

IPHIGENIA IN TAURIS



Translated by Theodore Alois Buckley

Composed between 414 BC and 412 BC, this play is often described as a romance, forming a tragi-comedy, unlike the more severe tragedies in the Euripidean corpus. The drama concerns the daughter of Agamemnon, Iphigenia, who, years before the time period covered in the play, narrowly avoided death by sacrifice at the hands of her father. At the last moment the goddess Artemis intervened and replaced Iphigenia on the altar with a deer, secretly taking the girl off to Tauris. There she was made a priestess at the temple of Artemis, a position in which she has the gruesome task of ritually sacrificing foreigners that land on King Thoas' shores. Despising her forced religious servitude, she is desperate to contact her family in Greece and let them know she is still alive and wants to return to her homeland.

The play also features Iphigenia's brother Orestes, who has, with assistance from his friend Pylades, killed his mother Clytemnestra to avenge his father Agamemnon. Haunted by the Erinyes for committing matricide, he suffers periodic fits of madness and so has travelled to Tauris in order to steal a sacred statue of Artemis to help free him from his madness. Unknown to him, he will shortly meet his sister, whom he still believes perished years ago.



'Pylades and Orestes Brought as Victims before Iphigenia' by Benjamin West, 1766

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THE ARGUMENT.

Orestes, coming into Tauri in Scythia, in company with Pylades, had been commanded to bear away the image of Diana, after which he was to meet with a respite from the avenging Erinnyes of his mother. His sister Iphigenia, who had been carried away by Diana from Aulis, when on the point of being sacrificed by her father, chances to be expiating a dream that led her to suppose Orestes dead, when a herdsman announces to her the arrival and detection of two strangers, whom she is bound by her office to sacrifice to Diana. On meeting, a mutual discovery takes place, and they plot their escape. Iphigenia imposes on the superstitious fears of Thoas, and, removing them to the sea-coast, they are on the point of making their escape together, when they are surprised, and subsequently detained and driven back by stress of weather. Thoas is about to pursue them, when Minerva appears, and restrains him from doing so, at the same time procuring liberty of return for the Grecian captives who form the chorus.

IPHIGENIA IN TAURIS.

IPHIGENIA. Pelops, the son of Tantalus, setting out to Pisa with his swift steeds, weds the daughter of CEnomaus, from whom sprang Atreus; and from Atreus his sons, Menelaus and Agamemnon, from which [latter] I was born, Iphigenia, child of [Clytæmnestra,] daughter of Tyndarus, whom my father, as he imagined, sacrificed to Diana on account of Helen, near the eddies, which Euripus continually whirls to and fro, upturning the dark blue sea with frequent blasts, in the famed recesses of Aulis. For here indeed king Agamemnon drew together a Grecian armament of a thousand ships, desiring that the Greeks might take the glorious prize of victory over Troy, and avenge the outraged nuptials of Helen, for the gratification of Menelaus. But, there being great difficulty of sailing, and meeting with no winds, he came to [the consideration of] the omens of burnt sacrifices, and Calchas speaks thus. O thou who rulest over this Grecian expedition, Agamemnon, thou wilt not lead forth thy ships from the ports of this land, before Diana shall receive thy daughter Iphigenia as a victim; for thou didst vow to sacrifice to the light-bearing Goddess whatsoever the year should bring forth most beautiful. Now your wife Clytæmnestra has brought forth a daughter in your house, referring to me the title of the most beautiful, whom thou must needs sacrifice. And so, by the arts of Ulysses, they drew me from my mother under pretense of being wedded to Achilles. But I wretched coming to Aulis, being seized and raised aloft above the pyre, would have been slain by the sword; but Diana, giving to the Greeks a stag in my stead, stole me away, and, sending me through the clear ether, she settled me in this land of the Tauri, where barbarian Thoas rules the land, o'er barbarians, [Thoas,] who guiding his foot swift as the pinion, has arrived at this epithet [of Thoas, i.e. *the swift*] on account of his fleetness of foot. And she places me in this house as priestess, since which time the Goddess Diana is wont to be pleased with such rites as these, the name of which alone is fair. But, for the rest, I am silent, fearing the Goddess. For I sacrifice even as before was the custom in the city, whatever Grecian man comes to this land. I crop the hair, indeed, but the slaying that may not be told is the care of others within these shrines. But the new visions which the [past] night hath brought with it, I will tell to the sky, if indeed this be any remedy. I seemed in my sleep, removed from

this land, to be dwelling in Argos, and to slumber in my virgin chamber, but the surface of the earth [appeared] to be shaken with a movement, and I fled, and standing without beheld the coping of the house giving way, and all the roof falling stricken to the ground from the high supports. And one pillar alone, as it seemed to me, was left of my ancestral house, and from its capital it seemed to stream down yellow locks, and to receive a human voice, and I, cherishing this man-slaying office which I hold, weeping [began] to besprinkle it, as though about to be slain. But I thus interpret my dream. Orestes is dead, whose rites I was beginning. For male children are the pillars of the house, and those whom my lustral waters sprinkle die. Nor yet can I connect the dream with my friends, for Strophius had no son, when I was to have died. Now, therefore, I being present, will to my absent brother offer the rites of the dead — for this I can do — in company with the attendants whom the king gave to me, Grecian women. But from some cause they are not yet present. I will go within the home wherein I dwell, these shrines of the Goddess.

ORESTES. Look out! Watch, lest there be any mortal in the way.

PYLADES. I am looking out, and keeping watch, turning my eyes every where.

OR. Pylades, does it seem to you that this is the temple of the Goddess, whither we have directed our ship through the seas from Argos?

PYL. It does, Orestes, and must seem the same to thee.

OR. And the altar where Grecian blood is shed?

PYL. At least it has its pinnacles tawny with blood.

OR. And under the pinnacles themselves do you behold the spoils?

PYL. The spoils, forsooth, of slain strangers.

OR. But it behooves one, turning one's eye around, to keep a careful watch. O Phœbus, wherefore hast thou again led me into this snare by your prophecies, when I had avenged the blood of my father by slaying my

mother? But by successive attacks of the Furies was I driven an exile, an outcast from the land, and fulfilled many diverse bending courses. But coming [to thy oracle] I required of thee how I might arrive at an end of the madness that drove me on, and of my toils [which I had labored through, wandering over Greece.] But thou didst answer that I must come to the confines of the Tauric territory, where thy sister Diana possesses altars, and must take the image of the Goddess, which they here say fell from heaven into these shrines; and that taking it either by stratagem or by some stroke of fortune, having gone through the risk, I should give it to the land of the Athenians — but no further directions were given — and that having done this, I should have a respite from my toils. But I am come hither, persuaded by thy words, to an unknown and inhospitable land. I ask you, then, Pylades, for you are a sharer with me in this toil, what shall we do? For thou beholdest the lofty battlements of the walls. Shall we proceed to the scaling of the walls? How then should we escape notice [if we did so?] Or shall we open the brass-wrought fastenings of the bolts? of which things we know nothing. But if we are caught opening the gates and contriving an entrance, we shall die. But before we die, let us flee to the temple, whither we lately sailed.

PYL. To fly is unendurable, nor are we accustomed [to do so,] and we must not make light of the oracle of the God. But quitting the temple, let us hide our bodies in the caves, which the dark sea splashes with its waters, far away from the city, lest any one beholding the bark, inform the rulers, and we be straightway seized by force. But when the eye of dim night shall come, we must venture, bring all devices to bear, to seize the sculptured image from the temple. But observe the eaves [of the roof,] where there is an empty space between the triglyphs in which you may let yourself down. For good men dare encounter toils, but the cowardly are of no account any where. We have not indeed come a long distance with our oars, so as to return again from the goal.

OR. But one must follow your advice, for you speak well. We must go whithersoever in this land we can conceal our bodies, and lie hid. For the [will] of the God will not be the cause of his oracle falling useless. We must venture; for no toil has an excuse for young men.

[ORESTES *and* PYLADES *retire aside.*]

CHORUS. Keep silence, O ye that inhabit the twain rocks of the Euxine that face each other. O Dictynna, mountain daughter of Latona, to thy court, the gold-decked pinnacles of temples with fine columns, I, servant to the hallowed guardian of the key, conduct my pious virgin foot, changing [for my present habitation] the towers and walls of Greece with its noble steeds, and Europe with its fields abounding in trees, the dwelling of my ancestral home. I am come. What new matter? What anxious care hast thou? Wherefore hast thou led me, led me to the shrines, O daughter of him who came to the walls of Troy with the glorious fleet, with thousand sail, ten thousand spears of the renowned Atrides?

