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AESCHYLUS

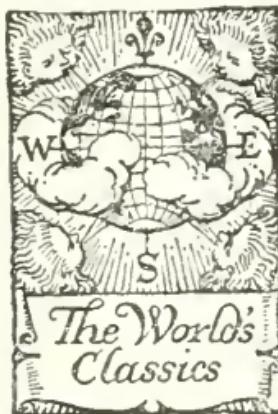
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AESCHYLUS  
THE SEVEN PLAYS IN  
ENGLISH VERSE

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AESCHYLUS

Born at Eleusis . . . . .	B.C. 525
Died at Gela, in Sicily . . . .	B.C. 456

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## TO MRS. FLEEMING JENKIN

DEAR MRS. JENKIN,

You saw the beginning of this work, and but for you, I doubt if it would ever have been begun. You have been kindly interested in its progress, and, in revising it, I have owed much to your friendly criticism. To whom, then, can it more fittingly be inscribed ?

I remain, ever yours sincerely.

LEWIS CAMPBELL.

'The harmonious mind  
Poured itself forth in all-prophetic song.'

SHELLEY, *Prom. Unbound*

'Hearted in each heart,  
Athenai, undisgraced as Pallas' self.'

R. BROWNING, *Aristoph. Apology.*

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## PREFACE

IN 1877 Professor Fleeming Jenkin and his amateur dramatic company had honoured me by producing in Edinburgh and afterwards in St. Andrews my translation of the *Trachinian Maidens* of Sophocles.

In 1897 they asked me to translate the *Choephoroe*. This play was pronounced unsuitable for a private stage. But in the Spring of the following year the *Agamemnon*, in a version which I had prepared, with some abridgement of the lyrical parts, was acted by them before select audiences in Edinburgh and in London. This version was revised and completed ; and, thus encouraged, I gradually finished the translation of the seven plays, which Messrs. Kegan Paul & Co. published in 1890. I have to thank that firm for their permission to republish in this cheaper form, although the larger edition is not yet exhausted.

In revising my work for the present issue I have altered some things in deference to recent critical studies, amongst which those of Professor Tucker and Dr. Walter Headlam deserve special mention.

The numbering of the lines for reference is taken from Mr. Arthur Sidgwick's Oxford edition of the text.



## PREFATORY NOTE TO THE EDITION OF 1890

TWICE within human memory have great poets been heartily satisfied with the time in which they lived. The love of Dante for Florence, or of Milton for the people of England, was associated with an ideal not yet realized, and, like Victor Hugo's proud affection for the city of Paris, was dashed with bitter experiences in the recent past. But of Spenser and Shakespeare in England, and of Aeschylus in Hellas, it may be said that, for them, the ideal and the actual were interfused. They imagined nothing better than that the glory of Athens or of the reign of Elizabeth might spread and continue. The exultation of Virgil and Horace in the rule of Augustus is less unmixed, and less intensely real. And the pride which Aeschylus took in the renown of Athens was associated with a profound religious feeling. The secret of her triumph was, as he regarded it, that principle of Right, which is the corner-stone of civilization, and alone makes national life worth living. And he found the sanction of that principle in the religion of Hellas, which he interpreted as an Eleusinian mystic, perhaps also an Orphic or Pythagorean theosophist, and certainly as an original thinker and prophet. His epitaph<sup>1</sup> shows that he was first a citizen and soldier, and then a poet, although he is not for that reason less a poet. His admirer, Aristophanes,<sup>2</sup> describes him as 'nourished in spirit by Demeter and her

<sup>1</sup> 'This monument in Gela's fruitful plain  
Doth Aeschylus, Euphorion's son, contain.  
Of Athens he ;—whose might the Mede will own,  
That met him on the field of Marathon.'

<sup>2</sup> Ar. *Frogs*, 884, 885.

mysteries.' What else he was, we have to gather from his plays.

As a minister of Dionysus in his great festival, at a time when Choerilus, Pratinas, and Phrynicus had already developed the art of Thespis into a lyrical drama, he came upon the scene with a strength of conviction only rivalled by the splendour of his imagination. His mind soared far beyond the reach of his contemporaries, but he more than satisfied them by the concrete form in which his thoughts were presented.

Imagination works by contrast, and to emphasize the fame of Athens the poet took his audience back into a time when the claim of the Suppliant for protection could still be matter for debate, while the marriage law was not yet fixed, or away to a region in which liberty was not yet born, nor the reign of law inaugurated, making them sympathize with the sorrow of the alien people whom they had conquered. Or, again, by holding up to them the patriotism of Eteoeles and the piety of Amphiaraus he took a more direct way of inspiring their zeal, at the same time reminding them, through the unnatural horrors of the house of Thebes, of the domestic sanctities that had been so violated in early days. Once more, as in the *Oresteia*, he exhibited a pageant of wild justice, ending with the triumph of equity; or, as in the *Prometheus* trilogy, he sought to raise his audience to a height from which they might contemplate Deity in the making. But over all there reigned one thought, one image, one dominant idea: the idea of righteousness, as the goal towards which all human actions are inevitably drawn or driven: the resultant of all forces, whether consentaneous or opposed; the rewarder, the punisher, the final reconciler. Meanwhile, tragedy proper was being created--only once again to be renewed in equal strength when Shakespeare wrote his *Hamlet*, *Lear*, *Othello*, and *Macbeth*. The growth of this young giant goes on apace from the *Persae* to the *Septem*, from the *Septem* to the *Agamemnon* and *Choephoroe*; in which last plays, as Fleeming Jenkin said with pardonable

exaggeration, ‘the real Greek drama’ for the first time appears.

‘In the scenes with Cassandra before the murder, and with Clytemnestra afterwards, the poet was swept away by his dramatic feelings, and in writing these scenes he invented the real Greek drama, not by plan aforeshortened, but by the inspiration of his subject. In form he adheres to an address from one actor to the Chorus, but the spirit is changed. The arrival of Agamemnon, the prophecy of Cassandra, the murder of the King, and the boast of Clytemnestra form a real dramatic representation of a fact happening then and there. The Chorus changed its character,<sup>1</sup> and the words assigned to it might have been spoken by a few persons on the stage. They became actors, whereas before they had been alternately singers of a sacred hymn and listeners to set speeches. The proposition that Aeschylus invented a new art while writing the *Agamemnon* is not a mere figure of speech. The *Choëphoroi*, which follows, is a complete drama from beginning to end. The Chorus takes part in the action throughout, and, when the stage was empty, recited only such short poems as might serve to divide acts. In its arrangement the *Choëphoroi* might have been planned by Sophocles! As usual, when we pass from one artistic form to that next evolved, something was gained, something lost. As a dramatic entertainment, far more was gained than lost; and if even now the *Agamemnon* and *Choëphoroi* were successively acted, the spectators would, we venture to say, prefer the later play. The long hymns of the *Agamemnon*, so beautiful to read, would be a trifle dull recited by bands of performers. The declamation of the single actor about the taking of Troy, or the shipwreck of Menelaus, magnificent poetry as it is, would be something

<sup>1</sup> This remark needs qualification. The part of the Chorus, like all else, is more dramatically handled; but the Chorus is not more, but, if anything, less prominent as a person of the drama than in the *Supplices* and *Persae*.

like a reading of Milton ; we should admire, but remain cold. The play would not begin till Agamemnon arrived, and it would be over by the time Clytemnestra had finished her great speech after Agamemnon's death. In the *Choëphoroi*, on the contrary, the interest is dramatic from first to last. The return of Orestes, the present woe of Electra, the recognition of the brother and sister, the invocation of Agamemnon, whose hidden shade listens to son and daughter, the meeting of Clytemnestra and her son, the death of Aegisthus, the pleading for life or death between mother and son, with the final frenzy of Orestes, form one unbroken chain of domestic scenes of the most perfect kind, ending in a climax far finer than that of the *Agamemnon*. Yet the translations of the *Agamemnon* outnumber those of the *Choëphoroi* perhaps by ten to one, precisely because the *Agamemnon* is as much a poem as a drama, while the *Choëphoroi* is above all a play.<sup>1</sup>

In what remains of this note I propose to touch briefly on Aeschylus' manner of conceiving and presenting (1) Mythology and Legend, (2) Crime and Retribution, (3) War, (4) the Popular Will (*vox populi*), (5) the Characters of Women, (6) the State of the Dead ; and to conclude with a few remarks on the seven extant tragedies.

1. *Mythology*.—Many students of Aeschylus have been struck with the boldness of his innovations in mythology. Herodotus observes (ii. 156) that Aeschylus *alone of poets* has made Artemis the daughter of Demeter ; and he accuses him of taking this from the Egyptians.<sup>2</sup> Nor is the poet consistent with himself. Themis in the *Prometheus* is the same with Earth ;<sup>3</sup> in the *Eumenides* she is Earth's daughter. These and similar facts are puzzling to those who have not realized the different parts borne by mythology and

<sup>1</sup> *Papers of Fleeming Jenkin*, vol. i. p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> i.e. Isis = Demeter, Bubastis = Artemis.

