade him bring his Yeomen of the Guard.

*Cho.* Never deliver to the brute her message!  
Tell him to come alone, that he may hear  
From lips unawed; say, 'quickly, cheerly come!'  
A tale that's warped oft straightens in the telling!

*Nurse.* Dost mean that these are welcome news to thee?

*Cho.* 'Tis an ill wind Zeus cannot turn to good.

*Nurse.* Good? And our hope, our dear Orestes dead?

*Cho.* 'Twere no mean prophet could expound my text.

*Nurse.* What mean'st? Hast aught that squares not with the tale?

*Cho.* Run! Take thy message, do as thou art bid:  
Safe in Heaven's Hands is all that touches Heaven.

*Nurse.* Well, I will suffer ye to have it so;  
And by the bounty of God may all end well.

[*Exit Nurse.*]

*Cho.* Father of Heaven, hear me in this hour ;  
 Raise up a fallen house ; vouchsafe to bless  
 Hearts that thirst and eyes that ache  
 To see the Face of Soothfastness.  
 Justice is all the plea I make ;  
 Uphold it with the Hand of Power.

Oh, Zeus ! Him in yon house of kings  
 Prefer above his enemies,  
 And he shall bring Thee free-will offerings,  
 With triple lauds and threefold sacrifice.

'Tis but a Colt, bethink Thee, sired of One  
 Beloved, that's linked to the Iron Car of Woe !  
 Collect those fiery paces ! Mete  
 The measure of his stride, that so  
 With steady rhythm of galloping feet  
 He break not till the course be run !

Ye Dwellers of the inmost shrine, adorned  
 With vessels of fine gold,  
 Hearken ! Ye Gods, that with us wept and  
 mourned !  
 Cancel with fresh Doom the blood of old.  
 Shed guiltily, till all's undone !  
 Nevermore, come Time, come Tide,  
 In the House where Ye abide  
 Grizzled Murder get a Son !

God of the Grot, the vaulted Fane,  
 Give these blind walls back their sight !  
 Make them Man's fair home again !  
 Give them Freedom ! Give them Light !  
 Through this dark Veil, of Thy Grace,  
 Make them show a shining face !

Meet is it Maia's child with subtlest craft  
 Our dubious venture speed :  
 Is none so deft, so nimble-light, to waft  
 To port the hazard of a dextrous deed !  
 He opes or shuts with ' Yea ' and ' Nay '  
 The gold of His hid Treasury ;  
 His Word is night to the seeing eye,  
 And darkness in the broad noonday.

Then, for deliverance from Despair,  
 For a steady breeze and strong,  
 We'll harp and sing to a merry air  
 The mumping witch-wives' song :

" The ship rides free ; come, fill my lap ;  
 Put money in my purse ;  
 Largesse, fair Sirs, for your good hap  
 And the boon of a broken Curse."

Thou to the deed march boldly on ;  
 And, when thou hear'st her cry,— ' My Son '—  
 Answer— ' Not thine ! '—and with one blow  
 In blameless blood-guilt blot this Woe !

On ! Lest a word should win thee,  
 A look break down thy guard ;  
 Harden the heart within thee,  
 As Perseus' heart was hard !

Make stern amends ; relent not ;  
 Doth the wronged ghost forgive ?  
 Relax not,—pause, repent not !  
 They ask it that yet live !

Strike, strike for Hate's allaying,  
 The House of Hate within,

And with one sinless Slaying  
Slaughter the Seed of Sin !

*Enter Aegisthus.*

### AEGISTHUS.

I come not here unasked ; a message reached me ;  
I'm told there's a strange rumour, certain men,  
Our guests, have brought, little to pleasure me ;  
Orestes' death. That were with a fresh load  
To chafe a sore that runs with fears ~~unstaunch~~  
And open bygone Murder's aching scars.  
Shall I concede it true ? Look'st forth clear-eyed ?  
Or null and void as woman's vain alarms ;  
A flight of sparks that presently come to nought ?  
What canst thou tell me that shall clear my doubt ?

*Cho.* Only that we have heard it : go within :  
Question the strangers, man to man ; there lies  
The marrow and pith of all the news e'er brought.

*Aeg.* I'll see this messenger and question him  
Again, if he was present at the death ;  
Or vents a tale that hath no substance in it.  
They that would steal my wits first steal my eyes.

[*Exit.*]

### CHORUS.

Open my lips, order my prayers aright,  
O God above !  
Give them the strength, the breadth, the depth, the  
height,  
Of my exceeding love !

Now on the soilure of one slaughterous sword  
     Hangs Doom and Death  
 For all the race of Agamemnon Lord ;  
     Or light and breath  
 Of Liberty on its keen edge shall glance ;  
     And, by those brandished fires,  
 He shall possess a Kingdom's governance  
     And the glory of his sires.  
 And, in this gest, a solitary knight,  
     Two crafty foes grips he,  
 Even Orestes, girt with a hero's might ;  
     God give him Victory !

*A shriek is heard within the Palace.*

Hark !—Hush !—which way  
 Went the battle ? What is Heaven's will,  
     O House, for thee this day ?  
 Let's go aside that in this dark event  
~~It~~ may be thought that we are innocent :  
 What's done is done ; or be it good or ill.

*The Inner Court.*

### DOORKEEPER.

Alas, my master ! Oh, my lord, Aegisthus !—  
 A bloody, bloody end ! Open !—Be quick !  
 Unbar the women's gates ! Muscle and brawn,  
 Mettle of manly youth, we need you now,—  
 But not—God help us—for the helpless dead !  
 Ho there, within ! Oho !  
 'Tis shouting to the deaf ; they are asleep ;  
 They heed me not ! Where's Clytaemnestra ?  
 What

Doth she ? Fore God, her neck is for the knife ;  
Yea, by the hand of Judgement she must fall !

*Enter Clytaemnestra.*

### CLYTAEMNESTRA.

What's this ? Why do you keep this bawling here ?

*Doorkeeper.* The dead have come to life and slain  
the quick.

*Clyt.* Ah, God ! Ah, God ! I read your riddle ; we  
Are to perish even as we slaughtered him,  
Tricked and betrayed ! Bring me a battle-axe !  
We'll know if we mount high or fall full low ;  
I touch the bound and bourn of all my woe.

*Enter Orestes, Pylades with him.*

### ORESTES.

I am come to fetch thee ; thy fellow hath his fill.

*Clyt.* Oh,—my dear'st love,—Aegisthus,—dead  
—dead—dead !

*Or.* Thou lov'st him ? Good ! Then thou shalt  
lie with him  
In's grave ; there thy false heart can never betray him.

*Clyt.* Oh, hold thy hand ! My child,—my babe  
—look here !

My breast ; be tender to it ; thy soft gums  
Did in thy drowze so often drink its milk.

*Or.* Pylades, what now ? Shall I be tender to her ?

### PYLADES.

What then were Loxias' prophesyings worth,  
His holy oracles ? What oaths deep-sworn ?  
Better the world thine enemy than Heaven !

*Or.* Thou art my better mind ; thou counsellest well.

Come here ; I mean to slay thee where he lies,  
Whom thou didst count a better than my father.  
Sleep with him in death since thou lov'st him,  
and hat'st  
~~Him~~ whom thou oughtest truly to have loved.

*Clyt.* I nursed thee ; I would fain grow old with thee !

\**Or.* What ? Kill my father and make thy home  
with me !

*Clyt.* Destiny, dear child, was partner in my guilt.

*Or.* And Destiny accomplishes thy doom.

*Clyt.* Child, fear'st thou not a mother's malison ?

*Or.* Mother ! You cast me out to misery !

*Clyt.* Not cast thee out. They were our trusty  
friends !

*Or.* You basely sold me, born a free man's son.

*Clyt.* Where is the price that I received for thee?

*Or.* I am ashamed to tell thee openly.

*Clyt.* Nay, do; but leave not out thy father's sins!

*Or.* He wrought for thee while thou sat'st safe at home.

*Clyt.* 'Tis nature, child; unmanned we ache and pine.

*Or.* They win ye bread that ye may eat at ease.

*Clyt.* Is it even so? Child, wilt thou slay thy mother?

*Or.* Thou slay'st thyself, it is not I that kill thee.

*Clyt.* Beware the ban-dogs of a mother's fury!

*Or.* Except I do this how shall I 'scape my father's?

*Clyt.* I am like one that cries to the deaf grave!

*Or.* My father's fate strikes thee with airs of death.

*Clyt.* Thou art the aspic I brought forth and nursed!

*Or.* Thy fearful dream was prophet of thy woe, And thy foul sin pays forfeit in thy sorrow.