IPHIGENIA. O attendants mine, in what moans of bitter lamentation do I dwell, in the songs of a songless strain unfit for the lyre, alas! alas! in funereal griefs for the ills which befall me, bemoaning my brother, what a vision have I seen in the night whose darkness has passed away! I am undone, undone. No more is my father's house, ah me! no more is our race. Alas! alas! for the toils in Argos! Alas! thou deity, who hast now robbed me of my only brother, sending him to Hades, to whom I am about to pour forth on the earth's surface these libations and this bowl for the departed, and streams from the mountain heifer, and the wine draughts of Bacchus, and the work of the swarthy bees, which are the wonted peace-offerings to the departed. O germ of Agamemnon beneath the earth, to thee as dead do I send these offerings. And do thou receive them, for not before [thine own] tomb do I offer my auburn locks, my tears. For far away am I journeyed from thy country and mine, where, as opinion goes, I wretched lie slaughtered.

CHOR. A respondent strain and an Asiatic hymn of barbarian wailing will I peal forth to thee, my mistress, the song of mourning which, delighting the dead, Hades hymns in measure apart from Pæans. Alas! the light of the sceptre in the Atrides' house is faded away. Alas! alas for my ancestral home! And what government of prosperous kings will there be in Argos? * * * And labor upon labor comes on * * * * with his winged mares driven around. But the sun, changing from its proper place, [laid aside] its eye of light. And upon other houses woe has come, because of the golden lamb,

murder upon murder, and pang upon pang, whence the avenging Fury of those sons slain of old comes upon the houses of the sons of Tantalus, and some deity hastens unkindly things against thee.

IPH. From the beginning the demon of my mother's zone was hostile to me, and from that night in which the Fates hastened the pangs of childbirth * * * * whom, the first-born germ the wretched daughter of Leda, (Clytæmnestra,) wooed from among the Greeks brought forth, and trained up as a victim to a father's sin, a joyless sacrifice, a votive offering. But in a horse-chariot they brought me to the sands of Aulis, a bride, alas! unhappy bride to the son of Nereus' daughter, alas! And now a stranger I dwell in an unpleasant home on the inhospitable sea, unwedded, childless, without city, without a friend, not chanting Juno in Argos, nor in the sweetly humming loom adorning with the shuttle the image of Athenian Pallas and of the Titans, but imbruing altars with the shed blood of strangers, a pest unsuited to the harp, [of strangers] sighing forth a piteous cry, and shedding a piteous tear. And now indeed forgetfulness of these matters [comes upon] me, but now I mourn my brother dead in Argos, whom I left yet an infant at the breast, yet young, yet a germ in his mother's arms and on her bosom, Orestes [the future] holder of the sceptre in Argos.

CHOR. But hither comes a herdsman, leaving the sea-coast, about to tell thee some new thing.

HERDSMAN. Daughter of Agamemnon and child of Clytæmnestra, hear thou from me a new announcement.

IPH. And what is there astonishing in the present report?

HERDS. Two youths are come into this land, to the dark-blue Symplegades, fleeing into a ship, a grateful sacrifice and offering to Diana. But you can not use too much haste in making ready the lustral waters and the consecrations.

IPH. Of what country? of what land do the strangers bear the name?

HERDS. Greeks, this one thing I know, and nothing further.

IPH. Hast thou not heard the name of the strangers, so as to tell it?

HERDS. One of them was styled Pylades by the other.

IPH. But what was the name of the yoke-fellow of this stranger?

HERDS. No one knows this. For we heard it not.

IPH. But how saw ye them, and chanced to take them?

HERDS. Upon the furthest breakers of the inhospitable sea.

IPH. And what had herdsmen to do with the sea?

HERDS. We came to lave our steers in the dew of the sea.

IPH. Go back again to this point — how did ye catch them, and by what means, for I would fain know this? For they are come after a long season, nor has the altar of the Goddess yet been crimsoned with Grecian blood.

HERDS. After we woodland herdsmen had brought our cattle down to the sea that flows between the Symplegades, there is a certain hollow cave, broken by the frequent lashing of the waves, a retreat for those who hunt for the purple fish. Here some herdsman among us beheld two youths, and he retired back, piloting his step on tiptoe, and said: See ye not? these who sit here are some divine powers. And one of us, being religiously given, uplifted his hand, and addressed them, as he beheld: O son of Leucothea, guardian of ships, Palæmon our lord, be propitious to us, whether indeed ye be the twin sons of Jove (Castor and Pollux) who sit upon our shores, or the image of Nereus, who begot the noble chorus of the fifty Nereids. But another vain one, bold in his lawlessness, scoffed at these prayers, and said that they were shipwrecked seamen who sat upon the cleft through fear of the law, hearing that we here sacrifice strangers. And to most of us he seemed to speak well, and [we resolved] to hunt for the accustomed victims for the Goddess. But meanwhile one of the strangers leaving the rock, stood still, and shook his head up and down, and groaned, with his very fingers quaking, wandering with ravings, and shouts with voice like that of hunter, “Pylades, dost thou behold this? Dost not behold this snake

of Hades, how she would fain slay me, armed against me with horrid vipers? And she breathing from beneath her garments fire and slaughter, rows with her wings, bearing my mother in her arms, that she may cast upon me this rocky mass. Alas! she will slay me. Whither shall I fly?" And one beheld not the same form of countenance, but he uttered in turn the bellowings of calves and howls of dogs, which imitations [of wild beasts] they say the Furies utter. But we flinching, as though about to die, sat mute; and he drawing a sword with his hand, rushing among the calves, lion-like, strikes them on the flank with the steel, driving it into their sides, fancying that he was thus avenging himself on the Fury Goddesses, till that a gory foam was dashed up from the sea. Meanwhile, each one of us, as he beheld the herds being slain and ravaged, armed himself, and inflating the conch shells and assembling the inhabitants — for we thought that herdsmen were weak to fight against well-trained and youthful strangers. And a large number of us was assembled in a short time. But the stranger, released from the attack of madness, drops down, with his beard befouled with foam. But when we saw him fallen opportunely [for us,] each man did his part, with stones, with blows. But the other of the strangers wiped away the foam, and tended his mouth, and spread over him the well-woven texture of his garments, guarding well the coming wounds, and aiding his friend with tender offices. But when the stranger returning to his senses leaped up, he perceived that a hostile tempest and present calamity was close upon them, and he groaned aloud. But we ceased not hurling rocks, each standing in a different place. But then indeed we heard a dread exhortation, "Pylades, we shall die, but that we die most gloriously! Follow me, drawing thy sword in hand." But when we saw the twain swords of the enemy brandished, in flight we filled the woods about the crag. But if one fled, others pressing on pelted them; and if they drove these away, again the party who had just yielded aimed at them with rocks. But it was incredible, for out of innumerable hands no one succeeded in hitting these victims to the Goddess. And we with difficulty, I will not say overcome them by force, but taking them in a circle, beat their swords out of their hands with stones, and they dropped their knees to earth [overcome] with toil. And we brought them to the king of this land, but he, when he beheld them, sent them as quickly as possible to thee for lustral waters and sacrifice. But do thou, O virgin, wish that such strangers may be here as victims, and if thou slayest these strangers,

Hellas will atone for thy [intended] murder, paying the penalty of the sacrifice at Aulis.

CHOR. Thou hast told wondrous things concerning him who has appeared, whosoever he be that has come to the inhospitable sea from the Grecian earth.