<sup>3</sup> Prometheus, as a Titan, was a son of Earth, but for symbolic purposes he must be son of Themis.

custom severally in Greek religious life. The same people who went mad about the mutilation of the Hermae could revel in such free handling of Divine persons as we find in the Old Comedy. The truth is, that while religious custom lay upon them with a weight almost as deep as life, the changing clouds of mythology rested lightly on their minds, and were in their very nature, to some extent, the sport of fancy and imagination. This gave a ‘liberty of prophesying,’ of which Aeschylus was not slow to avail himself. The mythopoetic instinct was still at work in him, and suggested to him imaginative modes of giving plastic shape to thoughts that lay deep within his mind, and were already ‘touched with emotion.’

*Legend.*—His treatment of legendary history is likewise free. In spite of Epic tradition, Mycenae and Sparta are expunged from the map of Hellas for the period of the Trojan War. Agamemnon and Menelaus are joint Kings of Argos. In the *Supplices* the poet carries us back to a still earlier time, when King Pelasgus ruled all the region southward from Epirus and Thrace, making Argos the centre of his government. Similarly in the *Niobe*, Tantalus described the limits of his Phrygian Kingdom.<sup>1</sup> Such instances afford strong illustration both of the unfixed condition of Greek heroic legend, and of the boldness of Aeschylus in his employment of it.

2. *Crime and Retribution.*—The plays of Aeschylus may well be left to read their own moral. Each drama presents a special aspect of the interplay of character and destiny. But in order to catch the peculiar ethical note in this great poet it is worth while to compare him for a moment with Herodotus. In the moral world which the historian loves to paint, not pride merely, but prosperity of itself insures a fall. The Xerxes of Herodotus works his own destruction, it is true; but he is brought to this by the irresistible leadings of a Divine power. ‘It was to be so’ ( $\epsilon\delta\epsilon\iota\omega\gamma\epsilon\nu\epsilon\sigma\theta\alpha\iota$ ); and when

<sup>1</sup> Fr. 158 (Nauck).

the good counsel of Artabanus had all but prevailed, the dream was sent by God to bring it to nought. The Xerxes of Aeschylus falls under the censure of Darius for his impious recklessness in listening to evil counsellors, which had hastened on the destruction which had been prophesied indeed, but might otherwise have been delayed. The poet here already diverges from the crude notion of Nemesis and Divine envy, from which he makes the Chorus of the *Agamemnon* explicitly dissent, contending that *sin* (*Agam.* 750, ff.), and not prosperity, is the prime cause of ruin. But when the ruin falls, it falls not on the individual alone. The solidarity of the family prevents that: and the consequence of one man's crime may be a curse that weighs upon a late posterity. Yet heroic character may be evinced even beneath the crushing burden of hereditary evil; and of this Orestes and Eteocles are examples. Orestes is saved so as by fire. For he acted under a Divine impulse, and his intention was just. Eteocles is carried down into the whirlpool of fraternal hatred, under the stress of his father's curse. Yet his nobleness is not effaced. For he has saved his country. Lastly, Aeschylus holds that Justice will triumph, but not necessarily now. Goodness shall be vindicated, but in the end of things.<sup>1</sup> The endurance of Prometheus is entirely noble. He suffers, but he will not repent. For the eye

<sup>1</sup> For a kindred thought, see Robert Browning's poems, especially the 'Reverie' in *Asolando*, concluding with the words:—

'I have faith such end shall be:  
From the first, Power was—I knew.  
Life has made clear to me  
That, strive but for closer view,  
Love were as plain to see.'

'When see? When there dawns a day,  
If not on the homely earth,  
Then yonder, worlds away,  
Where the strange and new have birth,  
And Power comes full in play.'

of Themis, his mother, Goddess of Right, beholds that he is suffering unjustly.

3. *War*.—The finest soldiers have always been most alive to the horrors of the battlefield, and Aeschylus is not an exception. Tolstoi's Prince André hardly goes beyond him in this. The descriptions in *War and Peace* are more extended, but not more vivid, than Clytemnestra's imagining of the state of things in Troy after its capture, or the Theban women's apprehension of what happens in the sacking of a town. And in more than one place our poet has anticipated the peculiarly modern feeling that great conquerors have much to answer for. Even in the day of victory it is not forgotten that the victor is 'a man of blood,' nor that king-made wars are oppressive to the people.

4. *Vox populi*.—And a people's curse is to be feared. Even King Pelasgus must consult his citizens, before committing himself to a righteous cause. He is less absolute than Theseus in Sophocles. To the astonishment of Atossa it is told that the Athenians have no master, and are all the better soldiers for it. Eteocles, who has no other fear, fears the censure of the citizens, if he should fail. The murmurs of the folk form one of the many elements of gloom in the *Agamemnon*. And the falling away of popular respect and awe from the royal house is one of the premonitions of the fate of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus. In Aeschylus there is still the glad consciousness of new-found freedom, at one with law; whereas in Sophocles we trace something of the reaction towards oligarchy from the abuse of liberty. A different, not an inconsistent, note is struck in the *Eumenides*, where it appears that the security of a people's sovereignty rests on the due observance of law and equity. And in the *Prometheus* yet a higher strain is heard,—that all power, apart from wise beneficence, must come to nought.

5. *Women*.—The genius of Aeschylus is essentially masculine, and the place of women in his world is subordinate. He regards them with the tenderness of a strong nature, but the tenderness of sympathy is tinged

with conscious superiority. The only strong woman in his extant plays is Clytemnestra, the murderer, whose death remains unavenged: for the character of his *Antigone* is undeveloped; and his *Electra* is pathetically feminine, and not like the Sophoclean heroine. The Trojan captives of the *Choëphoroe* are profoundly embittered, and their vindictiveness is intense. They can incite to violence:—but they do not act in their own persons. The Lemnian women, in one of the lost dramas, must have been likewise fierce. The Danaïdes, in the play called after them, must have proved capable of action in the last resort; but in the *Supplices* the same persons are full of trepidation, and wholly dependent on their father's counsel. The Chorus in the *Seren against Thebes* are also markedly feminine. Their flurry and feverish excitement form the dramatic contrast to the manly self-possession of Eteocles, who treats them sternly, yet now and then with gentleness. But of all dramatic contrasts, that of Cassandra at once to Clytemnestra and Agamemnon is the most affecting. The fierce determination of the vengeful Queen is set in the most lurid possible light by her innocent victim, the most pathetic figure on the Greek or any stage. Cassandra has often been misconceived. Because of her prophetic gift she has been mistaken, as she herself prophetically complains, for a bold ‘beggar priestess,’ ‘a forward babbler at the door’ (*Agam.* 1274, 1195). Because she foresees horrors, and quakes before them, she is imagined as a ranting fury. But the evil which she foretells falls with equal weight on Agamemnon and herself, and although one single allusion to the Avenger is wrung from her at last, the thought uppermost in the spectator's mind throughout has been, or should have been, ‘Oh, the pity of it!’ ‘The dainty princess, the wise prophetess, the beloved of deity, lost, ruined, fallen!’ As the Chorus observe, upon her exit, ‘This is more piteous than the ruin of pride.’ Io's retrospect of her misfortunes has a peculiar pathos, and the daughters of Oceanus, at once superhuman and compassionate, trembling with awe and dread, yet not to

be divided in extremity from the sublime sufferer, afford one more example of the range of the poet's imagination, and of the tenderness and depth of his conception of the 'Ewig-weibliche.' His treatment of women in the extant plays makes us regret the loss of his *Niobe* and his *Callisto*.<sup>1</sup>

6. *State of the Dead*.—Aeschylus' belief in a future state (if the expression may be allowed) suggests a condition less shadowy than that implied in the Homeric poems,—less real, but also less remote from the concerns of this life, than that set forth by Sophocles. The grave of Oedipus (in the *Oed. Col.*) was to have a magical power, and he looks forward with satisfaction to the blood of his enemies saturating his corpse. This notion, however, stands alone in Sophocles, and it is not so much a thought of the poet's own, as one of the data of the fable on which he drew. But Atossa in approaching the monument of Darius, Orestes and Electra at their father's tomb, have the firmest belief that when the libation has been poured, the spirit of the dead will be revived and hear. He is present there in a peculiar sense, returning to the spot of earth where the body has been laid. On the other hand, the Ghost of Clytemnestra in the *Eumenides* is only a shade, and Darius bids his ancient comrades make the most of life even amid sorrows, seeing that there is no gladness in the grave whither they must go. The state to which Antigone looks forward is different from this, more substantial, although perchance as ineffectual. She will be herself there, and will find her kindred—not their shadows only. The manner of speech is different, and conveys a different belief. Other touches here and there in Aeschylus seem to involve some communication between the dead and living: as when Clytemnestra

<sup>1</sup> See Matthew Arnold's *Dramatic and Later Poems* (*Merope*), pp. 98–100:—

‘But his mother, Callisto,

The guard-watched Bear.’

says that the spirits of the Trojan dead may ‘cross the homeward way’ for the victorious Greeks; or where the Danaïdes claim the help of Epaphus, though so far away.

7. *Humour*.—The broad humour which peers through the tragic business of the *Choëphoroë* in the speech of the Nurse must have been richly exemplified in Aeschylus’ Satyric dramas. Perhaps the most characteristic remnant of it is the fragment of the ‘Fire-kindling Prometheus,’ where the Satyr, in playing with the strange element, is in danger of burning off his beard. That something of the grand manner remained even here appears from the fragment where the sounds of the ‘bull-roarer,’ or some exercise of the human voice resembling them, are described:—‘Dread imitative bull-like bellowings.’ This may belong, as Hermann thought, to the tragic treatment of Bacchic rites in the *Lycurgeia*. But it affords a valuable indication of the spirit in which Aeschylus approached the essentially Dionysiac aspect of his art. Other rustic or quasi-comic touches are the figure of the Watchman in the *Agamemnon*, and that of the Herald in the *Suppliants*.