*Orestes drags in Clytaemnestra, followed by Pylades.*

*Cho.* Oh, my heart's heavy even for their fall.  
 But since the gory edifice of woe  
 Orestes copes and crowns ; 'tis better so  
 Than he be quenched who was the eye of all.

There came on Priam's sons at last  
 Judgement and Retribution sore :  
 There came two Lions wrapped in one tawny hide  
 To Agamemnon's house, yea, two-fold War.  
 But, warned at Pytho, furious and fast,  
 The banished man drove on amain, with God for  
 Guide.

Shout ! Shout, Ho ! with a jubilant rouse !  
 Shout for my lord and my lord's house  
 Delivered from evil ; from the twain that defiled  
 His hearth and his substance squandered !  
 Farewell, the lone, the trackless wild,  
 The waste of Woe we wandered !

Came He that loves the dark surprise  
 Deep Retribution subtly planned ;  
 And Zeus' own Daughter in this combat dire  
 Her finger laid on the avenger's hand ;  
 Men call her Justice—on her enemies  
 She vents the blast of her consuming ire.

The Voice of Loxias,  
 In great Parnassus' rocky cavern heard,  
 The word of guile where no guile was,  
 Though long deferred,  
 Hath come to pass.  
 The power of God can never pass away  
 Because no evil thing is holp thereby ;  
 Meet is it, then, we worship and obey  
 His governance Whose Hand sustains the starry  
 sky.

The dawn breaks fair ; the night is spent ;  
 The bit is loosed and the bridle unbound ;  
 Rise, walls ! Rise, tower and battlement,  
 Ye shall no more lie levelled to the ground.

And it shall not be long  
 Ere pardoning Time, the world's great Hierarch,  
 Shall pass with sound of charming song  
     These portals dark,  
     Absolve the wrong,  
 And break the spell that bound them, utterly.  
 Fortune shall throw a main and sweep the board ;  
     And we shall see her face and hear her cry ;  
 'Here will I make my home, to your fair house  
 restored.'

*The scene discovers Orestes and Pylades standing over the dead bodies of Clytaemnestra and Aegisthus.*

### ORESTES.

Behold the tyrants that oppressed your land,  
 Slayers of fathers, plunderers of kings' houses.  
 But now they kept great state, seated on thrones ;  
 Yea, and, methinks, they yet lie lovingly  
 In death, true honourers of their oath and bond.  
 They sware that they would kill my father, sware  
 To die together, and were not forsown.  
 Behold, ye judges of their heinous crimes,  
 The thing they wrought, the links that bound my  
     father,  
 Gyves for his wrists and fetters for his feet.  
 Shake it abroad, stand round me in a ring,  
 Hang out these trappings, that a father's eye,  
 Not mine, but he that watcheth all the world,

Helios, may view my mother's handiwork ;  
 Ay, and hereafter testify for me  
 That justly I pursued even to the death  
 My mother ; I reck not Aegisthus' end ;  
 For by the law the adulterer shall die.  
 But she that hatched this horror for her lord,  
 By whom she went with child, carried the load  
 Of sometime love,—but this tells you 'twas hate !—  
 What ? Had she conger's teeth or adder's fangs,  
 She had corrupted where her tooth not bit,  
 So absolute was she in iniquity.  
 How shall I name this right and use fair words ?  
 Trap for a beast ? Clout for a dead man's feet ?  
 A towel is't ? Fore God, a trapper's toil ;  
 A noose ; a gown that trips the wearer up ;  
 Some rascal publican might get one like it,  
 That robs his guests for a living ; ay, with this,  
 Put scores away and feel no cold fit after.  
 I pray God one like her may never house  
 With me,—I'd liefer go childless to my grave.

*Cho.* Aiai ! the woeful work ! This hideous  
 death

Ends thee ; thy pride and all thy passions cold ;  
 For him that yet must draw this lethal breath  
 The flower of suffering begins to unfold.

*Or.* Was this her work or not ? This proves it,  
 this

Robe, sullied with Aegisthus' dagger-plunge.  
 The tinct of murder, not the touch of Time  
 Alone, hath—here and here—spoiled its rich brede.  
 I'll praise and mourn him now, I was not by  
 To mourn and praise, with his death-robe before me.  
 Sad act, sad end, thrice-wretched race, triumph  
 No man need envy, soilure of my soul.

*Cho.* Time grants not our so perishable clay  
 Bliss that endures or glory that shall last ;  
 Heaviness wears the instant hour away,  
 Or it will come before the next be passed.

*Or.* Mark this : for I know not where it will  
 end,

Dragged like a driver of hot, headlong horses  
 Quite from the track ; beaten and borne afar  
 By break-neck thoughts ; fear at my heart, at  
 stretch

To strike up the grim tune, whereto 'twill dance.  
 While I am in my senses, I protest  
 I slew not, friends, my mother save with cause,  
 My father's blood upon her, and Heaven's hate.  
 I lay it on the charm that made me bold ;  
 On Pytho's prophet, Loxias, that charged  
 Me do the deed, and sware to hold me guiltless  
 If done ; if not,—I sink the consequence :  
 No bolt ere shot can hit that height of suffering.  
 And now behold and see how I am furnished  
 With branch and wreath, and, thus appareled, go  
 To earth's great nombril-precincts, Loxias' ground,  
 And that famed fount of indestructible fire,  
 Kin-murder's outlaw ; at no hearth but His  
 Did Loxias bid me look for sanctuary.  
 Hereafter let all Argives bear me out  
 Not without strong compunction did I deal  
 So ruefully with her that gave me life.  
 I am a wanderer now, I have no friends,  
 But, live or die, this shall be told of me.

*Cho.* Thou hast done well ; let words of evil note  
 Be far from thy lips : give not ill fancies speech.  
 Thou hast delivered all the land of Argos ;  
 Sawn off with one sword-sweep two dragon-heads.

*Or.* Ha ! Ha !

Women, they come about me,—Gorgon shapes,  
Sheeted in grey,—clasped round with scaly folds  
Of intertwined snakes,—away ! away !

*Cho.* True son to thy father, what fantastic thoughts

Are these ? Stand fast ! thou hast triumphed ; fear for nought.

*Or.* These fearful torments are no phantasies ;  
These are the leashed sleuth-hounds my mother slips !

*Cho.* Because the blood is fresh upon thy hands,  
Therefore this sudden frenzy rocks thy soul.

*Or.* Apollo ! Prince ! Look, look !—They come in crowds,—  
And from their eyeballs blood drips horribly !

*Cho.* Haste thee where cleansing is ! To Loxias !  
Hold fast to him and find deliverance !

• •  
*Or.* Ye see them not, but I see them ; they turn  
Upon me ! Hunt me forth ! Away ! Away !  
[He rushes out.]

*Cho.* Fair Fortune go with him ; God be his Guide ;  
God keep him ceaselessly, and send him peace !

There rose Three Winds and shook thee, sad palace  
where Power sat throned,  
And now the third bloweth over, the last that the  
first atoned.

The First Wind came with crying of children slain  
long ago ;

Long, long was it a-dying, the Thyestean Woe !  
The next Wind swept with slaughter, but not by  
the foeman's sword ;  
All bloody was the water that laved Achaia's lord.  
Now the Third Storm hath struck thee from the  
vast of an infinite gloom ;  
Shall I hail thee Wind of Deliverance, or art thou a  
blast of doom ?  
Oh, when will thy course be finished, when wilt  
thou change and cease,  
And the stormy heart of Havoc be lulled into  
lasting peace ?

[*Exeunt.*

**EUMENIDES**



# EUMENIDES

*Delphi. Before the Temple of Apollo.*

## PROPHETESS

Before all Gods my punctual prayer prefers  
Gaia, first Prophetess ; Themis next her,  
Who did succeed her Mother in this seat  
Oracular, as some have told us ; third  
In order, by her free, unforced consent,  
Sat here another Titaness, Chthon's child,  
Phoebe ; and she gave it a birthday-gift,  
To Phoebus, who took on him Phoebe's name.  
From his still mere, his craggy Delian Isle,  
On Pallas' shore, the port of ships, debarked,  
Hither he came, to this Parnassian grot ;  
With fair conduct and worship and great laud  
From Hephaestus' sons, that hewed his path, and  
made

The unreclaimed and savage region tame.  
Rich honours had he here from the simple folk  
And from Delphos, their prince and governor.  
And Zeus possessed him of his mystery,  
And planted him fourth seer upon this throne ;  
Prophet of Zeus is Loxias, Son of Sire.  
These are the gods of prefatory prayer.  
But Pronaean Pallas hath prime mention, too ;

Their lauds the Nymphs of the Corycian Rock,  
 Hollow birds love, repair of Deities ;  
 The wild is Bromius' chace, never forgot,  
 Since His Divinity captained the Bacchanals  
 And toiled King Pentheus like a mountain hare.  
 On Pleistus' Fountain and Poseidon's Force  
 I call, and highest Zeus, All-Perfecter,  
 Ere I go in and take my prophet-throne.  
 And now good hap all heretofore excelling  
 Wait on my going in, and every Greek,  
 By lot admitted and old custom-law.  
 I deal mine answers as the God me guides.