IPH. Be it so. Do thou go and bring the strangers, but I will take care respecting the matters here. O hapless heart, that once wast mild and full of pity toward strangers, awarding the tear to those of thine own land, when thou didst receive Grecian men into thine hands. But now, because of the dreams by which I am driven wild, thinking that Orestes no longer beholds the sun, ye will find me ill disposed, whoever ye be that come. For this is true, I perceive it, my friends, for the unhappy who themselves fare ill have no good feelings toward those more fortunate. But neither has any wind sent by Jove ever come [hither,] nor ship, which could have brought hither Helen, who destroyed me, and Menelaus, in order that I might be avenged on them, placing an Aulis here to the account of the one there, where the sons of Danaus seized, and would have slain me like as a calf, and the father who begat me was the priest. Ah me! for I can not forget the ills of that time, how oft I stretched out my hands to his beard, and hanging on the knees of him who gave me life, spake words like these: "O father, basely am I, basely am I wedded at thine hands. But my mother, while thou art slaying me, and her Argive ladies are hymning my wedding with their nuptial songs, and all the house resounds with the flute, while I perish by thy hands. Hades in truth was Achilles, not the son of Peleus, whom thou didst name as my husband, and in the chariot didst pilot me by craft unto a bloody wedding." But I, casting mine eye through my slender woven veil, neither took up with mine hands my brother who is now dead, nor joined my lips to my sister's, through modesty, as departing to the home of Peleus; and many a salutation I deferred, as though about to come again to Argos. Oh wretched one, if thou hast died! from what glorious state, Orestes, and from how envied a sire's fortune art thou fallen! But I reproach the devices of the Goddess, who, if any one work the death of a man, or touch with hands a woman newly delivered, or a corpse, restrains him from her altars, as deeming him impure, but yet herself takes pleasure in man-slaying sacrifices. It can not be that the consort of Jove, Latona,

hath brought forth so much ignorance. I even disbelieve the banquets of Tantalus set before the Gods, [as that they] should be pleased with feeding on a boy. But I deem that those in this land, being themselves man-slayers, charge the Goddess with their own baseness, for I think not that any one of the Gods is bad.

CHOR. Ye dark blue, dark blue meetings of the sea, which Io, hurried along by the brize, once passed through to the Euxine wave, having changed the territory of Asia for Europe, — who were they who left fair-watered Eurotas, flourishing in reeds, or the sacred founts of Dirce, and came, and came to the inhospitable land, where the daughter of Jove bedews her altars and column-girt temples with human blood? Of a truth by the surge-dashing oars of fir, worked on both sides, they sailed in a nautical carriage o'er the ocean waves, striving in the emulation after loved wealth in their houses. For darling hope is in dangers insatiate among men, who bear off the weight of riches, wandering in vain speculation on the wave and o'er barbarian cities. But to some there is a mind immoderate after riches, to others they come unsought. How did they pass through the rocks that run together, the ne'er resting beaches of Phineus, [and] the marine shore, running o'er the surge of Amphitrite, — where the choruses of the fifty daughters of Nereus entwine in the dance, — [although] with breezes that fill the sails, the creaking rudders resting at the poop, with southern gales or the breezes of Zephyr, to the bird-haunted land, the white beach, the glorious race-course of Achilles, near the Euxine Sea. Would that, according to my mistress' prayers, Helen, the dear daughter of Leda, might sometime chance to come, quitting the city of Troy, that, having been drenched about the head with the blood-stained lustral dews, she might die by my mistress' hand, paying in turn an equal penalty [for her death.] Most joyfully then would we receive this news, if any one came sailing from the Grecian land, to make the toils of my hapless slavery to cease. And would that in my dreams I might tread in mine home and ancestral city, enjoying the hymns of delight, a joy shared with the prosperous. But hither they come, bound as to their two hands with chains, a new sacrifice for the Goddess. Be silent, my friends, for these first-fruits of the Greeks approach the temples, nor has the herdsman told a false tale. O reverend Goddess, if the city performs these things

agreeably to thee, receive the sacrifice which, not hallowed among the Greeks, the custom of this place presents as a public offering.

IPH. Be it so. I must first take care that the rites of the Goddess are as they should be. Let go the hands of the strangers, that being consecrated they may no longer be in bonds. And, going within the temple, make ready the things which are necessary and usual on these occasions. Alas! Who is the mother who once bore you? And who your father, and your sister, if there be any born? Of what a pair of youths deprived will she be brotherless! For all the dispensations of the Gods creep into obscurity, and no one [absent] knows misfortune, for fortune leads astray to what is hardly known. Whence come ye, O unhappy strangers? After how long a time have ye sailed to this land, and ye will be a long time from your home, ever among the shades!

OR. Why mournest thou thus, and teasest us concerning our future ills, whoever thou art, O lady? In naught do I deem him wise, who, when about to die, with bewailings seeks to overcome the fear of death, nor him who deplores death now near at hand, when he has no hope of safety, in that he joins two ills instead of one, both incurs the charge of folly, and dies none the less. But one must needs let fortune take its course. But mourn us not, for we know and are acquainted with the sacrificial rites of this place.

IPH. Which of ye twain here is named Pylades? This I would fain know first.

OR. This man, if indeed 'tis any pleasure for thee to know this.

IPH. Born citizen of what Grecian state?

OR. And what wouldst thou gain by knowing this, lady?

IPH. Are ye brothers from one mother?

OR. In friendship we are, but we are not related, lady.

IPH. But what name did the father who begot thee give to thee?

OR. In truth we might be styled the unhappy.

IPH. I ask not this. Leave this to fortune.

OR. Dying nameless, I should not be mocked.

IPH. Wherefore dost grudge this, and art thus proud?

OR. My body thou shalt sacrifice, not my name.

IPH. Nor wilt thou tell me which is thy city?

OR. No. For thou seekest a thing of no profit, seeing I am to die.

IPH. But what hinders thee from granting me this favor?

OR. I boast renowned Argos for my country.

IPH. In truth, by the Gods I ask thee, stranger, art thou thence born?

OR. From Mycenæ, that was once prosperous.

IPH. And hast thou set out a wanderer from thy country, or by what hap?

OR. I flee in a certain wise unwilling, willingly.

IPH. Wouldst thou tell me one thing that I wish?

OR. That something, forsooth, may be added to my misfortune.

IPH. And truly thou hast come desired by me, in coming from Argos.

OR. Not by myself, at all events; but if by thee, do thou enjoy it.

IPH. Perchance thou knowest Troy, the fame of which is every where.

OR. Ay, would that I never had, not even seeing it in a dream!

IPH. They say that it is now no more, and has fallen by the spear.

OR. And so it is, nor have you heard what is not the case.

IPH. And is Helen come back to the house of Menelaus?

OR. She is, ay, coming unluckily to one of mine.

IPH. And where is she? For she has incurred an old debt of evil with me also.

OR. She dwells in Sparta with her former consort.

IPH. O hateful pest among the Greeks, not to me only!

OR. I also have received some fruits of her nuptials.

IPH. And did the return of the Greeks take place, as is reported?

OR. How dost thou question me, embracing all matters at once!

IPH. For I wish to obtain this before that thou diest.

OR. Examine me, since thou hast this longing, and I will speak.

IPH. Has a certain seer named Calchas returned from Troy?

OR. He perished, as the story ran, at Mycenæ.

IPH. O revered Goddess, how well it is! And how fares the son of Laertes?

OR. He has not yet returned to his home, but he is alive, as report goes.

IPH. May he perish, never obtaining a return to his country!

OR. Invoke nothing — all his affairs are in a sickly state.

IPH. But is the son of Thetis, the daughter of Nereus, yet alive?

OR. He is not. In vain he held his wedding in Aulis.

IPH. A crafty [wedding] it was, as those who have suffered say.

OR. Who canst thou be? How well dost ken the affairs of Greece!

IPH. I am from thence. While yet a child I was undone.

OR. With reason thou desirest to know the affairs there, O lady.

IPH. But how [fares] the general, who they say is prosperous.

OR. Who? For he whom I know is not of the fortunate.

IPH. A certain king Agamemnon was called the son of Atreus.

OR. I know not — cease from these words, O lady.

IPH. Nay, by the Gods, but speak, that I may be rejoiced, O stranger.

OR. The wretched one is dead, and furthermore hath ruined one.

IPH. Is dead? By what mishap? O wretched me!

OR. But why dost mourn this? Was he a relation of thine?

IPH. I bemoan his former prosperity.

OR. [Ay, well mayest thou,] for he has fallen, slain shamefully by a woman.

IPH. O all grievous she that slew and he that fell!

OR. Cease now at least, nor question further.

IPH. Thus much at least, does the wife of the unhappy man live?

OR. She is no more. The son she brought forth, he slew her.

IPH. O house all troubled! with what intent, then?

OR. Taking satisfaction on her for the death of his father.

IPH. Alas! how well he executed an evil act of justice.

OR. But, though just, he hath not good fortune from the Gods.

IPH. But does Agamemnon leave any other child in his house?

OR. He has left a single virgin [daughter,] Electra.

IPH. What! Is there no report of his sacrificed daughter?

OR. None indeed, save that being dead she beholds not the light.