*The Plays*.—(1) ‘*The Suppliants*.’—There is no record of the first performance of the *Supplices*. It was probably the first drama of a trilogy, of which the second part was the *Aegyptians* (i.e. sons of Aegyptus) and the third the *Danaïdes*. A certain *naïveté* of presentation, and also the rudimentary character of the moral and religious elements, as well as the prevalence of lyric measures and the prominent part taken by the Chorus, justify us in regarding this as an early play. It is in fact rather a Cantata than a tragedy. The poet had not yet attained the depth and breadth and height of his art.

(2) ‘*Persae*.’—The *Persae* was first put on the stage in 472, seven years after Plataea. It stands alone amongst the extant tragedies in treating, not myth or legend, but solid history, and history which the dramatist himself had helped to make. But an ideal treat-

ment is secured by the imaginative reversal of the ordinary Hellenic point of view, the great struggle being represented, not as it affected Hellas, but as it must have reacted on the Persian Court. No Greek is mentioned by name throughout the play. The *Persae* was the central tragedy of three that were produced at the same time—the *Phineus*, *Persae*, and *Glaucus of Potniae*—together with the Satyric drama of *Prometheus with the Fire*, referred to above. There is no apparent connexion between the subjects, and it is not certain that there was any such organic connexion between the plays as in the case of the *Lycurgeia*, the *Oedipodeia*, and the *Oresteia*.

(3) ‘*Seven against Thebes*.’—The *Seven against Thebes* was long believed to be the second drama of three, as the conclusion points forward either to an *Antigone* or an *Epigoni*. It is now known to have been the third and concluding tragedy of the *Oedipodeia*, being preceded by a *Laius* and an *Oedipus*. This shows that Aeschylus did not yet round off his trilogies so completely as he has done in that which happily remains entire. It also proves that the ‘drama of reconciliation’ was not necessary to an Aeschylean trilogy.

(4, 5, 6) *The ‘Oresteia’*.—The *Oedipodeia* was performed in 467 B.C. Between this and the production of the *Agamemnon*, *Choëphoroe*, and *Eumenides*, there was an interval of nine years, which must have been well and fruitfully employed. For there is more of thought and power in these than in all the preceding plays.

(7) *The Promethean Trilogy*.—The precise date of the Promethean trilogy is unknown. But the structure and versification are not in the poet’s earlier manner. And in the allusion to the eruption of Aetna and some other minute points, critics have found traces of his visit to Sicily, which is said to have taken place between 472 and 468 B.C. *Prometheus* is put last, not as being necessarily later than the *Oresteia*, but as being *sui generis* amongst the extant dramas, belonging to the class of superhuman plays, which included also the

*Psychostasia*, and perhaps the *Niobe*, and to which the *Eumenides* is partially related.

For further remarks the reader is referred to the notes at the end of this volume, and to the short introductions prefixed to the several plays.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See also the Translator's Essay on *Tragic Drama* (Smith, Elder & Co.), and *A Guide to Greek Tragedy* (Rivingtons); also *Religion in Greek Literature* (Longmans).

# THE SUPPLIANTS

## PERSONS OF THE DRAMA

*Chorus of Danaïdes (Daughters of Danaüs).*  
DANAÜS.

PELASGUS, *the King.*  
*The Herald of the sons of Aegyptus.*  
*Attendant Maidens.*

SCENE—a sacred place between Argos and the sea.

TIME—prehistoric.

AESCHYLUS is fond of contemplating morality in the making. By throwing back imagination to a time when 'what is now Hellas was Pelasgia,' and Argos was the metropolis of a kingdom extending from Epirus to Cape Taenarum, he is able to represent the protection of the suppliant as a duty that was still open to debate, and also to recall an inchoate stage of the laws respecting marriage, and so to prepare for the interesting theme of the 'Danaïdes,' of which the only considerable fragment is part of the defence of Hypermnestra (or of Aphrodite on her behalf) for her 'splendid perfidy' in sparing her cousin-bridegroom, Lynceus, from assassination on the marriage night:—

'The holy Heaven longs for Earth's yielding breast,  
Earth inly yearns to feel the fond embrace,  
Heaven melting then descends in genial rain,  
Quickening Earth's womb, that bears, to bless mankind,  
Demeter's gifts, and yeanling flocks that graze.  
From that moist marriage-rite the woods put on  
Their pomp. The fault of Earth and Heaven is mine.'

The legend of Io, which forms the background of the story, connects the subject of this drama with that of the *Prometheus Bound*.

Danaüs and his daughters have just landed on the coast of Argolis. They are met by King Pelasgus, to whom the Danaïdes present their credentials of Argive descent, craving sanctuary from the violence of the sons of Aegyptus, who are seeking them in marriage. After some parleying, the king and his people undertake to give them refuge and protection. Then the sons of Aegyptus are seen approaching. They are preceded by a Herald who demands the persons of the maidens. He is repulsed, but threatens war, and the play ends doubtfully, one half of the Chorus, no doubt including Hypermnestra, appearing not altogether disinclined to yield to the inevitable seizure.

# THE SUPPLIANTS

## CHORUS.

LET the lord of suppliants smile  
On our ship-borne train, who come  
From the sand-heapt mouths of Nile,  
Wafted o'er the wide sea-foam !  
Exiles from the sacred land  
Bordering Syria's meads, we flee,  
Not for guilt of murder banned  
By a people's just decree,  
But because we durst not wed  
With Aegyptus' sons, our kin,  
Hating with a holy dread  
Thought of that enforcèd sin.  
Danaüs then, our prudent sire,  
Weighing all the desperate game,  
Taking part with our desire,  
Deemed it best, as least in blame,—  
Noblest in a choice of woe,—  
Launching forth in checkless flight,  
O'er the briny wave to go,  
Guarded by a father's right,  
Till we trode this Argive strand.  
Whence we trace our boasted line  
Through the touch of Zeus's hand  
And his gentle breath divine,  
Freeing Io from the pest  
Of the biting brize, that drove  
That poor heifer, robbed of rest,  
Over lands and seas to rave.  
Where then should we wanderers find  
For our need a soil more kind ?  
Whither else direct our way  
Armed with wreaths, the suppliant's stay ?

Land and city, stainless streams,  
 Gods that overlook this clime ;  
 Tombs that hide, withdrawn from dreams,  
 Honoured souls of eldest time ;  
 Zeus, great Saviour of pure homes,  
 Worshipped third when wine is poured,—  
 Kindly entrance 'neath yon domes  
 May ye one and all afford,  
 Breathing mercy from your land  
 On our female suppliant band.—  
 Ere our father's brother's race,  
 Forceng an abhorred embrace,  
 Make their own in our despite  
 Wedlock barred by Heaven and Right.  
 Ere their feet have touched your plain  
 Send them coursing o'er the main  
 Lashed with rainy winds, and driven  
 By hot thunderbolts from Heaven,  
 Till they founder 'mid the sweep  
 Of the wildly weltering deep.

Divine Protector, now beyond the sea, I 1  
 Son of the highest, the wandering heifer's child.—  
 For while she roamed, and cropped the flowery lea,  
 Zeus breathed on her, and, ever undefiled,  
 She felt the touch that filled her veins with thee,  
 And made her to be mother of us all ;  
 Epaphus, named of Fate, on thee we call !

Here, mindful of our ancient mother's woes, I 2

Amid these grassy fields, her pasturage,  
 Clear present proofs of birth we shall disclose ;

And all the past, a weird miraculous page,  
 Strange as the trouble whence our race arose,  
 Convincing even to doubters shall appear ;  
 Let but the people lend a patient ear.

Haply some bird-diviner in the vale II 1

Of Argolis, perceiving our sad plaint,  
 Shall think he hears the pity-moving wail  
 Of Tereus' wife, mourning without restraint,  
 The hawk-pursued, despairing nightingale.

She mourns the strangeness of an alien land, II 2  
 Of alien streams ; but more for that wild blow,  
 Unnaturally stricken, unkindly planned,  
 That gave her child his timeless overthrow  
 Felled by a cruel mother's wrathful hand.

I too, like her, in soft Ionian numbers, III 1  
 Indulging sorrow, tear this tender cheek  
 By Egypt's suns embrowned, and wake from slumbers  
 Of careless maidenhood a heart once weak—  
 Unexercised in pain. I cull from grief  
 Soul-moving strains, fear-smitten to the core  
 By mine own kin, and pleading for relief  
 In this my flight from yonder faint-blue shore.

Who cares for me ? Gods of our lineage proud, III 2  
 Listen with heed ; look on the righteous cause !  
 Yield not our flower to lordship unallowed ;  
 True to yourselves, uphold grave Hymen's laws,  
 And ban rude violence. Even in war  
 Afflicted wights find shelter and sure hold  
 Beside your altars—evermore a bar  
 To lawless force, by fear of Heaven controlled.

Let highest in mind be most in might. IV 1  
 The choice of Zeus what charm may bind ?  
 His thought, 'mid Fate's mysterious night,  
 A growing blaze against the wind  
 Prevails :—whate'er the nations say,  
 His purpose holds its darkling way.