*She enters the Shrine but returns almost immediately.*

Horrors past speech, horrors I durst not look on,  
 Have driven me forth again from Loxias' House !  
 My limbs failed me ; I could not stand upright ;  
 On hands and knees I scrambled along the ground !  
 Fear makes us old wives naught, helpless as babes.  
 As I was passing toward the wreath-hung shrine  
 I saw a man right at the Nombril-Stone  
 He did pollute sit like a suppliant ; blood  
 Dripped from his hands ; he held a naked sword  
 And a high-branched and leafy olive bough,  
 With a great flock of wool all meekly tied ;  
 A silvery fleece ; of that I am very sure.  
 And over against the man a company  
 Of awesome women sound asleep on thrones ;  
 And yet not women ; rather Gorgon-shapes ;  
 And yet not Gorgons neither by their mien.  
 I have seen pictures of She-things that snatched  
 At Phineus' feast ; but these, methought, were all  
 Wingless and black and made my blood run cold.  
 They snored with blasts I dared not draw anigh,  
 And from their eyes let ooze an evil rheum ;

Their garb no vestment for the marble Gods  
 Nor fit to carry to the homes of men.  
 I never saw the kindred or the tribe  
 Of this strange fellowship, nor know the land  
 Could breed them and not sorrow for their birth.  
 Let this be looked to by great Loxias.  
 Prophet and leech and portent-reader, He ;  
 In homes not His the Purgatorial Power.

*Exit.*

*The Temple-doors open, disclosing all that the Prophetess has described. Apollo stands over Orestes.*

## APOLLO

My word is passed : I never will forsake thee,  
 Thy guardian to the end, close at thy side,  
 And far away not tender to thy foes.  
 These ogreish maws are muzzled now, thou seest ;  
 These cursèd carlines cast into a sleep ;  
 Old barreners, the early get of Time,  
 Never clasped in love by God or man or brute.  
 For Evil's sake brought forth, since Evil came,  
 The Dark their pale, and Tartarus 'neath the world ;  
 Fiends loathed of flesh and of Olympian Gods.  
 Natheless, fly thou and never faint thy heart ;  
 For they will drive thee over continents,  
 Treading for evermore the travelled earth,  
 And over the sea and cities far enisled.  
 Weary not ere thy warfare come ; chew not  
 The cud of fearful phantasy : get thee  
 To Pallas' Town ; there clasp her statua,  
 And we will find thee Judges of thy cause,  
 And frame sooth speeches that shall work like  
 charms

For evermore deliverance from thy sorrow.  
I speak, that bade thee strike thy mother down.

### ORESTES

O Prince Apollo, Thou know'st to do right ;  
Let not thy lore, oblivious, lapse from use.  
Thy puissance to effect is my sure bond.

*Ap.* I charge thee, think on that : fail not from  
fear.

*He turns to the statue of Hermes.*

And thou, My blood-brother, My Father's Son,  
Hermes, be Thou his Keeper ; prove Thy Name,  
Great Guide : be Pastor of my sheep that cries  
To me ; Zeus careth for the castaway,  
With Thy fair escort sent among mankind.

*Exit Orestes. Apollo retires into the Sanctuary.*

*Enter the Ghost of Clytaemnestra.*

### GHOST OF CLYTAEMNESTRA

Sleep then : Sleep on ! And whereto serve your  
slumbers ?

I only must endure your contumely  
In death : the rebuke of my assassination  
Clings to me yet among unbodied ghosts ;  
A vagabond, an outcast ! Let me tell ye  
They lay a sore indictment to my charge.  
And for these fearful wrongs, mine own dealt me,  
Not one of all the Invisible Powers is wroth,  
Though mine own child lifted his hand against me !

Look at these wounds ! Behold them with thy heart !

When the soul sleeps the inward eye is bright :  
No glance of Fate is glimpsed in the waking day.  
Times without number at my hand ye lapped  
Your draughts not mixed with wine, abstemious  
cups ;

Your solemn midnight suppers I have roast  
At mine own hearth, when no God else is served.  
And yet all this is trampled in the dust ;  
And he is fled, gone like a fleet-foot fawn,  
As lightsome leapt the toils, and laughs full loud.  
Give ear ! For I have pled for soul, for life,  
For being ! Wake, Goddesses of the Deep !  
A dream that once was Clytaemnestra calls.

*A noise of whining*

Whimper and whine, but you have lost your man.  
He hath his friends, and they are not like mine.

*Whining*

Thou sleepst too sound ; thou car'st not for my  
    , wrong ;  
Orestes that spilled his mother's blood flits free.

*Growling*

Thou snarling slug-a-bed ! Wilt not get up ?  
What hast thou done but evil since Time was ?

*Growling*

Weariness and Sleep, the arch-conspirators,  
Have stolen the fell Dragon's strength away !

*Two sharp howls*

*A Fury (still asleep).* There, there, there, there !  
Ware, hound !

*Ghost.* Thou hunt'st the hart in dream, and like  
a dog

That ne'er hath done, criest on the trail in sleep.  
What would'st be at? Up, lest sloth master thee  
And with its dull balm numb the nerve of pain.  
Ache with that inward anguish thou dost owe,  
The rankle of remorse, stern virtue's barb!  
Let loose on him thy breath, that reeks hot blood!  
Dry him up with smoke! Blast him with fire of thy  
belly!

Make this fault good and follow to his fall!

*She rushes out.*

*Chorus Leader.* Rouse all! Rouse her—and her!  
And I'll rouse thee!

Sleep'st? Get thee up! Shake off the shackling  
sleep!

Let's see if we have jeopardied our chase!

- 1 Undone! Undone!  
Oho! Oho!  
We are shamed! We are shent!
- 2 I have hunted my woe!
- 3 Ah, sister, and I,  
And all of our cry!  
Balked, baffled and foiled;  
We panted and toiled,  
As hounds on the trail,  
While the thicket he kept,  
But the deer leaped the pale,—
- 4 While I slumbered and slept!
- 1 A thief and a knave  
Art thou, Zeus' Son?
- 2 Our ancignty  
Thy youth hath o'er-run!
- 3 The suitor finds grace  
At thy hands this day!

The wicked one,  
 The matricide,  
 That Heaven defied,  
 Thou of Heaven's high race  
 Hast stolen away,—  
 4 And was this well done ?

## CHORUS

It is a knotless cord that cuts me most,  
 A phantom smart,  
 A charioteer of Dream, a chiding Ghost,  
 Hath wrung my heart !  
 I have been whipped ; I stiffen at the stake,  
 A public show ;  
 The hangman's knout hath stung me with dull  
 ache,  
 Blow upon blow !

'Tis the new fashion, their just heritage  
 They count too small.  
 They must engross, these godlings come of age,  
 They will have all !  
 And we must see the world's great Nombril-  
 - Stone  
 Spout blood, aghast !  
 Polluting purples desecrate a throne,  
 Whose gules shall last !

Blind Seer ! Himself infects His Holy Seat ;  
 With obscene unction mires  
 His inmost Altar, whose hearth-embers heat  
 Prophetic fires.  
 Self-bidden, self-impelled,  
 Against Heaven's Law He hath rebelled,

A dying cause He honoureth  
And immemorial Rights consigns to death !

He hath become abominable to me !  
Nor shall to the end of Time  
Cast loose whom He hath bound to Him, go free,  
    The Patron God of Crime !  
Where one takes soil, a thousand cursed  
Miscreants shall follow on the first,  
Set their unholy feet upon his head,  
Trampling His sanctuary with unquiet tread !

*Enter Apollo, with his bow and quiver of arrows.*

## APOLLO

Out ! I command you ! Fast and faster yet !  
Avoid My precincts ! Quit Mine oracle !  
Or take with ye a wingèd adder sheen,  
Shot from My bow that's strung with golden wire,  
And with the pang puke up black froth of men,  
The retchy goblets thou hast sucked from slaughter !  
Ye do presume when ye come near My house ;  
Ye should be with chopped heads and gouged-out  
eyes,  
Dooms, executions, maimed virilities,  
Boy-eunuchs, mutilations, whittled trunks,  
Stonings, deep groans and agonizing shrieks,  
Spines spiked on iron pales ! Now have ye heard  
Your horrible regale, that makes Gods hate ye,  
Your dainty dish ? Ay, everything about ye  
Betokens it. In some blood-bolting den  
Of lions hutch and house ; but rub not off  
Your foul, infectious hides in my rich fane ;

Go, griesly goats ! Get hence, unshepherded !  
No Son of Heaven would deign to pasture ye !