IPH. Hapless she, and the father who slew her!

OR. She perished, a thankless offering because of a bad woman.

IPH. But is the son of the deceased father at Argos?

OR. He, wretched man, is nowhere and every where.

IPH. Away, vain dreams, ye were then of naught!

OR. Nor are the Gods who are called wise any less false than winged dreams. There is much inconsistency both among the Gods and among mortals. But one thing alone is left, when a man not being foolish, persuaded by the words of seers, has perished, as he hath perished in man's knowledge.

CHOR. Alas! alas! But what of us and our fathers? Are they, or are they not in being, who can tell?

IPH. Hear me, for I am come to a certain discourse, meditating what is at once profitable for you and me. But that which is well is chiefly produced thus, when the same matter pleases all. Would ye be willing, if I were to save you, to go to Argos, and bear a message for me to my friends there, and carry a letter, which a certain captive wrote, pitying me, nor deeming my hand that of a murderess, but that he died through custom, as the Goddess sanctioned such things as just? For I had no one who would go and bear the news back to Argos, and who, being preserved, would send my letters to some one of my friends. But do thou, for thou art, as thou seemest, of no ignoble birth, and knowest Mycenæ and the persons I wish,

do thou, I say, be saved, receiving no dishonorable reward, your safety for the sake of trifling letters. But let this man, since the city compels it, be a sacrifice to the Goddess, apart from thee.

OR. Well hast thou spoken the rest, save one thing, O stranger lady, for 'tis a heavy weight upon me that this man should be slain. For I was steersman of the vessel to these ills, but he is a fellow-sailor because of mine own troubles. In no wise then is it right that I should do thee a favor to his destruction, and myself escape from ills. But let it be thus. Give him the letter, for he will send it to Argos, so as to be well for thee, but let him that will slay me. Base is the man, who, casting his friends into calamity, himself is saved. But this man is a friend, who I fain should see the light no less than myself.

IPH. O noblest spirit, how art thou sprung from some generous root, thou truly a friend to thy friends! Such might he be who is left of my brothers! For in good truth, strangers, I am not brotherless, save that I behold him not. But since thou willest thus, let us send this man bearing the letter, but thou wilt die, and some great desire of this chance to possess thee?

OR. But who will sacrifice me, and dare this dreadful deed?

IPH. I; for I have this sacrificial duty from the Goddess.

OR. Unenviable indeed. O damsel, and unblest.

IPH. But we lie under necessity, which one must beware.

OR. Thyself, a female, sacrificing males with the sword?

IPH. Not so; but I shall lave around thy head with the lustral stream.

OR. But who is the slayer, if I may ask this?

IPH. Within the house are they whose office is this.

OR. And what manner of tomb will receive me, when I die?

IPH. The holy flame within, and the dark chasm of the rock.

OR. Alas! Would that a sister's hand might lay me out.

IPH. A vain prayer hast thou uttered, whoever thou art, O stranger, for she dwells far from this barbarian land. Nevertheless, since thou art an Argive, I will not fail to do thee kindness in what is possible. For on thy tomb will I place much adornment, and with the tawny oil will I cause thy body to be soon consumed, and on thy pyre will I pour the flower-sucked riches of the swarthy bee. But I will go and fetch the letter from the shrines of the Goddess. But do thou not bear ill will against me. Guard them, ye servants, [but] without fetters. Perchance I shall send unexpected tidings to some one of my friends at Argos, whom I chiefly love, and the letter, telling to him that she lives whom he thinks dead, will announce a faithful pleasure.

CHOR. I deplore thee now destined to the gory streams of the lustral waters.

OR. 'Tis piteous, truly; but fare ye well, stranger ladies.

CHOR. But thee, (*to Pylades*) O youth, we honor for thy happy fortune, that at some time thou wilt return to thy country.

PYL. Not to be coveted by friends, when friends are to die.

CHOR. O mournful journeying! Alas! alas! thou art undone. Woe! woe! which is the [victim] to be? For still my mind resolves twain doubtful [ills,] whether with groans I shall bemoan thee (*to Orestes*) or thee (*to Pylades*) first.

OR. Pylades, hast thou, by the Gods, experienced the same feeling as myself?

PYL. I know not. Thou askest me unable to say.

OR. Who is this damsel? With what a Grecian spirit she asked us concerning the toils in Troy, and the return of the Greeks, and Calchas wise in augury, and about Achilles, and how she pitied wretched Agamemnon, and asked me of his wife and children. This stranger lady is some Greek by race; for otherwise she never would have been sending a

letter and making these inquiries, as sharing a common weal in the well-doing of Argos.

PYL. Thou hast outstripped me a little, but thou outstrippest me in saying the same things, save in one respect — for all, with whom there is any communication, know the fate of the king. But I was considering another subject.

OR. What? laying it down in common, you will better understand.

PYL. 'Tis base that I should behold the light, while you perish; and, having sailed with you, with you I must needs die also. For I shall incur the imputation of both cowardice and baseness in Argos and the Phocian land with its many dells, and I shall seem to the many, for the many are evil, to have arrived alone in safety to mine home, having deserted thee, or even to have murdered thee, taking advantage of the sickly state of thine house, and to have devised thy fate for the sake of reigning, in order that, forsooth, I might wed thy sister as an heiress. These things, then, I dread, and hold in shame, and it shall not be but I will breathe my last with thee, be slain, and have my body burned with thee, being a friend, and dreading reproach.

OR. Speak words of better omen. I must needs bear my troubles, but when I may [endure] one single trouble, I will not endure twain. For what thou callest bitter and reproachful, that is my portion, if I cause thee to be slain who hast shared my toils. For, as far as I am concerned, it stands not badly with me, faring as I fare at the hands of the Gods, to end my life. But thou art prosperous, and hast a home pure, not sickening, but I [have] one impious and unhappy. And living thou mayest raise children from my sister, whom I gave thee to have as a wife, and my name might exist, nor would my ancestral house be ever blotted out. But go, live, and dwell in my father's house; and when thou comest to Greece and chivalrous Argos, by thy right hand, I commit to thee this charge. Heap up a tomb, and place upon it remembrances of me, and let my sister offer tears and her shorn locks upon my sepulchre. And tell how I died by an Argive woman's hand, sacrificed as an offering by the altar's side. And do thou never desert my sister, seeing my father's connections and home bereaved. And fare thee well! for I have found thee best among my friends. Oh thou who hast been

my fellow-huntsman, my mate! Oh thou who hast borne the weight of many of my sorrows! But Phœbus, prophet though he be, has deceived me. For, artfully devising, he has driven me as far as possible from Greece, in shame of his former prophecies. To whom I, yielding up mine all, and obeying his words, having slain my mother, myself perish in turn.

PYL. Thou shalt have a tomb, and never will I, hapless one, betray thy sister's bed, since I shall hold thee more a friend dead than living. But the oracle of the God has never yet wronged thee, although thou art indeed on the very verge of death. But excessive mischance is very wont, is very wont to present changes, when the matter so falls.

OR. Be silent — the words of Phœbus avail me naught, for the lady is coming hither without the temple.

IPH. Depart ye, and go and make ready the things within for those who superintend the sacrifice. These, O stranger, are the many-folded inclosures of the letter, but hear thou what I further wish. No man is the same in trouble, and when he changes from fear into confidence. But I fear, lest he having got away from this land, will deem my letter of no account, who is about to bear this letter to Argos.

OR. What wouldst thou? Concerning what art thou disturbed?

IPH. Let him make me oath that he will ferry these writings to Argos, to those friends to whom I wish to send them.

OR. Wilt thou in turn make the same assertion to him?

IPH. That I will do, or will not do what thing? say.

OR. That you will release him from this barbarian land, not dying.

IPH. Thou sayest justly; for how could he bear the message?

OR. But will the ruler also grant this?

IPH. Yea. I will persuade him, and will myself embark him on the ship's hull.

OR. Swear, but do thou commence such oath as is holy.

IPH. Thou must say “I will give this [letter] to my friends.”

PYL. I will give this letter to thy friends.

IPH. And I will send thee safe beyond the Cyanean rocks.

PYL. Whom of the Gods dost thou call to witness of thine oath in these words?

IPH. Diana, in whose temple I hold office.

PYL. But I [call upon] the king of heaven, hallowed Jove.

IPH. But if, deserting thine oath, thou shouldst wrong me —

PYL. May I not return? But thou, if thou savest me not —

IPH. May I never living set footprint in Argos.