What thing his nod hath ratified IV 2  
 Stands fast, and moves with firm sure tread,  
 Nor sways, nor swerves, nor starts aside.  
 A mazy thicket, hard to thread,  
 A labyrinth undiscovered still,  
 The far-drawn windings of his will.

Down from proud towers of hope V 1  
 He throws infatuate men.  
 Nor needs, to reach his boundless scope,  
 The undistressful pain

Of godlike effort; on his holy seat  
He thinks, and all is done, even as him seems most  
meet.

Let him behold and see

V 2

What crooked thoughts of crime  
That swarthy brood, flushed with desire of me,  
Plan in their youthful prime,—  
Stung with mad passions in resistless throng,  
And never, save through loss, to be convinced of  
wrong.

I all the while, lamenting this dire lot VI 1  
With cries and groans, and salt tears streaming hot,  
In sounds beseeming dirges for the dead,—

Ah well-a-day! the mourner's way,—  
Grace with this wail my living maidenhead.  
Dear land of hills, my voice, though alien grown,  
Implores thee with a still-remembered tone,  
While ruthless I destroy with many a rent  
This flaxen veil of Tyrian ornament.

If all end well, and death remain aloof. VI 2  
Full swiftly shall the gods have ample proof  
Of grateful hearts with offerings brimming o'er.

O troublous hour! O hidden power!  
This swelling wave upbears me—to what shore?  
Dear land of hills, my voice, though alien grown,  
Implores thee with a still-remembered tone,  
While ruthless I destroy with many a rent  
This flaxen veil of Tyrian ornament.

With harmless wafture of a temperate wind VII 1  
Broad blades of Nile-made bark, papyrus-lined,  
(Safe convoy o'er an untempestuous sea),  
Have brought us. Here, shaping the end, may He,  
The Father all-beholding, lend his grace,

That Io's high-born race,  
Saved from dishonouring her from whom they came,  
May 'scape the soilure of their virgin fame.—

And may his child, Artemis, ever kind,      VII 2  
 Look on us maidens with a maiden's mind.  
 Defending our unscathed integrity,  
 Pursuing our pursuing foes, may she  
 With darts o'erwhelm them from her holy place :  
 That Io's high-born race,  
 Saved from dishonouring her from whom they came,  
 May 'scape the soilure of their virgin fame.

Rather than marry with the men we fear,      VIII 1  
 This dark-hued countenance by Helios burned—  
 If Lords Olympian will not hear—  
 To lowlier Hades shall be turned.  
 To him through strang'ing will we go,  
 Boon welcomer of wearied souls below,  
 To him these sacred branches bear,  
 Him visit with importunate prayer,  
 Supreme o'er realms of night  
 As Zeus o'er realms of light.

Ah, Zeus ! heal Io's ban and bane !  
 Heaven's large benevolence and counsel sage  
 I find o'erborne by Hera's boisterous rage,—  
 Wind after storm, cloud following rain.

Zeus then (forbid it, Fate !) would be reviled      VIII 2  
 With blasphemy too hideous to be told,  
 How he hath scorned his heifer's child,  
 Begotten by himself of old,  
 His own son Epaphus, whose seed  
 Forsaking in their piteous need,  
 He turns his face from their despair  
 Nor heeds their unavailing prayer.—

Nay, bending from on high,  
 Hear thou our inmost sigh !

Ah, Zeus ! heal Io's ban and bane !  
 Heaven's large benevolence and counsel sage  
 I find o'erborne by Hera's boisterous rage,—  
 Wind after storm, cloud following rain.

## DANAÜS

DAN. Children, take heed—since with good heed ye  
are come,

Through me, that shaped this voyage, your aged sire ;  
Whose words, now that ye tread the solid ground,  
With no less caution grave within your souls.

Yon cloud of dust, a silent harbinger,  
Foretells a coming troop, whose grinding wheels,  
Whirled on strong axletrees, even now I hear.

And now I see with steeds and chariot-rims  
A shielded host, spearmen in proud array.  
Methinks the leaders of this land are come

To view us, moved by tidings they have heard :  
It may be, without harm ; it may be, whetted  
To savage ire they stir this army on.

In either case, O maidens, 'tis most meet  
Ye settle on this mound, and supplicate  
The people's gods that sit in conclave here :—  
The altar's refuge is a shield of proof,  
Mightier than fencèd wall.—With swiftest speed  
Run hither, and, in solemn wise, upholding  
With your left hands those white-wreathed suppliant  
boughs.

Wherein the God of mercy takes delight,  
Make seemly answer to the stranger men.  
Telling the motive of your innocent flight.  
With pity-moving, reverent, pleading words,  
Becoming such unlooked-for visitants.

Let all your accents without boldness fall.  
And from chaste brows and free, untroubled gaze,  
Let modesty bespeak your sober mind.

In speech be neither sudden nor too slow :  
Soon ruffled is the race that harbours here.  
As needy refugees, be it yours to yield.  
Boldness in speech never became the weak.

CHO. Thy prudent counsel meets our cautious mood,  
Dear sire ! And these thy precepts, fraught with care,  
Our memories shall watchfully preserve.  
Let Zeus, the parent of our race, behold !

DAN. Then haste, but firmly hold the wands ye bear.

CHO. Forthwith I would be seated at thy side.

CHO. Zeus, save thy suppliants, pity our distress !

DAN. Let him behold you with a gracious eye.

CHO. If he vouchsafe, the end shall yet be well

DAN. Now call on this his wingèd messenger.

CHO. We call upon the Sun's all-fostering ray.

DAN. And Phoebus, once a fugitive from heaven.

CHO. Holy Apollo, feel our lot like thine.

DAN. May he regard and zealously defend !

CHO. Whom else of this great conclave should I call ?

DAN. I see the trident here, a god's dread sign.

CHO. He sped us hither. May he welcome too !

DAN. And here is Hermes in his Grecian guise.

CHO. Herald of good ! May he proclaim us free.

DAN. Now worship at the shrines of all these lords

Conjointly, as ye crowd the sacred place

Whereto ye cling like flocking doves that fly

From hawks of kindred hue—O hateful kin,

That ruffles its own race ! Pollution deep

For bird to ravin on bird's flesh ! Pollution

Not less profound to force the unwilling bride

From her reluctant sire. Not even in death

Shall he who hath done it be assoiled there

Of wanton criminality. Men say,

Another Zeus beneath, among the dead,

Gives final judgement on all wrongful deeds.

Be circumspect, and order your reply,

So that your cause may win deserved success.

### *Enter KING PELASGUS.*

KING. What company peers now before mine ey~~e~~  
 With manifold Barbaric garments proud,  
 Ungreek in garb, uncouth ? Nor Argolis  
 Nor any Grecian land so robes its women.  
 I marvel how ye came thus fearlessly  
 Unheralded, unharbingered, unintended

By native guides. Yet duly ye have laid  
Your suppliant branches on the altar-steps  
Of all our people's gods assembled here.  
This point alone argues a Grecian strain.  
Much else one might conjecture, but fair speech  
In present conference should make all clear.

CHO. You note our raiment truly. But to whom  
Address we this diseourse, mere citizen,  
Or warden of some fane, or chief o' the state?

KING. When I have said, take heart, and answer me.  
Earth-born Palachthon was my sire; I am named  
Pelasgus, and bear rule o'er all this land.  
Whence, rightly named from me their sovereign,  
Pelasgian are they called who reap these fields.  
Of all the region Strymon's holy stream  
Divides, the westward portion owns my power.  
I reach to the Perrhaebians and the coasts  
Past Pindus, neighbouring the Paeonian tribe,  
And the Dodonian mountains. There the sea  
Sets her moist limit to my sway. I am lord  
Within those boundaries. But this fair plain  
Is Apian ground, so called in thankfulness  
To Apis, a renowned physician here,  
Who coming from Naupactus over sea,  
Apollo's child inspired with healing power,  
Cleansed all the land from man-destroying plagues  
Of monsters whom great Earth, infested sore  
With stains of ancient murder, gave to light,  
Children of wrath, a clustering serpent-brood.  
Release therefrom, through searching remedies,  
Apis effected for this Argive land,  
And won remembrance at each hour of prayer.  
Ye have my tokens: now declare your own;  
Tell forth your pedigree; unfold your ease.  
But know, this people loves not long diseourse.

CHO. Our tale is brief and clear. Of Argos we  
Claim lineage—the fair-childed heifer's seed.  
All this with proofs will I confirm for true.

KING. Unlikely to my hearing sounds your tale,  
O stranger maids, that Argive is your race.

More African than Grecian is your mien,  
 Nowise resembling women native here.  
 Old Nile might nourish such a waterplant.  
 The Cyprian likeness may be traced in you  
 Stamped by male artists on a female mould.  
 Or bare ye but the quiver, I might guess  
 Full well that ye were Amazons, who feed  
 On flesh and know not men ; or Indian women,  
 Of whom I hear as wandering far and wide  
 With pack-saddles on trotting dromedaries,  
 And dwelling near the Aethiopian folk.  
 Inform me, then, more perfectly, what way  
 Your seed and parent-stock from Argos came.

CHO. 'Tis said that in this Argive land erewhile  
 Io was doorkeeper of Hera's Fane.

KING. Certes she was ; strong Rumour makes us  
 know.

Is't said that Zeus to mortal maid came near ?

CHO. Yea, and that Hera knew, and would prevent.

KING. How ended such a high-enkindled feud ?