*Cho.* Now listen to our answer, King Apollo !  
Thou art,—I say not the abettor of this,—  
But the sole Doer ; Thou and only Thou.

*Ap.* How, I beseech thee ? So far thou may'st speak.

*Cho.* Thou bad'st the guestling feigned do matricide.

*Ap.* I bade him venge his father ; what of that ?

*Cho.* Red-handed Thou receivedst the murderer.

*Ap.* I charged him haste for cleansing to My house.—

*Cho.* And dost Thou rail at them that help him hither ?

*Ap.* Ye are not fit to enter where I dwell.

*Cho.* It is our bounden duty and our charge.

*Ap.* What dignity is this ? Cry me your worth !

*Cho.* We harry mother-murderers from men's homes.

*Ap.* What do ye to a wife that kills her husband ?

*Cho.* 'Tis not so black as spilling kindred blood.

*Ap.* Injurious hags, ye make of no account  
 High Hera's nuptial bond and Zeus' troth-plight :  
 Cypris the tenour of your pleading scoffs,  
 That gives to men the dearest joys flesh knows.  
 The marriage-bed a parcel is of Fate,  
 Hedged by a holier law than all oaths else.  
 If there be murder there, and thou relax,  
 Not punish, nor bend thither an angry brow,  
 I say, in law thou canst not ban Orestes.  
 For I perceive ye burn with zeal 'gainst him,  
 And show towards them a marvellous unconcern.  
 Not so the Goddess when she tries 'the cause.

*Cho.* Not while Time lasts will I relinquish him.

*Ap.* Pursue him then and multiply thy travail.

*Cho.* Breathe no abridgement of my majesty.

*Ap.* Nay, were it tendered me I'd none of it.

*Cho.* Great art thou, ranked no lower than Zeus'  
 chair.

Ha ! I smell mother-blood ! It leads me on  
 To vengeance : I will hunt the miscreant down !

*The Chorus rush out.*

*Ap.* I will protect him, and draw him out of harm.  
 Dreaded of men and feared in Heaven is the wrath  
 Of him that sues for grace, if I forsake him.

*A year or perhaps longer passes : the scene changes to Athens and the Shrine of Pallas, whose image stands in front of the stage. Enter Orestes, weary, with bleeding feet.*

### ORESTES.

Athena, Queen, by Loxias' command  
 I am here ; be kind ; receive a runagate,  
 But not a recreant with uncleansed hands.  
 My guilt grows dull, the edge of it worn down  
 On hearths not mine and the highways of the world.  
 Across wide continents, over the sea,  
 To Loxias' oracular command  
 Obedient, I am come unto Thy house,  
 Yea, to Thy holy Statua, Goddess,  
 Here will I harbour and abide Thy Doom.

*He crouches down and clasps the image.*

*Enter the Chorus.*

### CHORUS.

Aha, a palpable trace ; we have him now !  
 Follow this close informer's mute record !  
 We are the hound and he is the hit fawn ;  
 The blood's the trail, and we mark every drop.  
 Ha ! I breathe hard, this helter-skelter heaves  
 My hollow flanks ; we have quartered the whole  
 earth,  
 Across the ocean warped our wingless way  
 Still close abeam, and never lost his sail.  
 Or here, or not far off he quaketh sore.  
 The smell of man's blood is laughter to my soul,—  
 A winsome reek !  
 Go seek, go seek, go seek !  
 Search and sound  
 All this ground

Lest the vagabond we chase  
 Slip into safe hiding-place,  
 And for mother-murder done  
 Guilty son  
 Out of Law's reach scape scot-free.  
 There,—there,—there.

Yonder he sits !  
 See how he knits  
 His arms about Her image old  
 That breathes ambrosial air !  
 And doth Her succour make thee bold ?  
 And do those hands implore  
 Her sentence ! That shall never be !  
 Sorrow on thee !

The mother-blood those murderous hands have shed  
 Is irrecoverably fled !

The swallowing earth shall yield it nevermore !  
 Thy life for hers ; thou shalt fill me a cup  
 Drawn from those veins of thine ;  
 Deep draughts of jellied blood I will sip and ~~sip~~,  
 Though bitter be the wine.

And then, when I have sucked thy life-blood dry,  
 I'll drag thee down below !

There mother's son shall mother's agony  
 Expiate, throe for throe !

And thou shalt see all damned souls, whilome  
 Sinners 'gainst God or guest

Or parent ; and of each the righteous doom  
 Shall be by thee witnessed !

For Hades is a jealous Judge of Men,  
 And in His Black Assize  
 The record writ with ghostly pen  
 Cons with remorseless eyes.

*Or.* I am made perfect in the rule of Sorrow,  
 By oft occasions schooled know when to speak

And when refrain. But on this theme I am bid  
 By a most wise Preceptor ope my lips.  
 The blood from off this hand fades, fallen on sleep ;  
 The spot of mother-murder is washed white ;  
 That, when 'twas fresh, on Divine Phoebus' hearth  
 Was purged away with blood of slaughtered swine.  
 'Twere long to tell from that first hour all those  
 I have consorted with and harmed no man.  
 Now with pure lips that can no more offend  
 I ask Athena, Sovreign of this realm,  
 To be my helper. Hers are we then, not won  
 In war, myself, my Argos and her people,  
 By pact well-kept her fedaries for ever.  
 If she about the parts of Libya  
 Round Triton's rapid river, her natal stream,  
 Her foot advance, or veil with flowing train,  
 True friend of them she loves ; or Phlegra's flats,  
 Like a bold cateran, lord of his clan, surveys,  
 Thence let her come—a God can hear from far—  
 And ~~from~~ this sore distress redeem my soul.

*Cho.* Maugre Apollo and Athena's might  
 Thou goest to perdition, derelict  
 And damned ; no place for joy in thy lost soul ;  
 A calf bled white for fiends to munch, a shadow.  
 Answerest thou nothing ? Art too sick with scorn,  
 My fatling, for my table sanctified ;  
 My dish, not altar-slain but eaten alive ?  
 Hear then the bitter spell that binds thee fast.

Come, dance and song, in linkèd round !

More deep than blithe Muse can  
 We'll make these groaning chanters sound  
 Our governance over Man !  
 No parley ! Give us judgement swift !  
 We vex not in our wrath who spread

White hands to Heaven uplift.  
 Not unto such ; he journeyeth  
 Unharmed, a happy traveller  
 Through life to the last pause of Death :  
 But to the foward soul, that seeks,  
 Like *him*, to cloak up, if he could,  
 Plague-spotted hands, with murder red,  
 To such our apparition speaks,  
 The faithful witness for the dead,  
 Plenipotentiary of Blood  
 And Slaughter's sovran minister.

Hear me, my Mother ! Hark,  
 Night, in whose womb I lay,  
 Born to punish dead souls in the dark  
 And the living souls in the day !  
 Lo, Leto's Lion-cub  
 My right denies ;  
 He would take my slinking beast of the field,  
 Mine, mine by mother-murder sealed,  
 My lawful sacrifice.

But this is the song for the victim slain,  
 To blight his heart and blast his brain,  
 Wilder and wilder and whirl him along ;  
 This is the song, the Furies' song,  
 Not sung to harp or lyre,  
 To bind men's souls in links of brass  
 And over their bodies to mutter and pass  
 A withering fire !

Long the thread Fate spun  
 And gave us to have and hold  
 For ever, through all Time's texture run,  
 Our portion from of old.  
 Who walks with murder wood,  
 With him walk we

On to the grave, the deep-dug pit ;  
 And, when he's dead, he shall have no whit  
     Too large a liberty !

Oh ! this is the song for the victim slain,  
 To blight his heart and blast his brain,  
 Wilder and wilder and whirl him along !  
 This is the song, the Furies' song,  
     Not sung to harp or lyre,  
 To bind men's souls in links of brass  
 And over their bodies to mutter and pass  
     . A withering fire !

When as yet we were quick in the womb,  
     This for our jointure was meted ;  
 And the Gods that know not Death's doom  
     Are not at our table seated ;

With us, they break no bread,  
     And of all their raiment shining,  
 I wear nor thrum nor thread ;  
     I will have no fane for my shrining !  
     ..

But when Quarrel comes in at the gate  
 For the crashing of homes, when Hate  
 Draweth his sword against kind,  
 Ho ! who shall our fleet feet bind ?  
 Though he putteth his trust in his strength,  
 The blood that is on him shall blind,  
 And our arm overtake him at length !