PYL. Hear now then a matter which we have passed by.

IPH. There will be opportunity hereafter, if matters stand aright.

PYL. Grant me this one exception. If the vessel suffer any harm, and the letter be lost in the storm, together with the goods, and I save my person only, that this mine oath be no longer valid.

IPH. Knowest thou what I will do? for the many things contained in the folds of the letter bear opportunity for many things. I will tell you in words all that you are to convey to my friends, for this plan is safe. If indeed thou preservest the letter, it will itself silently tell the things written, but if these letters be lost at sea, saving thy body, thou wilt preserve my message.

PYL. Thou hast spoken well on behalf of the Gods and of myself. But tell me to whom at Argos I must needs bear these epistles, and what hearing from thee, I must tell.

IPH. Bear word to Orestes, the son of Agamemnon, (*reading*) “she that was sacrificed at Aulis gives this commission, Iphigenia alive, but no longer alive as far as those in Argos are concerned.”

OR. But where is she? Does she come back again having died?

IPH. She, whom you see. Do not confuse me with speaking. (*Continues reading*) “Bear me to Argos, my brother, before I die, remove me from this barbarian land and the sacrifices of the Goddess, in which I have the office of slaying strangers.”

OR. Pylades, what shall I say? where shall we be found to be?

IPH. (*still reading*) “Or I will be a cause of curses upon thine house, Orestes,” (*with great stress upon the name and turning to Pylades,*) “that thou, twice hearing the name, mayest know it.”

PYL. O Gods!

IPH. Why callest thou upon the Gods in matters that are mine?

PYL. 'Tis nothing. Go on. I was wandering to another subject. Perchance, inquiring of thee, I shall arrive at things incredible.

IPH. (*continues reading*) “Say that the Goddess Diana saved me, giving in exchange for me a hind, which my father sacrificed, thinking that it was upon me that he laid the sharp sword, and she placed me to dwell in this land.” This is the burden of my message, these are the words written in my letter.

PYL. O thou who hast secured me in easy oaths, and hast sworn things fairest, I will not delay much time, but I will firmly accomplish the oath I have sworn. Behold, I bear and deliver to thee a letter, O Orestes, from this thy sister.

OR. I receive it. And letting go the opening of the letter, I will first seize a delight not in words (*attempts to embrace her*). O dearest sister mine, in

amazement, yet nevertheless embracing thee with a doubting arm, I go to a source of delight, hearing things marvelous to me.

CHOR. Stranger, thou dost not rightly pollute the servant of the Goddess, casting thine arm around her garments that should ne'er be touched.

OR. O fellow-sister born of one sire, Agamemnon, turn not from me, possessing a brother whom you never thought to possess.

IPH. I [possess] thee my brother? Wilt not cease speaking? Both Argos and Nauplia are frequented by him.

OR. Unhappy one! thy brother is not there.

IPH. But did the Lacedæmonian daughter of Tyndarus beget thee?

OR. Ay, to the grandson of Pelops, whence I am sprung.

IPH. What sayest thou? Hast thou any proof of this for me?

OR. I have. Ask something relative to my ancestral home.

IPH. Thou must needs then speak, and I learn.

OR. I will first speak from hearsay from Electra, this. Thou knowest the strife that took place between Atreus and Thyestes?

IPH. I have heard of it, when it was waged concerning the golden lamb.

OR. Dost thou then remember weaving [a representation of] this on the deftly-wrought web?

IPH. O dearest one. Thou art turning thy course near to my own thoughts.

OR. And [dost thou remember] a picture on the loom, the turning away of the sun?

IPH. I wove this image also in the fine-threaded web.

OR. And didst thou receive a bath from thy mother, sent to Aulis?

IPH. I know it: for the wedding, though good, did not take away my recollection.

OR. But what? [Dost thou remember] to have given thine hair to be carried to thy mother?

IPH. Ay, as a memorial for the tomb in place of my body.

OR. But the proofs which I have myself beheld, these will I tell, viz. the ancient spear of Pelops in my father's house, which brandishing in his hand, he [Pelops] won Hippodameia, having slain Ænomaus, which is hidden in thy virgin chamber.

IPH. O dearest one, no more, for thou art dearest. I hold thee, Orestes, one darling son far away from his father-land, from Argos, O thou dear one!

OR. And I [hold] thee that wast dead, as was supposed. But tears, yet tearless, and groans together mingled with joy, bedew thine eyelids, and mine in like manner.

IPH. This one, this, yet a babe I left, young in the arms of the nurse, ay, young in our house. O thou more fortunate than my words can tell, what shall I say? This matter has turned out beyond marvel or calculation.

OR. [Say this.] May we for the future be happy with each other!

IPH. I have experienced an unaccountable delight, dear companions, but I fear lest it flit from my hands, and escape toward the sky. O ye Cyclopean hearths, O Mycenæ, dear country mine. I am grateful to thee for my life, and grateful for my nurture, in that thou hast trained for me this brother light in my home.

OR. In our race we are fortunate, but as to calamities, O sister, our life is by nature unhappy.

IPH. But I wretched remember when my father with foolish spirit laid the sword upon my neck.

OR. Ah me! For I seem, not being present, to behold you there.

IPH. Without Hymen, O my brother, when I was being led to the fictitious nuptial bed of Achilles. But near the altar were tears and lamentations. Alas! alas, for the lustral waters there!

OR. I mourn aloud for the deed my father dared.

IPH. I obtained a fatherless, a fatherless lot. But one calamity follows upon another.

OR. [Ay,] if thou hadst lost thy brother, O hapless one, by the intervention of some demon.

IPH. O miserable for my dreadful daring! I have dared horrid, I have dared horrid things. Alas! my brother. But by a little hast thou escaped an unholy destruction, stricken by my hands. But what will be the end after this? What fortune will befall me? What retreat can I find for thee away from this city? can I send you out of the reach of slaughter to your country Argos, before that my sword enter on the contest concerning thy blood? This is thy business, O hapless soul, to discover, whether over the land, not in a ship, but by the gust of your feet thou wilt approach death, passing through barbarian hordes, and through ways not to be traversed? Or [wilt thou pass] through the Cyanean creek, a long journey in the flight of ships. Wretched, wretched one! Who then or God, or mortal, or [unexpected event,] having accomplished a way out of inextricable difficulties, will show forth to the sole twain Atrides a release from ills?

CHOR. Among marvels and things passing even fable are these things which I shall tell as having myself beheld, and not from hearsay.

PYL. It is meet indeed that friends coming into the presence of friends, Orestes, should embrace one another with their hands, but, having ceased from mournful matters, it behooves you also to betake you to those measures by which we, obtaining the glorious name of safety, may depart from this barbarian earth. For it is the part of wise men, not wandering from their present chance, when they have obtained an opportunity, to acquire further delights.

OR. Thou sayest well. But I think that fortune will take care of this with us. For if a man be zealous, it is likely that the divine power will have still greater power.

IPH. Do not restrain or hinder me from your words, not first to know what fortune of life Electra has obtained, for this were pleasant to me [to hear.]

OR. She is partner with this man, possessing a happy life.

IPH. And of what country is he, and son of what man born?

OR. Strophius the Phocian is styled his father.

IPH. And he is of the daughter of Atreus, a relative of mine?

OR. Ay, a cousin, my only certain friend.

IPH. Was he not in being, when my father sought to slay me?

OR. He was not, for Strophius was childless some time.

IPH. Hail! O thou spouse of my sister.

OR. Ay, and my preserver, not relation only.

IPH. But how didst thou dare the terrible deeds in respect to your mother?

OR. Let us be silent respecting my mother— 'twas in avenging my father.

IPH. And what was the reason for her slaying her husband?

OR. Let go the subject of my mother. Nor is it pleasant for you to hear.

IPH. I am silent. But Argos now looks up to thee.

OR. Menelaus rules: I am an exile from my country.

IPH. What, did our uncle abuse our house unprospering?

OR. Not so, but the fear of the Erinnyes drives me from my land.

IPH. For this then wert thou spoken of as being frantic even here on the shore.

OR. We were beheld not now for the first time in a hapless state.

IPH. I perceive. The Goddesses goaded thee on because of thy mother.

OR. Ay, so as to cast a bloody bit upon me.

IPH. For wherefore didst thou pilot thy foot to this land?

OR. I came, commanded by the oracles of Phœbus —

IPH. To do what thing? Is it one to be spoken of or kept in silence?