CHO. Your goddess turned the woman to a cow.

KING. But was the hornèd heifer safe from Zeus ?

CHO. He took the likeness of a leaping bull.

KING. What then contrived the mighty Queen of  
 Heaven ?

CHO. She set a sleepless watch, with myriad eyes.

KING. What all-seeing herdman of one heifer ? Say.

CHO. Argus, the child of Earth,—whom Hermes  
 slew.

KING. What framed she more for the poor cow's  
 annoy ?

CHO. A goading gad-fly, giving her no rest.

KING. 'Tis called the 'brize' by neighbours of the  
 Nile.

CHO. This drove her, banished, on a distant course.

KING. Your tale sorts fitly with the truths I know.

CHO. Canopus and then Memphis saw her come.

CHO. Zeus with a finger-touch begat a child.

KING. How then was named the heifer's birth divine ?

CHO. Named from the touch that gat him, Epaphus.

CHO. Lybia, who ruled a wide extent of earth.

KING. What other child of hers hast thou in mind ?

CHO. Bel, with two sons, sire of my father here.

KING. Of thrilling moment is this name. Declare it.

CHO. Danaüs, whose brother fifty sons begat.

KING. His name, too, let thy liberal words reveal.

CHO. Aegyptus. Now thou knowest my primal race.

Act therefore as toward Argive visitants.

KING. In truth ye seem to me to be of kin

Ancestrally to Argos. But what stroke

Of fortune made you leave your native home ?

CHO. Pelasgian lord, the troubles of mankind

Are manifold. Sorrow hath various hues.

Who could foretell this unexpected flight,—

That Argos' ancient kindred, a new care,

Should touch her strand, shrinking from hateful wed-lock ?

KING. Say, what imports your supplication here,  
With these fresh branches wreathed in whitest wool,  
Before the altars of our people's gods ?

CHO. Not to be subject to Aegyptus' race.

KING. As enemies, or in some infamous bond ?

CHO. An honourable bond to friends were good.

KING. By such means human strength is multiplied.

CHO. And severance of such bonds, if things go ill,  
Is easily accomplished without harm.

KING. How then may I maintain good faith with  
you

Before the gods ?

CHO. Give us not up again,  
Though they demand it, to Aegyptus' sons.

KING. A heavy task, to take new wars in hand !

CHO. Justice protects the champion of the weak.

KING. I had nought to do with these affairs at first.

CHO. Respect the stern o' the state thus garlanded.

KING. I see those steps o'ershadowed, and I fear.

CHO. 'Tis danger, when the Zeus of suppliants frowns.—

Child of Palaechthon hear ! Accord thine ear ! I I  
 See us thy suppliants wind our restless flight,  
 Like some poor heifer whom the wolves pursue  
 To inaccessible rocks, where, taking refuge,  
 With piteous lowings, trusting human aid,  
 She tells the herdman her sore trouble.

KING.

I see

With wonder your strange company, that shades  
 With boughs fresh-pulled these public altar-steps.  
 Would this affair might leave our common weal  
 Scathless, nor raise unlooked-for strife, unsought,  
 To Argos, that of strife hath little need !

CHO. Yea, scathless may our refuge prove ! Be-  
 hold it, I 2

Themis of suppliants, daughter of Him who guards  
 All true inheritance !—Old though thou art,  
 Let thy great mind learn from our youthful lips.  
 Be kind to suppliants and thou shalt not fall.  
 Heaven still regards the offerings of the just.

KING. Ye are not kneeling at my hearth. This  
 people

Shall see to it, should pollution touch the state,  
 To find due remedies. Promise from me  
 Ye cannot have, till all our citizens  
 Have heard your cause.

CHO. Thou art the city, thou II 1  
 The sovereign state, thy word without appeal.  
 The city's hearth is thine, her altars come  
 Beneath thy sway, thy mandate all supreme.  
 Thy sceptre ratifies each public act  
 Given from thy throne. Beware of sacrilege !

KING. May sacrilege attaint mine enemies.  
 I cannot help you without bringing bane.  
 Yet to reject your prayer were savagery.  
 Which answer should I hazard ? Ay or no ?  
 The issue is dark. I am distraught with fears.

CHO. Think of the eye that scans you from above. II 2  
 Yea, think of him who shields all wretched wights,  
 And, when their prayer is baffled, wreaks their wrong.  
 The wrath of Zeus, befriender of the oppressed,  
 Inexorably attends on their complaint.

KING. Aegyptus' sons perchance have rights in you  
 As your next kinsmen. Should they press that claim  
 Under your country's law, who could oppose ?  
 Needs must you plead some clear Aegyptian rule  
 That bars your persons from their government.

CHO. Heaven keep me from the hand of my male  
 kin ! III 1

Wherever Earth beholds the stars, I will fly  
 That hated wedlock. Choose the pious part,  
 And righteousness supreme shall fight for thee.

KING. Make not me chooser ; for the choice is  
 hard.

The state must share my counsel, as I said,  
 Though I be sovereign ; lest my people say,  
 Should aught untoward be sequel to this act,  
 'Honouring chance-comers, thou hast ruined Argos.'

CHO. Kinsman to both, determining the event, III 2  
 Zeus holds the scales, assigning rightfully  
 Guilt to the wicked, pureness to the just.  
 What after-trouble is thine, if thou deal justly ?

KING. Deep thought is needed for our safety  
 here,

A calm clear eye, serene and temperate,  
 That, like the diver, searches out the abyss,  
 To find an issue seathless for the state,  
 And rich with honour for ourselves,—that neither  
 Quarrel enforce captivity, nor we,  
 Yielding up you that sit as suppliants  
 Of these our gods, bring down to dwell with us  
 The grievous Power that visits all such wrong,  
 The fell Destroyer, who delivereth not  
 Even the dead in Hades. Said I well ?  
 Is there not need of soul-preserving thought ?

Cho. Take thought for piety, take thought for  
right; I 1

Befriend us with true care,  
Give not us over to despair,

Who, driven from far with rude enforcèd flight,  
Make to thy gods our prayer !

See me not dragged a captive from this seat, I 2  
Of deities manifold the worshipped shrine !

Let not the men prevail ! O absolute lord,  
Their insolence abhorred  
Discover and defeat.  
Beware of wrath divine.

Endure not thou to see thy suppliant led II 1  
From sanctuary along,  
(O deed of impious wrong !)

Held by the fine-woven harness of my head,  
With ruffian hands and strong !

Whichever cause thou favourest in thy choice, II 2  
Whate'er the act thou willest, there awaits  
Thy children and thy house like trial of war.

Such truth oracular  
Whispers the sovran voice  
Of Zeus, and the ancient Fates.

KING. I have now bethought me, and it comes to  
this—

The ship of reason to this strand is borne—  
A mighty war impends, inevitable,  
With these or those. The cable holds my bark  
To that firm mooring-place, and there she's fixed.  
No end is possible without distress.  
Yet far from equal are the issues here.  
For though a house be ravaged of its store,  
Till poverty and misery overflow,  
Zeus, lord of produce, may compensate all ;  
And though a tongue may shoot forth bolts undue,  
To stir men's spleen and gall their inmost soul,  
Yet words may salve the wound that words have made.  
But bloodshedding 'twixt kinsmen to prevent

Full many a victim slain in sacrifice  
To many gods were meet, to heal that harm.  
Religiously I must avoid such strife.  
Let me be skilless rather than prove wise  
For mischief ! May the event bely my dread !

CHO. Hear the conclusion of our patient plea.

KING. Speak on. Your words will not escape mine  
ear.

CHO. Our robes are girded with these twisted bands.

KING. Beseeching well your feminine estate.

CHO. A rich resource, be sure, is ours herein.

KING. What utterance now will pass thy lips ?  
Say on.

CHO. If to this troop thou promise not sure aid—

KING. What riddance will your girdles bring to  
pass ?

CHO. Strange offerings shall adorn this sanctuary.

KING. A riddling sentence ! Plainly speak your  
mind.

CHO. We will hang ourselves forthwith on these your  
gods.

KING. Ye cut my heart, as with a scourge.

CHO. Ay, now

Thou understandest my words ; I have made thee  
see.

KING. In vain I wrestle with this perilous case.  
'Tis troublous every way. The rising flood  
Of teeming sorrows rushes to o'erwhelm.  
I am plunged in seas of woe unfathomable,  
And find no harbourage, no further shore.  
If I shall fail to satisfy your need,  
Ye threaten me with horrors unsurpassed,  
Pollution irredeemable. But if  
Before our ramparts I stand forth and fight  
To the utterance with Aegyptus' sons, your kin,  
A dear expense, bitter to bear, were this,  
That men for women's sake should stain the ground  
Yet needs must I revere the wrath of Zeus  
The suppliant's God. 'Tis man's supremest fear.  
Thou, reverend sir, father of these pure maids,

Take in thine arms those wool-wreathed boughs, and  
lay them

Before another sanctuary, where all  
The dwellers in our city may behold  
These visible tokens of your sore distress,  
Lest my report of you should pass for nought.  
This people love to cavil at their king.

It may be, those who see your suppliant guise  
May feel compassion, and the folk at large  
Be touched with kindness for you. None so cold  
Whose heart inclines not to befriend the weak.