Grave cares of public trust claim we  
     With sudden, swift appearing ;  
 Let hell's contention set heaven free,  
     Discharged without a hearing.

For all the Tribe that come  
 Dropping blood of kin, curse-ridden,  
 Zeus stoppeth their mouths ; they are dumb,  
 To His high parle unbidden.

But when Quarrel comes in at the gate  
 For the crashing of homes, when Hate  
 Draweth his sword against kind,  
 Ho ! who shall our fleet feet bind ?  
 Though he putteth his trust in his strength,  
 The blood that is on him shall blind,  
 And our arm overtake him at length !

Glory of Man, to the azure day  
 Lifted in pomp, shall pass away,  
 Crumbled to ashes, a glory discrowned,  
 When we come, black Spirits sable-gowned,  
 Demon dancers, dour and dun,  
 That step to the tune of Malison !

A lusty leaper am I  
 And the feet of me shod with steel  
 Dint earth with doom from on high,  
 And the strong limbs quake and reel,  
 And the stride of the runner slackens full slow  
 When I trample him down to the night of woe !

He falleth and wotteth no whit of his fall,  
 Wildered and lost ; so sick a pall  
 Like pestilence hangs o'er the soul that hath sinned ;  
 And rumours wist, like a sobbing wind,  
 Loud in the land of his blindness tell  
 And the stately house whereon Darkness fell.

A lusty leaper am I,  
 And the feet of me shod with steel  
 Dint earth with doom from on high,

And the strong limbs quake and reel,  
 And the stride of the runner shall slacken full slow  
 When I trample him down to the night of woe !

Ay, Judgement may be stayed,  
 But it will come !

Skilled craftsmen are we at our trade,  
 Perfect in masterdom !

Yea, and therewith our memory is good  
 For all the evil under the sun ;

To Man implacable, much wooed,  
 But hardly won !

Jealous of honours indefeasible,  
 Though by the Gods held in despite and scorn,  
 Sundered from them by the great sink of Hell  
 And sunless gulfs forlorn,  
 Where who hath eyes, and who hath none  
 Grope in one twilight over scraes and scars,  
 And evil are the ways and dusky set the stars.

— what man that holds life dear

But bows the knee

In worship, yea, and shuddering fear,  
 Knowing that this must be ?

By mine own lips admonished and advised  
 Of Power on Law's foundations laid,

To me by olden Destiny demised,  
 By Gods conveyed

An absolute gift ? I am the inheritress  
 Of Time, and hold my fief since Time has been  
 By very antiquity ; not honoured less,

Nor abject held and mean,

Though deep in ever-during shade  
 Under the sunny earth my mansion is,

And the thick Dark of the unlamped Abyss.

*Enter Athena.*

## ATHENA.

I heard a voice calling me when I chanced  
 On far Scamander's side, to enfeoff me there  
 In my new land, the which the kings and captains  
 Achæan quartered me from their war-spoils,  
 Mine in eternal seisin absolute,  
 But set apart, a gift to Theseus' sons.  
 Thence come I speeding not with way-worn foot,  
 Or wing, but rapt on ægis rustling wide,  
 My harnessed colts high-couraged and my car.  
 And now this visitation, though I own  
 No touch of fear, presents a wonder to me.  
 In wonder's name who are ye ? I say to all,  
 And to yon alien seated at mine image,  
 Your like I know not amongst things create,  
 Whether they be sights gazed on by the Gods  
 Or aught in the similitude of man.  
 But to revile deformity offends  
 Good neighbourhood and much revolts from justice.—

*Cho.* Daughter of Zeus, I will in brief inform thee.  
 We are night's children grey and grim and old ;  
 In Hell, our home, called maledictions dire.

*Ath.* This tells your title and your lineage.

*Cho.* Thou art yet to know our state and our high charge.

*Ath.* Clearly expound and I shall quickly learn.

*Cho.* Man-slayers we drive forth from the homes of men.

*Ath.* Where is the bound set for the slayer's feet ?

*Cho.* Where gladness is clean fallen out of fashion.

*Ath.* Is it in such wise ye beset yon man ?

*Cho.* Yea ; he 'sdeigned not to shed his mother's blood.

*Ath.* Under some strong constraint of menaced wrath ?

*Cho.* Where is the goad compels to mother-murder ?

*Ath.* There be twain here, and I have heard but one.

*Cho.* He is not to be bound, he will not take an oath.

*Ath.* Ye would seem just, yet work iniquity,

*Cho.* How ? Tell me that ! Thou art not poor in wisdom.

*Ath.* Wrong shall not triumph here by force of oaths.

*Cho.* Question him then and give a righteous judgment.

*Ath.* What ? Would ye leave the issue in my hands ?

*Cho.* Yea, for Thine own worth and Thy worshipful Sire.

*Ath.* Sir, what hast thou to answer touching this?

Tell me thy land, thy lineage and all  
 Thy griefs ; and then speak in thine own defence,  
 If that thou look'st for judgment ; for that cause  
 Harbourest at my hearth ; all rites performed,  
 A grave appellant, like Ixion old.  
 Come, to all this make me your clear reply.

*Or.* Sovran Athena, thou hast kept till last  
 A grave misgiving I shall first dispel.  
 I am no suppliant under ban ; I come not  
 To clasp Thine image with polluted hands.  
 Proof mighty will I offer thereanent.  
 By law the blood-stained murderer must be mute  
 Till one with power to cleanse strike over him  
 The sacrificial blood of sucking swine.  
 Long since in homes not ours have we been  
     purged  
 With all due rites, dumb beast and running stream.  
 Thus I resolve Thy doubt. By birth I am  
 Argive ; my sire—'tis well thou askest me—  
 Was Agamemnon, Admiral of the sea,  
 With whom thou didst dispeople Ilium,  
 Yea, unstate Troy. Returned to his own house  
 Foully he fell, by my black-hearted mother  
 Cut down, ta'en, netted in the trammelling toils  
 That bare grim witness of his bloody bath.  
 I, then an exile, presently returned  
 And killed my mother—I deny it not—  
 In murderous revenge for my dear father.  
 And Loxias with me is answerable,  
 Who spake of torments dire to goad my heart,  
 Except I dealt with them after their guilt.  
 Judge Thou if I have justly done or no :  
 Whate'er Thy doom, in Thee I rest content.

*Ath.* If any man think he can judge herein,  
 'Tis much too weighty ; neither were it lawful  
 That I try murder, wreaked in bitter wrath.  
 And, namely, when thou com'st a sacrosanct  
 Suitor, aneled and hurtless to my house :  
 Preferred withal as guiltless to my realm ;  
 While these hold powers not easily dismissed,  
 And, if they triumph not in the event,  
 Poison of hurt pride will fall presently  
 And the land ail with age-long pestilence.  
 So stands it ; whether they stay or I bid them hence  
 I shall find trouble and perplexity.  
 But, since so jump the business comes this way,  
 I will appaint a court for murder sworn  
 And make it a perpetual ordinance.  
 Call up your witnesses, bring in your proofs,  
 Justice' sworn helpers and oath-bounden aids.  
 The prime in worth I'll choose from out my sons  
 And come, and well and truly try the cause  
 By the unswerving tenour of their troth.

*Exit.*

### CHORUS.

Now comes the crack of doom, by strong  
 Subversive stroke of rebel laws,  
 If he have room to plead his wrong,  
 And justice vindicate his cause,  
 Whose hands are stained with his mother's blood.  
 This knits all in one brotherhood,  
 The easy fellowship of crime.  
 And from this instance loom in long array  
 Blood-boltered parents whom their sons shall slay  
 Down the dark glimpses of disordered Time.  
 And we that wont to watch mankind,  
 That thirst for cups incarnadined,

No more our anger shall unleash :  
 I'll give Death leave to slay all flesh.  
 And each shall prophesy his own  
 Doom from his neighbour's fate foreknown ;  
 All comers then from the world's ends  
 They shall accost in search of some relief ;  
 And learn from ashy lips and looks of grief  
 Such feeble physic as despair commends.

Who reeleth then to the fatal blow  
     Let him look not for redress,  
 Nor bootless clamour " Justice, Ho !  
     " Ho, the Throned Erinyes ! "

Fathers, mothers, let your loud  
     Death-wound shriek shrill through your halls ;  
 For a mightier frame is bowed ;  
     Yea, the House of Justice falls.

There is a place for Fear ; she tries  
     The reins, a warder weariless ;  
 And it is well with tears and sighs  
     To follow after Soothfastness.

What man, what power through the wide earth,  
     Whose soul is not with child of Fear  
 Nor tends her as a blessed birth,  
     Can be of Law true worshipper ?