OR. I will tell you, but these are the beginning for me of many woes. After these evil things concerning my mother, on which I keep silence, had been wrought, I was driven an exile by the pursuits of the Erinnyes, when Loxias sent my foot to Athens, that I might render satisfaction to the deities that must not be named. For there is a holy council, that Jove once on a time instituted for Mars on account of some pollution of his hands. And coming thither, at first indeed no one of the strangers received me willingly, as being abhorred by the Gods, but they who had respect to me, afforded me a stranger's meal at a separate table, being under the same house roof, and silently devised in respect to me, unaddressed by them, how I might be separated from their banquet and cup, and, having filled up a share of wine in a separate vessel, equal for all, they enjoyed themselves. And I did not think fit to rebuke my guests, but I grieved in silence, and did not seem to perceive [their conduct,] deeply groaning, because I was my mother's slayer. But I hear that my misfortunes have been made a festival at Athens, and that this custom still remains, that the people of Pallas honor the Libation Vessel. But when I came to the hill of Mars, and stood in judgment, I indeed occupying one seat, but the eldest of the Erinnyes the other, having spoken and heard respecting my mother's death, Phœbus saved me by bearing witness, but Pallas counted out for me the equal votes with her hand, and I came off victor in the bloody trial. As

many then as sat [in judgment,] persuaded by the sentence, determined to hold their dwelling near the court itself. But as many of the Erinnyes as did not yield obedience to the sentence passed, continually kept driving me with unsettled wanderings, until I again returned to the holy ground of Phœbus, and lying stretched before the adyts, hungering for food, I swore that I would break from life by dying on the spot, unless Phœbus, who had undone, should preserve me. Upon this Phœbus, uttering a voice from the golden tripod, sent me hither to seize the heaven-sent image, and place it in the land of Athens. But that safety which he marked out for me do thou aid in. For if we can lay hold on the image of the Goddess, I both shall cease from my madness, and embarking thee in the bark of many oars, I shall settle thee again in Mycenæ. But, O beloved one, O sister mine, preserve my ancestral home, and preserve me, since all my state and that of the Pelopids is undone, unless we seize on the heavenly image of the Goddess.

CHOR. Some dreadful wrath of the Gods hath burst forth, and leads the seed of Tantalus through troubles.

IPH. I entertained the desire to reach Argos, and behold thee, my brother, even before thou camest. But I wish, as you do, both to save thee, and to restore again our sickening ancestral home from troubles, in no wise wrath with him who would have slain me. For I should both release my hand from thy slaughter, and preserve mine house. But I fear how I shall be able to escape the notice of the Goddess and the king, when he shall find the stone pedestal bared of the image. And how shall I escape death? What account can I give? But if indeed these matters can be effected at once, and thou wilt bear away the image, and lead me in the fair-pooped ship, the risk will be a glorious one. But separated from this I perish, but you, arranging your own affairs, would obtain a prosperous return. Yet in no wise will I fly, not even if I needs must perish, having preserved thee. In no wise, I say; for a man who dies from among his household is regretted, but a woman is of little account.

OR. I would not be the murderer both of thee and of my mother. Her blood is enough, and being of the same mind with you, [with you] I should wish, living or dying, to obtain an equal lot. †But I will lead thee, even though I

myself fall here, to my house, or, remaining with thee, will die.† But hear my opinion. If this had been disagreeable to Diana, how would Loxias have answered, that I should remove the image of the Goddess to the city of Pallas, and behold thy face? For, putting all these matters together, I hope to obtain a return.

IPH. How then can it happen that neither you die, and that we obtain what we wish? For it is in this respect that our journey homeward is at fault, but the will is not wanting.

OR. Could we possibly destroy the tyrant?

IPH. Thou tellest a fearful thing, for strangers to slay their receivers.

OR. But if it will preserve thee and me, one must run the risk.

IPH. I could not — yet I approve your zeal.

OR. But what if you were secretly to hide me in this temple?

IPH. In order, forsooth, that, taking advantage of darkness, we might be saved?

OR. For night is the time for thieves, the light for truth.

IPH. But within are the sacred keepers, whom we can not escape.

OR. Alas! we are undone. How can we then be saved?

IPH. I seem to have a certain new device.

OR. Of what kind? Make me a sharer in your opinion, that I also may learn.

IPH. I will make use of thy ravings as a contrivance.

OR. Ay, cunning are women to find out tricks.

IPH. I will say that thou, being slayer of thy mother, art come from Argos.

OR. Make use of my troubles, if you can turn them to account.

IPH. I will say that it is not lawful to sacrifice thee to the Goddess.

OR. Having what pretext? For I partly suspect.

IPH. As not being pure, but I will [say that I will] give what is holy to sacrifice.

OR. How then the more will the image of the Goddess be obtained?

IPH. I [will say that I] will purify thee in the fountains of the sea.

OR. The statue, in quest of which, we have sailed, is still in the temple.

IPH. And I will say that I must wash that too, as if you had laid hands on it.

OR. Where then is the damp breaker of the sea of which you speak?

IPH. Where thy ship rides at anchor with rope-bound chains.

OR. But wilt thou, or some one else, bear the image in their hands?

IPH. I, for it is lawful for me alone to touch it.

OR. But in what part of this contrivance will our friend Pylades be placed?

IPH. He will be said to bear the same pollution of hands as thyself.

OR. And wilt thou do this unknown to, or with the knowledge of the king?

IPH. Having persuaded him by words, for I could not escape notice.

OR. And truly the well-rowed ship is ready for sailing.

IPH. You must take care of the rest, that it be well.

OR. There lacks but one thing, namely, that these women who are present preserve our secret. But do thou beseech them, and find words that will persuade. A woman in truth has power to move pity. But all the rest will perchance fall out well.

IPH. O dearest women, I look to you, and my affairs rest in you, as to whether they turn out well, or be of naught, and I be deprived of my country, my dear brother, and dearest sister. And let this first be the commencement of my words. We are women, a race well inclined to one another, and most safe in keeping secret matters of common interest. Do ye keep silence for us, and labor out our escape. Honorable is it for the man who possesses a faithful tongue. But behold how one fortune holds the three most dear, either a return to our father-land, or to die. But, being preserved, that thou also mayest share my fortune, I will restore thee safe to Greece. But, by thy right hand, thee, and thee [*addressing the women of the chorus in succession*] I beseech, and thee by thy beloved cheek, and thy knees, and those most dear at home, mother, and father, and children, to whom there are such. What say ye? Who of you will, or will not [*speak!*] these things. For if ye assent not to my words, I am undone, and my wretched sister.

CHOR. Be of good cheer, dear mistress, and think only of being saved, since on my part all shall be kept secret, the mighty Jove be witness! in the things thou enjoimest.

IPH. May your words profit ye, and may ye be blest. 'Tis thy part now, and thine [*to the different women*] to enter the house, as the ruler of this land will straightway come, inquiring concerning the sacrifice of the strangers, whether it is over. O revered Goddess, who in the recesses of Aulis didst save me from the dire hand of a slaying father, now also save me and these, or the voice of Loxias will through thee be no longer truthful among mortals. But do thou with good will quit the barbarian land for Athens, for it becomes thee not to dwell here, when you can possess a blest city.

CHORUS. Thou bird, that by the rocky cliffs of the sea, halcyon, dost chant thy mournful elegy, a sound well understood by the skilled, namely, that thou art ever bemoaning thine husband in song, I, a wingless bird, compare my dirge with thine, longing for the assemblies of the Greeks,

longing for Lucina, who dwells along the Cynthian height, and near the palm with its luxuriant foliage, and the rich-springing laurel, and the holy shoot of the deep blue olive, the dear place of Latona's throes, and the lake that rolls its waters in a circle, where the melodious swan honors the muses. O ye many tricklings of tears which fell upon my cheeks, when, our towers being destroyed, I traveled in ships beneath the oars and the spears of the foes. And through a bartering of great price I came a journey to a barbarian land, where I serve the daughter of Agamemnon, the priestess of the Goddess, and the sheep-slaughtering altars, envying her who has all her life been unfortunate; for she bends not under necessity, who is familiar with it. Unhappiness is wont to change, but to fare ill after prosperity is a heavy life for mortals. And thee indeed, O mistress, an Argive ship of fifty oars will conduct home, and the wax-bound reed of mountain Pan with Syrinx tune cheer on the oarsmen, and prophet Phœbus, plying the tones of his seven-stringed lyre, with song will lead thee prosperously to the rich land of Athens. But leaving me here thou wilt travel by the dashing oars. And the halyards by the prow, will stretch forth the sails to the air, above the beak, the sheet lines of the swift-journeying ship. Would that I might pass through the glittering course, where the fair light of the sun wends its way, and over my own chamber might rest from rapidly moving the pinions on my shoulders. And would that I might stand in the dance, where also [I was wont to stand,] a virgin sprung from honorable nuptials, wreathing the dances of my companions at the foot of my dear mother, bounding to the rivalry of the graces, to the wealthy strife respecting [beauteous] hair, pouring my variously-painted garb and tresses around, I shadowed my cheeks.