DAN. We have gained one point, much valued, to  
have found

In thee a patron so considerate.  
But send an escort of the natives here  
To point my way, and make mine errand known,  
That I may find the altars 'fore those fanes  
Where dwell your state's protecting deities,  
And through your streets may pass without annoy.  
Our garb is foreign here, and strange our mien.  
Nile fosters not like forms with Inachus.  
Take heed security breed not dismay.

Friend hath slain friend ere now, not knowing him.

KING (*to the attendants*). Go ye, for well the stranger  
speaks, and guide

His feet to our mid-city's altar-places,  
The dwellings of our gods. Nor, as ye go,  
Speak much to those ye meet, while ye conduct  
This mariner whom here we suppliant found.

[*Exit DANAÜS*

CHO. Our sire hath your commands. Then let him  
go.

What shall we do ? Where dost thou 'point us safety ?

KING. Leave there those tokens of your trouble  
past.

CHO. These boughs ? I obey thy gesture and thy  
words.

KING. Now turn thy steps along this level ground.

CHO. How should unhallowed ground protect my  
head ?

KING. Though your pursuer have wings, we will not yield you.

CHO. But if he have fangs sharper than serpents' teeth?

KING. Speak gently. No harsh word was spoken to thee.

CHO. Forgive the impatience of a heart that fears.

KING. A woman's fears are ever uncontrolled.

CHO. Thy words are comforting. So be thy deeds.

KING. Your father will not leave you long forlorn.

I go to assemble all this populace,  
And turn the public mind to a friendly mood;  
To instruct thy father, too, what things to say.  
Remain ye, therefore, and entreat with prayer  
This country's gods to grant you your desires:  
To compass which event I now depart.  
May smooth Persuasion and Success go with me!

[Exit]

### CHORUS.

O thou of blessed gods most blest, I 1  
Of dignities the topmost crest,  
Zeus, lord of lords, amidst thy glory, hear!  
Let that be done which calms our fear.  
Hate and avert the crime the men would do,  
And where those purpling waves appear,  
Whelm the accursed bark rowed by the swarthy crew.

Renew the tale of kindness past I 2  
And let the fond remembrance last.  
The women here are offspring of thy love,  
When touching Io from above  
Thou didst create our lineage with thy hand.  
May we from hence no more remove,—  
No longer aliens here, but inmates of the land.

Exiled from Egypt, I come back II 1  
To find the old familiar track.  
'Twas here the myriad-eyed one gazed  
On our poor mother while she grazed  
And cropped the flowery herbage sweet.  
'Twas hence with brize-bewildered feet

She passed through many a mortal race,  
Till, where the continents divide,  
She measured the foredestined space,  
And crossed the limit of the billowy tide.

Through Asia rushing, and through all  
Rude Phrygia's region pastoral,  
She passed the Mysian citadels  
Of Teuthras, and the Lydian dells,  
Cilician mounts, Pamphylian fields,  
Streams, whose perennial water yields  
Infinite wealth,—through all she fares,  
And through the land of countless gain,  
The land abounding with strange wares,  
The land of Aphrodite, rich in grain.

Till, 'neath the wingèd drover's goad III 1  
Traversing all that devious road,  
She reached the life-maintaining mead  
That southern snow-storms feed,  
Favoured of Zeus, where wandering all abroad,  
Nile's healthful waters banish every bane.  
Unto that mystic plain  
Comes Hera's bacchanal, brize-distraught,  
Transformed, dismantled, shamed, o'erwrought  
With weariness and still-returning pain.

The mortal inmates of that land III 2  
With heart appalled and visage wanned  
Were portent-stricken and sore amazed,  
As on that form they gazed,  
And now the maiden, now the heifer scanned,  
Strange bovine nature intermixed with human,  
Part cow, part tender woman.  
Who then might soften the wild distress  
Of Io's brize-driven wandering loneliness,  
Or make her tale of tribulation less ?

'Twas Zeus, the lord of inexhaustible years : IV 1  
He calmed her alien fears,  
And by a touch restored her injured mind.  
Rude violence, by harmless power confined,

Vexes no more ; the breath of god dispels  
 Her stony trance, and once again there wells  
 From honour's fount the tender grace of tears.  
 Of Zeus the genuine breed then came to Earth.  
 And heavenly was that unoffending birth  
 Of him whose line hath prospered brightly and  
 long,

IV 2

Till earth takes up the song,  
 ' Of Zeus the authentic race is here displayed,  
 The genial issue of the wandering maid.'  
 Who else could quell the overmastering league  
 Of troubles raised by Hera's wild intrigue ?  
 To whom save Zeus belongs undoing of wrong ?  
 The deed was his, and his, believe it well,  
 The race of Epaphus whereof we tell.

To whom then of the gods with holier right      V 1  
 Should I appeal to aid me with his might ?  
 With his own hand he planted erst the seed  
 Wherefrom we sprang ; author of every deed,  
 Eldest artificer, giving to wisdom speed.

Not hastening work beneath a master's eye,      V 2  
 As one who on a mightier doth rely,  
 Or lowly worshippeth a lordlier throne :  
 With Zeus alone, thought, word, and deed are one ;  
 Whate'er he wills, he say' th, and when he say' th, 'tis  
 done.

*Re-enter DANAÜS.*

DAN. Be of good eheer, my daughters. All is well.  
 This people's heart is sound. Their votes are given.

CHO. Hail, reverend sire ! Right welcome is thy  
 news—

But say, what bearing hath the full deerce,  
 Or in what sense those many hands were shown.

DAN. Unanimous was the Argive folk's resolve,  
 Reviving youth within mine aged frame.  
 The bright sky bristled with right hands in air,  
 From that great crowd, confirming this decree :  
 That we should share the freedom of their soil,

And none should seize or claim our persons here ;  
 No indweller, no stranger from afar,  
 Should take us captive ; and, if force were tried,  
 Whoever of these townsmen rushed not forth  
 To work our rescue, should be visited  
 With public outlawry, and banishment.  
 So mightily prevailed the royal word  
 Of King Pelasgus, pleading on our side.  
 And warning all his people, ne'er to raise  
 The wrath of Zeus, the suppliant's friend, to grow  
 And magnify hereafter, lest pollution  
 Twofold, involving home and foreign mischief,  
 Should foster here immedicable harm.  
 That heard, no summoner was needed there,  
 But the Argive host with one consent upheld  
 Their willing hands, voting that this should be.  
 And all the assembly of Pelasgian men  
 Gave heed to much persuasive argument  
 To the same end. Which Zeus hath ratified.

## CHORUS.

Bless we the Argives, and repay  
 Their blessings with a kindly lay.

Zeus of strangers, see it done !  
 Strangers, we implore thy throne :  
 Let the truth our lips proclaim  
 Swell the glory of thy name.

Hear the blessings now we pour  
 From the heart's abundant store  
 On your issue, gods of Greece !  
 Ares, from thy madness cease !  
 Make not this Pelasgian town,  
 Burned with fire, to crumble down !  
 Lover of the lyreless cry,  
 That in regions far and nigh  
 Mowest down the human grain  
 Dripping with the gory rain !  
 Spare the folk that showed us ruth,  
 Passing votes of mercy and truth,

Reverencing this piteous throng,  
Through the grace of Zeus made strong :

Siding not with man-made laws, I 2  
Scorning not the woman's cause,  
But regarding in their thought  
That which none may set at nought,  
Nor resist, and flee from bane.  
Who may stand the crushing strain  
Of pollution on his home  
Pressing with the weight of doom ?  
These revere the suppliant maids  
Whom the Lord of mercy aids ;  
They revere the strain divine  
Mingled with our ancient line.  
Pure, then, shall their altars prove,  
Pleasing to the gods above.

With these olive-boughs arrayed, II 1  
Sheltered 'neath their sacred shade,  
Peal we forth our heartfelt prayer,  
Thrilling through the liberal air.  
May no plague your people thin,  
Ne'er may faction from within  
Stain your streets with homebred strife ;  
Still be spared all youthful life ;  
Let not Ares cull your flower  
With his homicidal power,—  
Ares, unresisted rover,  
Aphrodite's restless lover.

Let old men and matrons bend II 2  
Where thrice-hallowed priests attend  
The altar, heaped with fragrant gifts,  
That clear flame to Heaven uplifts,—  
So be blest your aftertime,  
Honouring all the Powers sublime,  
Him in chief, whose hoary name  
Still protects the stranger's claim.  
Ever from each bounteous field  
Let boon Earth fresh tribute yeld ;

Artemis with genial love  
Watch your labouring wives above.

Plague that withers manly might      III 1  
Come not near, your town to affright,  
Making all your country rife  
With a worse than martial strife,  
Void of music, fraught with tears,  
Noisy with a nation's fears,  
Spreading misery and alarm ;—  
Fell diseases' dismal swarm  
Settle far from every head  
That is laid on Argive bed.  
Great Apollo look with ruth  
Upon all your tender youth !

Zeus at every season bless      III 2  
Your rich land with fruitfulness ;  
As they graze beside the stream  
May your flocks with eanlings teem ;  
Still may every worshipped Power  
Help you at the needful hour,—  
Most of all the heavenly Muse.  
Let your poets pay their dues  
At each shrine with songs of worth.  
Purely let the voice give forth  
Every reverence-breathing word,  
With the lyre in apt accord !

Let your rulers hold in awe      IV 1  
High degree and holy law,  
Swaying with far-sighted skill  
Toward wise aims the popular will.  
Ere they arm the war's array  
For the rash contentious fray,  
Let them fair proposals bring  
To remove the offence's sting,  
Healing what their foes resent,  
With unarmed arbitrament.