Let not thy heart commend  
     Life without Law, nor lend  
 Thy fulsome breath to fan a tyrant's lust ;  
     God doth to power advance,  
     Though His wise governance  
 Change with the shifting forms of things, the comely  
     Mean and just.

Hark, how my graver rhyme  
 To that just Mean keeps time :  
 From Godlessness springs Pride, the Prodigal ;  
 But he that doth possess  
 Soul's health hath Happiness,  
 The child of many prayers, the best beloved of all.

Lay to thy heart this law,  
 O Man ; stand thou in awe  
 Of Justice' Altar ; not for any lure  
 Or glitter of false gain  
 Plant there thy foot profane  
 To tread it in the dust, for chastisement is sure.

The deed is done, but thence  
 Ensues the consequence,  
 That crowns, completes, the master-stroke of all ;  
 Honour, ye sons of men,  
 Your parents first, and then  
 The guest that goeth in and out, the stranger in  
 your hall.

So, virtuous as I would have thee be,  
 Self-taught, by no compulsion overborne,  
 Thou canst not wholly miss Felicity,  
 Nor ever founder, utterly forlorn.  
 But this I say ;—who venturously puts forth  
 And every law of Righteousness outbraves,  
 His trash, his traffic, got 'neath evil stars,  
 In the dread Day of Wrath,  
 He shall commit to the devouring waves,  
 When splits the sail and splintered are the spars.

Then at deaf ears his cry unheard shall knock,  
 Swooning in gulfs where none to land may win ;

Unearthly laughter shall his summons mock  
 Whose soul is fuel for the fires of Sin.  
 He boasted he would never see that day,  
 But now his Angel sees him weak and spent,  
 Powerless to top those seas ; and, all his teen  
 And travail cast away,  
 On the unchartered reef of Justice rent,  
 He sinks with none to wail him and is no more seen.

*Scene. The Areopagus.*

ATHENA.

Make proclamation, herald ; keep the press back,  
 And let the braying trump Tyrrhenian  
 That's heard in Heaven, filled with thy man's  
 breath,  
 Sound in the public ear a mighty parle.  
 For while the synod fills my Judgement Hall.  
 There must be silence ; so shall the whole realm  
 Learn my commandments everlastingily,  
 And these, my chosen, that they judge aright.

*Enter Apollo.*

*Cho.* Apollo ! King ! O'er what is Thine bear rule !  
 Say, wherefore art Thou come to meddle here ?

APOLLO.

First I am come to testify ; for ye  
 Have here a suitor and a suppliant  
 Of mine ; his blood-guilt I did purge and cleanse.  
 Next, I am in the bill, myself arraigned

For this man's mother's murder.

(To *Athena*) Call the case ;  
And, as thou knowest how, maintain the Right.

*Ath.* (To the *Furies*) The word's with you ; the trial may proceed ; And 'tis sound law and justice both, that he Who doth prefer the charge shall first begin.

*Cho.* Though we be many, we shall use few words. Do thou make answer as I question thee. And tell us first if thou didst slay thy mother.

*Or.* Yea, I make no denial ; I killed her.

*Cho.* So, in this thrice encounter one round ends.

*Or.* Ye have not thrown your man, ye crow too soon.

*Cho.* No matter ; how was't thou didst take her life ?

*Or.* I answer,—with my sword ; I cut her throat.

*Cho.* By whom seduced ? Whose ill admonishment ?

*Or.* At His behest : Himself is witness for me.

*Cho.* The Prophet bade thee murder thine own mother ?

*Or.* Even so ; and to this hour I rue it not.

*Cho.* Not ? But a pebble-cast may change thy tune.

*Or.* I have my faith ; my sire sends help from his grave.

*Cho.* What ! Kill thy mother and put trust in ghosts !

*Or.* She was aspersed with two-fold villainy.

*Cho.* How can that be ? I charge thee, tell the court.

*Or.* She slew her husband and struck down my father.

*Cho.* Thou liv'st ; but she is quit by her bloody death.

*Or.* Why did ye not hunt her while yet she lived ?

*Cho.* She was not of one blood with him she-slew.

*Or.* Am I accounted of my mother's blood ?

*Cho.* Thou gory villain, was not thy body framed,  
Fed in her womb ? Wilt thou deny thy mother ?

*Or.* Do Thou bear witness for me now ; pro-nounce,

Apollo, if I slew her with just cause ;  
For that 'twas done I have and do confess ;  
But whether justly done or no, do Thou  
Give sentence, that the court may hear me plead.

*Ap.* To you, Athena's great Consistory,  
Justly I'll speak, and, withal, truthfully,  
For that I am a prophet and lie not.

My throne of Divination never yet  
 To man nor woman, no, nor polity,  
 Delivered aught, but I was bidden speak  
 By Zeus, the Father of the Olympian Gods.  
 Weigh well the force of that, ye Councillors,  
 And then ensue the thing my Father wills :  
 For Zeus is of more might than all oaths else.

*Cho.* Zeus, then, thou say'st, delivered the oracle  
 That bade Orestes venge his father's death  
 .And reckon not the cost of a mother's life ?

*Ap.* Far other was the murder of a man  
 Noble, by God-given sceptre high exalt,  
 At the hands of a woman, not with valiant  
 Arrows far sped by archer Amazon,  
 But in such wise as thou shalt hear, Pallas,  
 And you, upon whose vote the verdict hangs.  
 When from war's business prosperous in the main  
 He was returned, she gave him loving welcome.  
 He took his bath, and, when his bath was done,  
 She wrapped him in a cloak, a sleeveless robe,  
 And in its shackling mazes hewed him down.  
 This was the manner of his taking off,  
 The majesty of the world, the lord of ships ;  
 And such was she ; oh, lay it to your hearts,  
 Ye judges, that are set to try the cause.

*Cho.* Zeus, thou pretendst, holds a father's life  
 Precious exceedingly ; and yet Himself  
 Cast his own Father Cronos into chains !  
 Why, is not this confounding contraries ?  
 Mark well his argument, I conjure you !

*Ap.* You worse than beasts ! You hag-seed  
God-abhorred !

Bonds He may loose, for durance find a balm,  
And work, howso He please, deliverance.  
But when the dust hath drunk the blood of man  
And he's once dead, there's no uprising ; spell  
For that my Father hath created not ;  
Though saving only this the frame of things  
Is as a wheel He can revolve at will  
And, nothing scant of breath, turn upside-down.

*Cho.* A sorry plea, look you, to save your man ! -  
Shall he that spilt his mother's, his own, blood  
Live here in Argos, in his father's house ?  
What public altars, think you, will he use ?  
Who will admit him to the Holy Stoup ?

*Ap.* Listen, and thou shalt own my deeper lore.  
To be called mother is no wise to be •  
Parent, but rather nurse of seed new-sown.  
The male begets : she's host to her small guest ;  
Preserves the plant, except it please God blight it.  
I'll furnish reasons for my argument.  
There hath been and there can be fatherhood  
Though there should be no mother ; witness here  
Olympian Zeus' own self-created child,  
That grew not in the womb's dark coverture ;  
A branch so goodly never Goddess bore.  
Pallas, as it hath ever been my care  
To make thy city great, famous thine arms,  
I have sent thee this sitter on thy hearth,  
That he may be Thy true man evermore,  
And Thou, Goddess, may'st count him Thine ally  
And all his seed ; and to remotest age  
These men's sons' sons may keep Thy covenant.

*Ath.* Shall I direct them now to cast their votes,  
As conscience dictates? Hath enough been said?

*Cho.* We have shot every arrow from our bow;  
Nothing remains but to abide the event.

*Ath.* Surely. (*To Apollo and Orestes*) And how  
shall I do right by you?

*Ap.* Ye have heard what ye have heard: think  
on your oaths;

Carry to the urn the verdict of your hearts.

*Ath.* Ye men of Athens, hear my law; ye  
judges

That try this cause, the first for man's blood shed.  
Henceforth to Aegeus' congregated host  
This Court shall be an ordinance for ever;  
This Hill of Ares, once a place of arms  
Where leaguering Amazons pitched their tents,  
what time

They warred with Theseus and their jealous towers  
New-raised against our sovran citadel;  
And sacrificed to Ares, whence the Rock  
Is called the Rock Areian. There shall Awe,  
With civil Fear, her kinsman, night and day  
Perpetual sessions hold to punish wrong,  
If that my sons depart not from my law.