[*Enter* THOAS.]

THOAS. Where is the Grecian woman who keeps the gate of this temple? Has she yet begun the sacrifice of the strangers, and are the bodies burning in the flame within the pure recesses?

CHOR. Here she is, O king, who will tell thee clearly all.

TH. Ah! Why art thou removing in your arms this image of the Goddess from its seat that may not be disturbed, O daughter of Agamemnon?

IPH. O king, rest there thy foot in the portico.

TH. But what new matter is in the house, Iphigenia?

IPH. I avert the ill — for holy do I utter this word.

TH. What new thing art thou prefacing? speak clearly.

IPH. O king, no pure offerings hast thou hunted out for me.

TH. What hath taught you this? or dost thou speak it as matter of opinion?

IPH. The image of the Goddess hath again turned away from her seat.

TH. Of its own accord, or did an earthquake turn it?

IPH. Of its own accord, and it closed its eyes.

TH. But what is the cause? is it pollution from the strangers?

IPH. That very thing, naught else, for they have done dreadful things.

TH. What, did they slay any of the barbarians upon the shore?

IPH. They came possessing the stain of domestic murder.

TH. What? for I am fallen into a longing to learn this.

IPH. They put an end to a mother's life by conspiring sword.

TH. Apollo! not even among barbarians would any one have dared this.

IPH. By persecutions they were driven out of all Greece.

TH. Is it then on their account that thou bearest the image without?

IPH. Ay, under the holy sky, that I may remove it from blood stains.

TH. But how didst thou discover the pollution of the strangers?

IPH. I examined them, when the image of the Goddess turned away.

TH. Greece hath trained thee up wise, in that thou well didst perceive this.

IPH. And now they have cast out a delightful bait for my mind.

TH. By telling thee any charming news of those at Argos?

IPH. That my only brother Orestes fares well.

TH. So that, forsooth, thou mightest preserve them because of their pleasant news!

IPH. And that my father lives and fares well.

TH. But thou hast with reason attended to the interest of the Goddess.

IPH. Ay, because hating all Greece that destroyed me.

TH. What then shall we do, say, concerning the two strangers?

IPH. We needs must respect the established law.

TH. Are not the lustral waters and thy sword already engaged?

IPH. First I would fain lave them in pure cleansings.

TH. In the fountains of waters, or in the dew of the sea?

IPH. The sea washes out all the ills of men.

TH. They would certainly fall in a more holy manner before the Goddess.

IPH. And my matters would be in a more fitting state.

TH. Does not the wave dash against the very temple?

IPH. There is need of solitude, for we have other things to do.

TH. Lead them whither thou wilt, I crave not to see things that may not be told.

IPH. The image of the Goddess also must be purified by me.

TH. If indeed the stain of the matricide hath fallen on it.

IPH. For otherwise I should not have removed it from its pedestal.

TH. Just piety and foresight! How reasonably doth all the city marvel at thee!

IPH. Knowest thou then what must be done for me?

TH. 'Tis thine to explain this.

IPH. Cast fetters upon the strangers.

TH. Whither could they escape from thee?

IPH. Greece knows nothing faithful.

TH. Go for the fetters, attendants.

IPH. Ay, and let them bring the strangers hither.

TH. This shall be.

IPH. Having enveloped their heads in robes.

TH. Against the scorching of the sun?

IPH. And send thou with me of thy followers —

TH. These shall accompany thee.

IPH. And send some one to signify to the city —

TH. What hap?

IPH. That all remain in their homes.

TH. Lest they encounter homicide?

IPH. For such things are unclean.

TH. Go thou, and order this.

IPH. That no one come into sight.

TH. Thou carest well for the city.

IPH. Ay, and more particularly friends must not be present.

TH. This you say in reference to me.

IPH. But do thou, abiding here before the temple of the Goddess —

TH. Do what?

IPH. Purify the house with a torch.

TH. That it may be pure when thou comest back to it?

IPH. But when the strangers come out,

TH. What must I do?

IPH. Place your garment before your eyes.

TH. Lest I contract contagion?

IPH. But if I seem to tarry very long,

TH. What limit of this shall I have?

IPH. Wonder at nothing.

TH. Do thou rightly the business of the Goddess at thy leisure.

IPH. And may this purification turn out as I wish!

TH. I join in your prayer.

IPH. I now see these strangers coming out of the house, and the adornments of the Goddess, and the young lambs, in order that I may wash out foul slaughter by slaughter, and the shining light of lamps, and the other things, as many as I ordered as purifications for the strangers and the Goddess. But I proclaim to the strangers to get out of the way of this pollution, if any gate-keeper of the temples keeps pure hands for the Gods, or is about to join in nuptial alliance, or is pregnant, flee, get out of the way, lest this pollution fall on any. O thou queen, virgin daughter of Jove and Latona, if I wash away the blood-pollution from these men, and sacrifice where 'tis fitting, thou wilt occupy a pure house, and we shall be prosperous. But although I do not speak of the rest, I nevertheless signify my meaning to the Gods who know most things, and to thee, O Goddess.

CHORUS. Of noble birth is the offspring of Latona, whom once on a time in the fruitful valleys of Delos, Phœbus with his golden locks, skilled on the lyre, (and she who rejoices in skill of the bow,) his mother bore while yet an infant from the sea-side rock, leaving the renowned place of her delivery, destitute of waters, the Parnassian height haunted by Bacchus, where the ruddy-visaged serpent, with spotted back, † brazen † beneath the shady laurel with its rich foliage, an enormous prodigy of the earth, guarded the subterranean oracle. Him thou, O Phœbus, while yet an infant, while yet leaping in thy dear mother's arms, didst slay, and entered upon thy divine oracles, and thou sittest on the golden tripod, on the throne that is ever true, distributing to mortals prophecies from the divine adyts beneath the Castalian streams, dwelling hard by, occupying a dwelling in the middle of the earth. But when, having gone against Themis, daughter of earth, he expelled her from the divine oracles, earth begot dark phantoms of dreams, which to many mortals explain what first, what afterward, what in future will happen, during their sleep in the couches of the dusky earth. But † the earth † deprived Phœbus of the honor of prophecies, through anger on her daughter's account, and the swift-footed king, hastening to Olympus, stretched forth his little hand to the throne of Jove. [beseeching him] to take away the earth-born wrath of the Goddess,

† and the nightly responses. † But he laughed, because his son had come quickly to him, wishing to obtain the wealthy office, and he shook his hair, and put an end to the nightly dreams, and took away nightly divination from mortals, and again conferred the honor on Loxias, and confidence to mortals from the songs of oracles [proclaimed] on this throne, thronged to by many strangers.

[*Enter A MESSENGER.*]

MESS. O ye guardians of the temple and presidents of the altars, where in this land has king Thoas gone? Do ye, opening the well-fastened gates, call the ruler of this land outside the house.

CHOR. But what is it, if I may speak when I am not bidden?

MESS. The two youths have escaped, and are gone by the contrivances of Agamemnon's daughter, endeavoring to fly from this land, and taking the sacred image in the bosom of a Grecian ship.

CHOR. Thou tellest an incredible story, but the king of this country, whom you wish to see, is gone, having quitted the temple.

MESS. Whither? For he needs must know what has been done.

CHOR. We know not. But go thou and pursue him to wheresoever, having met with him, thou mayest recount this news.

MESS. See, how faithless is the female race! and ye are partners in what has been done.

CHOR. Art thou mad? What have we to do with the flight of the strangers? Will you not go as quickly as possible to the gates of the rulers?

MESS. Not at least before some distinct informer tell me this, whether the ruler of the land is within or not within. Ho there! Open the fastenings, I speak to those within, and tell the master that I am at the gates, bearing a weight of evil news.