Let them honour, as of old,      IV 2  
All the Gods, your town that hold,

With processions laurelled bright,  
 And the oxen-slaughtering rite.  
 Glory to forefathers given  
 Keeps the great behest of Heaven.  
 Third on Justice' roll doth stand  
 That infallible command,—  
 Justice, highest name on earth,  
 Worshipped as of heavenly worth.

DAN. Dear daughters, I commend that pious hymn.  
 But hear, and start not, while your father tells  
 Unwelcome tidings, unforeseen and strange.  
 From this high platform where ye suppliant knelt  
 I see the ship. 'Tis theirs beyond a doubt,—  
 Hull, sails, and tackling unmistakable,  
 And prow with eyes that scour the forward way,  
 While she obeys too surely, being our foe,  
 The paddle at her stern direeting her.  
 And now the men on board are plain to see,  
 Dark limbs appearing out of garments white.  
 Nor less remarkably her convoy swarms  
 With smaller craft around her. She herself  
 Their leader, now approaching land, hath lowered  
 Her canvas, and all hands are at the oars.  
 In quietness, then, and modest confidence  
 Attend, and eling to these protectors here,  
 Till I bring human advocates to aid.  
 Some herald or commission may arrive  
 And claim your persons as of right. But fear not,  
 Let them not startle you. This shall not be.—  
 Yet lest our help should be delayed, 'tis well  
 Ye lose not hold of this Divine defenee.  
 Be not afraid. Contemners of the gods  
 Shall pay their quittance at the appointed hour.

CHO. Father, I quake with fear. The swift-winged  
 bark  
 Arrives. The time of respite runneth short.  
 I am terrified. What profits my rough flight—  
 My wildered course by sea and land? My sire,  
 I faint with dread.

DAN.                   The Argive men's resolve  
Was final. They will fight in your behalf.  
Fear not, my daughters, for I know that well.

CHO. Abandoned are Aegyptus' maniac brood,  
Insatiate still in war. Thou know'st 'tis true.  
In that firm-timbered black-eyed bark they come,  
Rowed by dark throngs of warriors and impelled  
With headlong rage.

DAN.                   But they shall find on shore  
Full many to resist, whose arms are tanned  
To tough consistence in the midday heat.

CHO. Nay, leave me not alone, I entreat thee,  
sire.

A woman by herself is nothing-worth,  
Strengthless for battle,—and the men that come  
Are savage-thoughted, crafty-skilled, impure  
And impious as the raven, that regards  
Nor hearth nor altar.

DAN.                   Then the gods abhor them  
No less than thou ;—that makes for us, my daughters.

CHO. No reverence for the blessed gods, no fear  
Even of yon trident, will deter them, father,  
Or make them hold their hands from seizing us.  
Madly intent are they with godless fury,  
Frenzied with insolence, ignoring Heaven,  
Like dogs for boldness.

DAN.                   But lean wolves, 'tis said,  
Are mightier. Wheat-flour beats papyrus-pith.

CHO. The wildest beast hath not such vehemence  
Of impious valour as those vain-proud men.  
Beware !

DAN. Not swiftly speeds the marshalling  
Of troops from shipboard. And ere that is tried,  
Behoves to moor, and bring away on shore  
The hawsers, for security. All this  
Takes time ; nor all at once are men assured  
Who tend a vessel by a foreign strand,  
That anchors will not drag, but safely hold,—  
Least when the shore they find is harbourless.  
And night-ward wends the westering sun. Dark night

Still genders pangs in the wise pilot's breast.  
 Their army cannot well even disembark  
 Until their ship, safe-moored, in comfort rides.  
 Fear, if ye must, but lean on heavenly succour.

till I  
 Succeed in bringing help. Though I be old,  
 No ineffective summoner this town  
 Shall find me. For discourse I am lusty and young.

[*Exit*

CHORUS.

Mother of mountains, Earth, divinely great,      I 1  
 Hath the Apian land a cave to cover me ?  
 Some dark recess, whereunto we may flee ?  
 Would I might change my state  
 To coal-black smoke, neighbouring the clouds on high,  
 Or spiring dust, that wingless I might fly,  
 Vanishing like an arrow in the sky,

And there might perish ! The men's passionate  
 mind      I 2

Advances unavoidably. We quail  
 At our sire's tidings :—our dark spirits fail !  
 Ah ! would that we might find  
 Some hanging noose to give us violent death  
 Ere tainted with contaminating breath !  
 Ere then, may Hades rule our spirits beneath !

O for a scat on some ethereal height.      II 1  
 Where snow congeals from clouds that wandering float,  
 Or some smooth erag, forsaken by the goat,  
 Lone-thoughted, overhanging, far from sight,  
 The vulture's perch, to witness my deep fall,  
 Escaping from this wedlock's hated thrall !

Dogs, and wild birds that wing the region there II 2  
 Might take us for their unresisting spoil ;  
 For death sets free from lamentable coil  
 Of cureless evils. Death prevents despair.  
 Death before marriage be my lot ! No road  
 Frees me, but one straight path, to Death's abode.

Then lift your wailing voices high,  
 And let your prayers assail the sky.  
 The power that brings my fated end  
 Alone can free me or befriend.  
 Great Father, let thy righteous glance  
 Visit the proudly armed advance  
 Of violence thou hatest sore.  
 View their unblest battalions o'er,  
 And have regard to us who pray  
 To thee, whose rule all lands obey.

O Zeus, the intolerable pride                    III 2  
 Of that male offspring wrest aside !  
 Aegyptus' sons, arrived from far,  
 Hound me with noise of wanton war.  
 With violent hands they seek to clutch,  
 And taint us with unnatural touch.  
 But over all our human ways  
 The beam of thy great balance sways.  
 What mortal business without thee  
 Attains assured finality ?

Ah ! ah !

The snatcher comes, the shipmate of the men.

He stalks along the strand  
 To take me from the land  
 Even as his lords have planned—  
 Kidnapping snatcher, thou shalt weary ere then !  
 Sa ! Sa ! Even so ! Again  
 I raise my doleful strain ;  
 Seeing the forceful prelude close at hand,  
 Commencement of their violence and my pain.  
 O wala wa !  
 Fly to the refuge, fly !  
 Their looks of barbarous pride  
 At sea were hard to abide :  
 They fright us now on shore.  
 Thy shelter we implore,  
 Lord of this sanctuary !

*Enter HERALD.*

HER. Hark to my warning, hark !  
 Betake you to the bark  
 With all your swiftest speed.  
 Else comes the ruthless deed,  
 Hair pulled out by the root,  
 Branding of hand and foot,  
 Much blood in slaughter shed  
 And severing of the head.  
 If curses aught ye heed,  
 Speed to the galley, speed !

CHO. O would that in the briny flood  
 Thou and thy lords of impious mood,  
 And that proud ship with timbers strong  
 Had foundered the mad waves among !

HER. Down to the vessel lies  
 Your pathway : then be wise—  
 Give heed to force, and leave  
 Rash counsels that deceive ;  
 Forsake those seats and come !  
 The bark shall bear you home.  
 This Heaven-observing town  
 Smiles, as we seize our own.

CHO. No ! Nevermore let me behold  
 Those fertile waters, loved of old.  
 That save the labour of the steer,  
 And nourish life, to mortals dear,  
 Through rich supply of genial food,  
 Filling their veins with bounding blood !

HER. Full powers to command you are mine.  
 From that pedestalled shrine  
 Come away ; ye shall soon be afloat.  
 Will you, nill you, embarked in my boat.  
 Each one I will forcibly halo  
 By the folds of her veil,  
 Evicted with violent hand  
 From your seats in this land.

I 1

I 2

CHO. O would that thou with thy design II 1  
 Might perish in the weltering brine,  
 All wildly by the wandering breeze  
 Wafted adrift o'er spacious seas,  
 To where the shoaling currents are  
 That chafe the Sarpedonian bar !

HER. Howl as thou wilt, and rend thy robes, and call  
 Thy gods to aid ! Thou shalt not overskip  
 The limiting bulwark of Aegyptus' bark.  
 Ay, howl and cry, out-wailing thy distress ;  
 Thou hast thy name conjoined with wretchedness.

CHO. Too loud thine insults, child of Nile, II 2  
 Swart monster, biped crocodile !  
 Yawning with terrors manifold,  
 With serried jaws agape and bold !  
 May He that reared thee turn aside  
 And bring to nought thy ruthless pride !

HER. Speed to yon twy-prowed bark, I bid you speed !  
 Else, if ye loiter, any one of you,  
 Reverence defied, I'll drag you by the hair.

CHO. Father, the help of sanctuary proves naught, III 1

Vain our fond trust ; he drags us all the same ;  
 That stalking spider, that dark hideous dream.  
 Woe is me ! O mother Earth, attend our cry ;  
 Bid back our fear ! Zeus, sire, Earth's son, O hear !

HER. I fear not any gods that hold this ground—  
 They nursed me not, nor led me on to age.

CHO. To grip me he assays, the two-legged serpent ! III 2

He holds me like an adder with sharp fangs.  
 Woe is me ! O mother Earth, attend our cry !  
 Bid back our fear ! Zeus, sire, Earth's son, O hear !

HER. Come to the ship, or else, in spite of pity,  
 Your broideries shall be rent. Come on ! Refuse not !