For, an thou foul the spring with flood or mire  
The fresh and sparkling cup thou'l find no more.  
Nor anarchy nor arbitrary power  
Would I have Athens worship or uphold,  
Nor utterly banish Fear from civic life.  
For who is virtuous except he fear?  
This seat of Awe kept ever formidable  
Shall be a wall, a bulwark of salvation,

Wide as your land, as your imperial state ;  
 None mightier in the habitable world  
 From Scythia to the parts of the Peloponnese.  
 A Place of Judgement incorruptible,  
 Compassionate, yet quick in wrath, to wake  
 And watch while Athens sleeps I stablish here.  
 My large discourse these precepts would command  
 To my sons yet unborn. Rise from your seats ;  
 Take up your counters and upon your oaths  
 Return a righteous verdict. I have done.

*The Judges cast their votes during the ensuing dialogue*

*Cho.* Take heed, we are ungentle visitors ;  
 Learn of our wisdom and misprise us not.

*Ap.* My words that are God's Voice hold ye in  
 awe ;  
 Make them not as blind plants that bear no fruit.

*Cho.* Thou hallowest deeds of blood that are  
 not Thine,  
 And shalt no more prophesy holy things.

*Ap.* Faileth the Father's Wisdom, for that He  
 Sheltered Ixion, the first murderer ?

*Cho.* Thou sayest ; but, if I am baulked of  
 justice  
 I'll vex this land and visit it in wrath.

*Ap.* The younger Gods regard thee not ; the old  
 Pay thee no honour ; victory is mine.

*Cho.* So didst thou sometime deal in Pheres'  
 house ;

Tempting the Fates to make mankind immortal.

*Ap.* Is it not just to help a worshipper,  
And doubly, trebly just in the day of need ?

*Cho.* Thou didst break down earth's parcelled  
governance,  
With new wine practise on the Goddesses old.

*Ap.* Nay, when the cause is lost, thy venom  
void ;  
It hath no power to hurt thine adversaries.

*Cho.* Since Thy hot youth o'er-rides our ancientry  
I wait on judgement ; doubtful yet to launch  
My indignation 'gainst the State of Athens.

*Ath.* It shall be mine, if judgement hang in poise,  
To cast this counter that Orestes live.  
Mother is none that gave my Godhead life ;  
I am the male's ; saving my never-wed  
Virginity, my Father's child thrice o'er.  
Therefore I rate not high a woman's death  
That slew her lord, the master of her house.  
Orestes wins, yea, though the votes be paired.  
Come, Sirs, despatch ; ye whose the office is  
To make an end, empty me out the urns.

*Or.* Phoebus Apollo, how will judgement go ?

*Cho.* Swarth Night, my Mother, watchest Thou  
unseen ?

*Or.* I near mine end, the halter or the day !

*Cho.* We fall, or have great glory evermore !

*Ap.* Sirs, count the votes ; make strictest scrutiny,  
 With holy fear, lest Judgement go awry.  
 A vote o'er-looked may work most grievous wrong :  
 A single pebble save a tottering house.

*A pause.*

*Ath.* The accused is found 'not guilty' of the charge ;  
 The tellers certify an equal count.

*Or.* O Pallas ! O Preserver of my race !  
 To my lost realm my father once possessed  
 Thou hast restored me ! Now shall all Greece say,  
 'True Son of Argos, lord of his father's substance,  
 He dwelleth with his own.' Pallas wrought this  
 And Loxias and the Almighty Third,  
 The Saviour. Moved by my sire's fate, He saw,  
 And saved from them that pled my mother's cause.

Now e'er I go to mine own house I swear  
 Unto Thy land and all Thy host an oath  
 Succeeding ages shall fulfil : no prince  
 Of earth shall carry here the barbèd spear.  
 When we are in our graves we will confound  
 Who break this oath with sorry misadventure ;  
 Their ways be weariness, their paths forbid,  
 And for their rapine they shall reap but ruth.  
 But if they shall keep faith, gird them with might  
 For Pallas' city, we will show them grace.  
 Goddess, farewell ; be matchless still in arms,  
 Find still a valiant people strong to throw  
 All who rise up against Thee ; keep Thee safe  
 And with their sword win victory for Thee !

*Exit.*

## CHORUS.

Oh, ye young Gods ! Ye have ridden the old laws  
 down, ye have reft  
 My prey, and I am left  
 Dishonoured and undone !  
 But for these pangs  
 Athens shall have my malison !  
 Ay, on these lips there hangs  
 (Ho, Vengeance, soon to shed)  
 A venomed drop of my heart's agony !  
 And it shall multiply and spread,  
 Bitter and barren ! It shall be  
 A mildew and a leprosy,  
 A canker to the leafless tree,  
 A curse to the childless bed ;  
 On everything that hath breath  
 Corrosion, purulence and death !  
 Wail—and wail—and wail ?  
 Or witch them ? shadowing their land with bale ?  
 Transmute to unimaginable woe  
 Grief insupportable ! Oho,  
 Ye Virgin Daughters to black Midnight born,  
 How sharp your sorrow ! How is your honour  
 shorn !

•

*Ath.* Nay, take it not with such a heavy heart ;  
 Ye are not vanquished ; equal are the votes  
 In simple truth, not thy disparagement.  
 Oh, here were proofs radiant with God's own light !  
 And He that gave the oracle bare witness  
 Orestes should not suffer for his deed.  
 Let not your heavy wrath light on this ground ;  
 Consider, be not angry, shed no drops  
 To blast the fruitful earth with barrenness  
 And with keen tooth devour the pregnant seed.

I will provide you, pledge hereto my oath,  
 A hold, a hollow in this righteous land,  
 Altars and shining thrones where ye shall sit,  
 And worship and great honour from her sons.

*Cho.* Oh, ye young Gods ! Ye have ridden the  
 old laws down, ye have reft  
 My prey, and I am left  
 Dishonoured and undone !  
 But for these pangs  
 Athens shall have my malison !  
 Ay, on these lips there hangs,  
 (Ho, Vengeance, soon to shed)  
 A venomed drop of my heart's agony !  
 And it shall multiply and spread  
 Bitter and barren ; it shall be  
 A mildew and a leprosy,  
 A canker to the leafless tree,  
 A curse to the childless bed ;  
 On everything that hath breath  
 Corrosion, purulence and death !  
 Wail—and wail—and wail ?  
 Or witch them ? shadowing their land with bale ?  
 Transmute to unimaginable woe  
 Grief insupportable ? Oho,  
 Ye Virgin Daughters to black Midnight born,  
 How sharp your sorrow ! How is your honour  
 shorn !

*Ath.* Your honour is safe ; are ye not Goddesses ?  
 Curse not this soil that giveth life to man.  
 I too have faith in Zeus ; but why waste words ?  
 I only know the keys of the arsenal  
 Of Heaven, stored with the sealed thunderbolt.  
 But we shall need no thunder. Listen to me :  
 Vent no wild words in sour despite, to make

All that yields increase utterly miscarry.  
 This dark wave's bitter fury put to sleep.  
 Be what ye are, majestic, denizens  
 With me in this fair land ; prime offerings  
 Shall then be yours through all her borders wide  
 For children and the sacred marriage rite  
 For evermore, and ye shall bless my words.

*Cho.* Oho ! Am I to take these buffets,—I  
 To have my elder wisdom scoffed at,—be  
 Bid to my place,—to house with infamy  
 Here on this plot, this patch, this ell of earth ?  
 Blast it, my fury ! Pain,—pain,—pain,—  
 Here at my heart,—whence comes it ? Why  
 Am I to suffer ? Darkness, Death and Dearth !  
 Night, Mother Night, shall my wroth heart be hot  
 And wilt thou hearken not ?  
 Strong craft of subtle Gods hath reft my ancient  
 majesty !

*Ath.* I will be patient with thy passioning ;  
 Thou art mine elder, wiser then than I.  
 Yet Zeus hath not denied me understanding.  
 Find out a new race, other soil ; yet here  
 Your heart will be ; I speak this for your warning.  
 The tide of Time shall for my people roll  
 With ever-mantling glory : thou shalt have  
 Thy mansion here hard by Erectheus' house,  
 And men and women come with frequent pomp  
 And greater laud than the wide world can give.  
 But in my borders bring no grindery  
 To whet sharp daggers, in the breast of Youth  
 Bloody and dangerous ; with more madness edged  
 Than works with wicked ferment in new wine.  
 Nor take, as 'twere, the gamecock's heart, to plant  
 Domestic Havoc here that fights with kind.

Without their gates let my sons go to war,  
 And who loves honour shall have all he craves.  
 Your bantam-bully, ruffler of the yard,  
 Arrides me not, and I will none of him.  
 Take thou thy choice and take it from my hand ;  
 Fair service, fair content, fair recompense,  
 A portion in this realm the Gods love most.