THOAS. (*coming out*) Who makes this noise near the temple of the Goddess, hammering at the door, and sending fear within?

MESS. These women told me falsely, (and tried to drive me from the house,) that you were away, while you really were in the house.

TH. Expecting or hunting after what gain?

MESS. I will afterward tell of what concerns them, but hear the present, immediate matter. The virgin, she that presided over the altars here, Iphigenia, has gone out of the land with the strangers, having the sacred image of the Goddess; but the expiations were pretended.

TH. How sayest thou? possessed by what breath of calamity?

MESS. In order to preserve Orestes, for at this thou wilt marvel.

TH. What [Orestes]? Him, whom the daughter of Tyndarus bore?

MESS. Him whom she consecrated to the Goddess at these altars.

TH. Oh marvel! How can I rightly call thee by a greater name?

MESS. Do not turn thine attention to this, but listen to me; and having perceived and heard, clearly consider what pursuit will catch the strangers.

TH. Speak, for thou sayest well, for they do not flee by the way of the neighboring sea, so as to be able to escape my fleet.

MESS. When we came to the sea-shore, where the vessel of Orestes was anchored in secret, to us indeed, whom thou didst send with her, bearing fetters for the strangers, the daughter of Agamemnon made signs that we should get far out of the way, as she was about to offer the secret flame and expiation, for which she had come. But she, holding the fetters of the strangers in her hands, followed behind them. And these matters were suspicious, but they satisfied your attendants, O king. But at length, in order forsooth that she might seem to us to be doing something, she screamed aloud, and chanted barbarian songs like a sorceress, as if washing out the stain of murder. But after we had remained sitting a long

time, it occurred to us whether the strangers set at liberty might not slay her, and take to flight. And through fear lest we might behold what was not fitting, we sat in silence, but at length the same words were in every body's mouth, that we should go to where they were, although not permitted. And upon this we behold the hull of the Grecian ship, [the rowing winged with well-fitted oars,] and fifty sailors holding their oars in the tholes, and the youths, freed from their fetters, standing [on the shore] astern of the ship. But some held in the prow with their oars, and others from the epotides let down the anchor, and others hastily applying the ladders, drew the stern-cables through their hands, and giving them to the sea, let them down to the strangers. But we unsparing [of the toil,] when we beheld the crafty stratagem, laid hold of the female stranger and of the cables, and tried to drag the rudders from the fair-prowed ship from the steerage-place. But words ensued: "On what plea do ye take to the sea, stealing from this land the images and priestess? Whose son art thou, who thyself, who art carrying this woman from the land?" But he replied, "Orestes, her brother, that you may know, the son of Agamemnon, I, having taken this my sister, whom I had lost from my house, am bearing her off." But naught the less we clung to the female stranger, and compelled them by force to follow us to thee, upon which arose sad smittings of the cheeks. For they had not arms in their hands, nor had we; but fists were sounding against fists, and the arms of both the youths at once were aimed against our sides and to the liver, so that we at once were exhausted and worn out in our limbs. But stamped with horrid marks we fled to a precipice, some having bloody wounds on the head, others in the eyes, and standing on the heights, we waged a safer warfare, and pelted stones. But archers, standing on the poop, hindered us with their darts, so that we returned back. And meanwhile — for a tremendous wave drove the ship against the land, and there was alarm [on board] lest she might dip her sheet-line — Orestes, taking his sister on his left shoulder, walked into the sea, and leaping upon the ladder, placed her within the well-banked ship, and also the image of the daughter of Jove, that fell from heaven. And from the middle of the ship a voice spake thus, "O mariners of the Grecian ship, seize on your oars, and make white the surge, for we have obtained the things on account of which we sailed o'er the Euxine within the Symplegades." But they shouting forth a pleasant cry, smote the brine. The ship, as long indeed as it was within the port, went on; but, passing the

outlet, meeting with a strong tide, it was driven back. For a terrible gale coming suddenly, drives [the bark winged with well-fitted oars] poop-wise, but they persevered, kicking against the wave, but an ebbing tide brought them again aground. But the daughter of Agamemnon stood up and prayed, "O daughter of Latona, bring me, thy priestess, safe into Greece from a barbarian land, and pardon the stealing away of me. Thou also, O Goddess, lovest thy brother, and think thou that I also love my kindred." But the sailors shouted a pæan in assent to the prayers of the girl, applying on a given signal the point of the shoulders, bared from their hands, to the oars. But more and more the vessel kept nearing the rocks, and one indeed leaped into the sea with his feet, and another fastened woven nooses. And I was immediately sent hither to thee, to tell thee, O king, what had happened there. But go, taking fetters and halters in your hands, for, unless the wave shall become tranquil, there is no hope of safety for the strangers. For the ruler of the sea, the revered Neptune, both favorably regards Troy, and is at enmity with the Pelopidæ. And he will now, as it seems, deliver up to thee and the citizens the son of Agamemnon, to take him into your hands, and his sister, who is detected ungratefully forgetting the Goddess in respect to the sacrifice at Aulis.

CHOR. O hapless Iphigenia, with thy brother wilt thou die, again coming into the hands of thy masters.

TH. O all ye citizens of this barbarian land, will ye not, casting bridles on your horses, run to the shore, and receive the casting on of the Grecian ship? But hastening, by the favor of the Goddess, will ye not hunt down the impious men, and some of you haul the swift barks down to the sea, that by sea, and by horse-coursings on the land seizing them, we may either hurl them down the broken rock, or impale their bodies upon stakes. But you women, the accomplices in these plots, I will punish hereafter, when I have leisure, but now, having such a present duty, we will not remain idle.

[MINERVA *appears.*]

MIN. Whither, whither sendest thou this troop to follow [the fugitives,] king Thoas? List to the words of me, Minerva. Cease pursuing, and stirring on the onset of your host. For by the destined oracles of Loxias Orestes

came hither, fleeing the wrath of the Erinnyes, and in order to conduct his sister's person to Argos, and to bear the sacred image into my land, by way of respite from his present troubles. Thus are our words for thee, but as to him, Orestes, whom you wish to slay, having caught him in a tempest at sea, Neptune has already, for my sake, rendered the surface of the sea waveless, piloting him along in the ship. But do thou, Orestes, learning my commands, (for thou hearest the voice of a Goddess, although not present,) go, taking the image and thy sister. And when thou art come to heaven-built Athens, there is a certain sacred district in the farthest bounds of Atthis, near the Carystian rock, which my people call Alœ — here, having built a temple, do thou enshrine the image named after the Tauric land and thy toils, which thou hast labored through, wandering over Greece, under the goad of the Erinnyes. But mortals hereafter shall celebrate her as the Tauric Goddess Diana. And do thou ordain this law, that, when the people celebrate a feast in grateful commemoration of thy release from slaughter, let them apply the sword to the neck of a man, and let blood flow on account of the holy Goddess, that she may have honor. But, O Iphigenia, thou must needs be guardian of the temple of this Goddess at the hallowed ascent of Brauron; where also thou shalt be buried at thy death, and they shall offer to you the honor of rich woven vestments, which women, dying in childbed, may leave in their houses. But I command thee to let these Grecian women depart from the land on account of their disinterested disposition, I, having saved thee also on a former occasion, by determining the equal votes in the Field of Mars, Orestes, and that, according to the same law, he should conquer, whoever receive equal suffrages. But, O son of Agamemnon, do thou remove thy sister from this land, nor be thou angered, Thoas.

TH. Queen Minerva, whosoever, on hearing the words of the Gods, is disobedient, thinks not wisely. But I will not be angry with Orestes, if he has carried away the image of the Goddess with him, nor with his sister. For what credit is there in contending with the potent Gods? Let them depart to thy land with the image of the Goddess, and let them prosperously enshrine the effigy. But I will also send these women to blest Greece, as thy mandate bids. And I will stop the spear which I raised against the strangers, and the oars of the ships, as this seems fit to thee, O Goddess.

MIN. I commend your words, for fate commands both thee and the Gods [themselves.] Go, ye breezes, conduct the vessel of Agamemnon's son to Athens. And I will journey with you, to guard the hallowed image of my sister.

CHOR. Go ye, happy because of your preserved fortune. But, O Athenian Pallas, hallowed among both immortals and mortals, we will do even as thou biddest. For I have received a very delightful and unhoped-for voice in my hearing. O thou all hallowed Victory, mayest thou possess my life, and cease not to crown it.