*Cho.* Oho ! am I to take these buffets,—I  
 To have mine elder wisdom scoffed at,—be  
 Bid to my place, to house with Infamy  
 Here on this plot, this patch, this ell of earth !  
 Blast it, my fury ! Pain,—pain,—pain,  
 Here at my heart ! Whence comes it ? Why  
 Am I to suffer ? Darkness, Death and Dearth !  
 Night, Mother Night, shall my wróth heart be  
 hot  
 And wilt thou hearken not ?  
 Strong craft of subtle gods hath reft my ancient  
 majesty.

*Ath.* Still will I bless, thou shalt not weary me,  
 Nor say my nonage set thy years at nought,  
 Nor churlish men scorned thy Divinity  
 And drove thee from their gates discomfited.  
 If thou hold sacred the sweet Soul of Reason,  
 If there be any virtue, any balm,  
 Upon these lips, thou wilt remain. If not,  
 Though thou should'st cast all anger in the scale  
 To sink the land, all malice, all despite,  
 It is not justly done. Justice gives thee  
 A realm to share, a rich inheritance,  
 And nothing of thine honour takes away.

*Cho.* Athena Queen, what mansion wilt Thou  
 give me ?

*Ath.* One where Grief cometh not ; accept it thou.

*Cho.* An if I do, what honour shall I have ?

*Ath.* This, that no home shall prosper without thee.

*Cho.* But hast Thou power to make thy promise good ?

*Ath.* We will establish him that worships thee.

*Cho.* Wilt Thou assure me this for evermore ?

*Ath.* I promise not except I can perform.

*Cho.* Methinks, Thy magic works ; I am no more wroth.

*Ath.* Possess the land and thou shalt win its love.

*Cho.* What shall I sing that hath a blessing in it ?

*Ath.* A song to celebrate a cause well won.  
 From the sweet earth, from the sea-dews and damps,  
 From skies and winds ask inspirations, airs  
 That travel on over a sunlit land ;  
 Fruit from the ground, and increase of strong cattle  
 For all my sons, that Time can never tire ;  
 And saving Health for seed of human kind.  
 Natheless, on Virtue chiefly shed thy balm ;  
 Like a wise gardener of the Soul, I hold  
 There is no graft nor bud blooms half so fair ;  
 And this is thine ; but thou shalt leave to me  
 Glory of battle, where the cause is just,

Death, but death garlanded with victory ;  
And grudge if I be found herein remiss.

*Cho.* Pallas' home contenteth me ;  
Honour to the strong citie  
Zeus Almighty made His own  
And Ares' armèd strength sustains ;  
A fortress for the Gods of Greece,  
A jewel flashing forth anew,  
When ravished were her costly fanes  
And her high altars overthrown.  
Breathe on her blessings, breathe the dew  
Of prayer ; Earth, yield her thine increase ;  
Shine, thou rejoicing Sun, and speed  
All nature sends and mortals need .

*Ath.* Not that I cherish Athens less,  
But that I love her well, have I  
Throned in her midst Great Goddesses,  
Spirits hard to pacify.  
All that makes up Man's moving story  
Is theirs to govern and dispense ;  
He whom their hard hand ne'er made sorry,  
Who hath not met them on his way,  
Walking in blindness knows not whence  
The shock that beats him to his knees.  
The sin of some forgotten day  
Delivers up his soul to these.  
Destruction, like a voiceless ghost,  
Silenceth all his empty boast  
And minisheth his glory.

*Cho.* I will have nor storm nor flood  
Scathe her vines and olive-bowers ;  
No scorching wind shall blind the bud  
In the waking-time of flowers.

By my grace all airs that blow  
 Their appointed bounds shall know.  
 No distemper blast her clime  
 With perpetual barrenness ;  
 Flocks and herds in yearning time  
 Pan shall with twin offspring bless ;  
 And Earth's wombèd wealth, God-sealed,  
 All its lucky ingots yield.

*Ath.* Warders of Athens, have ye heard  
 Her voice ? Know ye what these things mean ?  
 Wist ye how mighty is the word  
 Erinys spake, the Queen ?  
 Mighty 'mid deathless Gods her crying,  
 'Mid Powers that Hell's hid glooms invest,  
 And in this world of living, dying  
 Mighty and manifest !  
 She biddeth one make melody,  
 And one down dark ways leadeth She,  
 Blinded with tears undrying.

*Cho.* Untoward and untimely Doom  
 Bring not strong Youth to his death-bed :  
 Ye maidens, in your beauty bloom,  
 Live not unloved, nor die unwed.  
 You Heavenly Pair, this good gift grant.  
 Grant it, ye Elder Destinies,  
 Our Sisters, whom one Mother bare,  
 Spirits whose governance is law,  
 Of every home participant,  
 And at all seasons, foul or fair,  
 Just Inmates, Righteous Presences,  
 Shadows of an Unseen Awe ;  
 Over the wide earth and the deep seas  
 Honoured above all Deities.

*Ath.* Oh, bounty dealt with loving hand !  
 It needs must fill my heart with glee,

Such largesse lavished on my land.  
 Wise Spirit, thanks to thee,  
 Spirit of Counsel, suave and holy,  
 Whose sober eye could lead me on  
 Till, though the stubborn will yield slowly,  
 Yet their wild hearts were won !  
 But Zeus, the Lord of Civic Life,  
 Gave victory ; in this noble strife  
 He made Good triumph solely.

*Cho.* Tiger-throated Faction fed  
 On the meat of human woe,  
 Filled but never surfeited,  
 Come not hither growling low,  
 Nor wake Athens with thy roar.  
 Never be this thirsty ground  
 Drunk with fratricidal blood,  
 Nor lust of Power insatiate  
 Snatch at vengeance evermore.  
 In one fellowship of Good  
 Each be to his neighbour bound,  
 One in love and one in hate ;  
 For such grace, where'er 'tis found,  
 Lays the balm to many a wound.

*Ath.* Are they not wise ? Speaks she not fair ?  
 Her tongue of gold makes counsel sweet  
 And points the happy highway where  
 Soft words and Wisdom meet.  
 Mine eyes see visions ; fair foundations  
 Rise round these forms with fury fraught !  
 Serve them ! Bring them your rich oblations,  
 And ye serve not for nought.  
 Bless them, and they will surely bless ;  
 At home the reign of Righteousness,  
 Renown throughout all nations.

*Cho.* Joy to you, joy and all good things !  
 Joy to the fortunate city that lies  
 With Zeus about her and above ;  
 Vowed to the Unmarried Maiden's love  
 And in the dawn of Time made wise,  
 Whom Pallas covers with her wings  
 And the Father sanctifies !

*Ath.* Joy to you too in amplest store !  
 But it is time ; I go before ;  
 I lead you on your road ;  
 And by your escort's holy light  
 Conduct you through the Shades of Night  
 Down to your dark Abode.  
 Set forward then your priestly train ;  
 Speed them with blood of victims slain  
 Under this holy ground ;  
 Bind whatsoever bringeth death,  
 And whatsoever profiteth  
 Be by your spell unbound.  
 As ye help Athens by your charms  
 She shall be great in arts and arms,  
 Still, still with victory crowned !  
 Lead on, ye sons of Cranaus ;  
 For those that make their home with us  
 A path and passage find ;  
 And by their good gifts freely given,  
 By these sweet charities of Heaven  
 Be all men of one mind !

*Cho.* Joy, joy to Athens ! Oh, twice blest  
 Be all that in her borders dwell,  
 Or be they men of mortal mould  
 Or deathless Deities that hold  
 Pallas' rock-built citadel !  
 Love me that am your Sacred Guest  
 And bid to Grief a long farewell !

*Ath.* Take all my thanks ; my heart goes with your prayers.

Myself will lead you by the torches' blaze  
 Down to your habitation 'neath the earth  
 With these my ministrants round my Statua  
 On duteous watch ; the apple of the eye  
 Of Theseus' land, a famous company  
 Of little ones and wives and beldames old.  
 We'll mantle them in cloaks of scarlet fine  
 And all about them shake the bright fireshine,  
 Give these New Dwellers noble welcoming  
 That goodly men from their goodwill may spring.

### ESCORT.

Pass on your way, ye mighty, -  
 Ye Jealous in honour pass on,  
 Children of Night unbegotten,  
 Seed of her womb unsown,  
 With pomp and triumph and holy mirth,  
 (Hush ! Good words, all ye people !)  
 And prayer and sacrifice descend  
 Down to the dark, diluvial earth.  
 (Hush ! Good words all ye people !)  
 Come, ye Majestic Spirits, come,  
 Bring good luck to your new-found home  
 By the glad bright light of the burning brand !  
 (Cry, cry aloud with jubilee !)  
 Peace to thee and peace to thee  
 And peace for ever in Pallas' land !  
 Partnered with happy Destiny  
 All-seeing Zeus hath wrought to this end !  
 (Cry, cry aloud with jubilee !)

*Exeunt.*