CHO. Lords of the land, I am overpowered. Come near !

HER. Lords of your life full many shall ye soon Behold, Aegyptus' sons. Not lordless ye !

CHO. We are undone, O king ! Our hopes are gone.

HER. I'll pluck you off by the long locks and drag you,

Since ye are dull in hearkening to my words.

*Re-enter KING PELASGUS.*

KING. Sirrah ! what dost thou ? What imports the pride

Thou show'st in scorning this Pelasgian land ?

Dost thou suppose we have nought but women here ?

Flout'st thou Hellenes with thy barbarous tongue ?

Much folly and no judgement, sure, is thine.

HER. Tell me wherein I have erred against the right ?

KING. Thou knowest not how a stranger should behave.

HER. A stranger, who hath found what he had lost ?

KING. To what power here didst thou prefer thy claim ?

H. To Hermes, mightiest patron of such quest.

KING. He is a god, and thou profanest the gods.

HER. Nile, and the gods of Nile, are those I worship.

KING. Thou set'st at nought the gods of Argos, then.

HER. If any rescue, well ! If not, I take them.

KING. Withdraw thy hand, else quickly shalt thou rue.

HER. Small courtesy lives in the words I hear.

KING. I yield not courteous terms to sacrilege.

HER. Aegyptus' sons shall learn it from my mouth.

KING. I take no charge of what they learn from thee.

HER. Yet let me know, that I may tell more clearly, As it beseems a herald should report

Each fact in full. What must I say ? By whom

Robbed of this band of female cousinship

Do I return ? 'Tis Ares will decide

This cause, not heard in court, nor shall a bribe

Take up the quarrel, but, or ere it close,  
Full many a warlike corpse shall stain the sod,  
And many a life be reft in agony.

KING. Why tell my name to thee ? Thyself in time,  
And those companions of thy voyage, shall learn it.  
These maidens, if with pious argument  
Thou gain'st their hearty kind consent, thou mayest  
Freely take with thee. Such was the decree  
Singly determined by the popular voice  
Of our whole city—nevermore to yield  
This female band to violent attempt.

That plank hath been nailed home, and will not start.  
Not graven on tablets was this law, nor sealed  
Within papyrus-rolls, but in plain speech  
Delivered to thee from a dauntless tongue.  
Hear it, and vanish quickly from our sight.

HER. In those few words thou hast proclaimed a war.  
May the men's cause prevail triumphantly !

KING. Men you shall find our land's inhabitants,  
And men that drink not wine from barley brewed.

[Exit HERALD

Ye, maidens, with your maiden escort, pass,  
And fear not, to our well-fenced citadel,  
Deeply ensconced in well-appointed walls.  
Wherein are many dwellings for my folk,  
And mine are large, built with no niggard hand.  
There you may find fair chambers, well prepared,  
To share with fellow-lodgers : or ye may,  
For this may seem more gracious, dwell apart,  
In single rooms. Cull therefore, at your choice,  
Whate'er is best, or most delights your souls.  
I and my citizens, whose voice herein  
This act hath ratified, protect you now.  
What more assured protection would ye crave ?

CHO. Peer of the gods, Pelasgian king,  
May thy good deeds blest fortune bring !  
Yet kindly hitherward convey  
Danaüs our sire, without dismay ;  
Since on his prudence we rely  
To appoint our dwelling, and espy

Where we may live with auspice good,  
Amidst a gentle neighbourhood.

May all be ordered for the best!

Slander soon strikes the far-come guest.

(*To the female attendants.*) Ye then, dear maids, in  
comely wise,

Shunning sharp tongues and curious eyes,  
Follow our steps in order due.

Taking the place appointed you  
By Danaüs, when for dower he gave  
Each daughter an attendant slave.

### *Enter DANAÜS*

DAN. Children, acknowledge your preservers here.  
Ye owe to the Argives, as to gods in heaven,  
Rich drink-offerings, and prayer and sacrifice ;  
Your saviours without controversy are they.  
With hearts incensed against the men, your kin,  
They heard me tell of their unkindliness,  
And granted me this escort of armed men  
For honour and defence, a priceless gift,  
Lest unawares I might be slain, and bring  
A long-abiding burden on their soil.  
Respect me then the more, since I have won  
This favour through persuasive friendliness.  
And take to heart one more admonishment  
And precept of your sire, that time may prove  
Their mind, whom yet this city doth not know.  
Against an alien every tongue is swift  
For mischief.—easy 'tis to blight with words.  
Take heed, then, how ye soil my new-found honours :  
Such beauty as yours provokes the gaze of men.  
Fruit tender-ripe is hard to keep in safety—  
Man covets it, how not ? and bird of the air ;  
And crawling creatures waste and ravage it.  
Cyparis proclaims the mellowing grape too soon,  
Bidding Love wait not, since the sap hath risen ;  
And on fair maidens, fresh and delicate,  
Each passer-by darts forth the searching shaft  
Of longing glances,—conquered by desire.

Let not this mar the plan for which we have toiled  
 So hard, and with our bark ploughed leagues of sea,  
 Nor let us reap disgrace, and please my foes.  
 For habitation, we have choice twofold—  
 Pelasgus' offer, and the citizens',  
 Exempt from charge. Take ye no thought for that,  
 But keep strict watch o'er this, your sire's behest,—  
 More than for life have care for modesty.

**LEADER OF CHO.** For other speed I trust the lords  
 of heaven.

But for our vintage, fear not, O my sire !  
 Unless the gods have some strange work on hand,  
 My heart shall hold its path unswervingly.

CHORUS.

Hail with blessings as ye move  
 All the gods this town who love !  
 Hail, great lords, that guard this land,  
 Ye that dwell along the strand  
 Erasinus from of old  
 With his stream divine doth hold.  
 Servant-maids, take up the strain ;  
 Praise no more the alluvial plain  
 Nourished by the mouths of Nile,  
 Where ye harboured otherwhile,  
 But Pelasgus' city bless  
 With bright hymns of thankfulness.

I 1

Praise the streams, who at their will  
 This fair land with plenty fill,  
 Making brilliant life abound  
 Over all the teeming ground.  
 Artemis, behold us now ;  
 Bend this way thy virgin brow ;  
 Have compassion on our band  
 Moving through the stranger land.  
 Let not forcèd wedlock come,  
 Cypris' unrelenting doom :  
 Hard were such a lot to bear !  
 Spare us, Cytherea, spare !

I 2

HALF-CH. Yet we scorn not Cypris' power, II 1  
 Glory waits her sanctioned hour;  
 Next to Zeus, with Hera, she  
 Owns divinest majesty,  
 Through her subtle wiles possessing  
 Dignity, with marriage-blessing.  
 Hope and longing wait upon her,  
 Soft desires and thoughts of honour,  
 And the god whom none deny,  
 Mild Persuasion's witchery.  
 Nor doth Cypris ere refuse  
 Praise to each harmonious muse;  
 Numbers that melodious move  
 Suit the whispering paths of Love.

HALF-CH. But my helpless exiled lot,  
 And the war that comes unsought.  
 Bid me shrink from Slander's breath,  
 And appalling sights of death.  
 Wherefore was their swift pursuing  
 Safely sped for mine undoing?

HALF-CH. What is fated, that shall be;  
 Zeus' inscrutable decree.  
 His vast mind's stupendous plan,  
 Ne'er shall be o'erpassed by man.  
 Even the end we deprecate,—  
 Should that marriage prove our fate,—  
 Often, since the world was human,  
 Hath o'er taken many a woman.

1ST HALF-CH. Zeus defend we should be wed III 1  
 To Aegyptus' hateful breed!

2ND HALF-CH. Happy 'twere to avoid that hour,  
 But can prayers entreat His power?

1ST HALF-CH. Nay, thou know'st not. We have  
 said.

2ND HALF-CH. Never could my feeble skill III 2  
 Sound the abysses of His will.  
 Boast not, then, beyond thy bound.

1ST HALF-CH. Give me counsel clear and sound.

2ND HALF-CH. Let the gods their plan fulfil.

1ST HALF-CH. Sovereign Zeus, prevent the stroke, IV 1  
Leave us not to bear that yoke,  
Married to the men we hate,—  
Thou that freed'st from her sad fate,  
When she suffered overmuch,  
'Io, with that healing touch.  
That with kindly force Divine,  
Founded our ancestral line.

2ND HALF-CH. To weak women lend thy might, IV 2  
Let decision crown the right.  
Not for happiness we pray,  
But redemption from dismay,—  
Least of threatening woes is still  
Better than the worst of ill.  
To the Gods we look for aid,  
Let us be no more afraid.



# THE PERSIANS

## PERSONS OF THE DRAMA

CHORUS of *Persian Elders.*

ATOSSA.

*Messenger.*

*Ghost of Darius.*

XERXES.

The SCENE is laid at Susa, before the palace of Xerxes.

TIME—after the battle of Salamis.

THE poet, in order to read the lesson of the Persian War, carries his Athenian audience into the heart of Persia, and bids them imagine the grief and consternation which must have reigned there after the destruction of the royal fleet. The play was produced in 472 B.C.

The Elders, the coevals of Darius, express anxiety for the fate of the great armament, whose splendour in going forth they describe.

Atossa, the widowed consort of Darius and mother of Xerxes, then enters, and confides to them the fears occasioned by her dream. They are trying to comfort her when the Messenger arrives, and at once reports the whole extent of the calamity. He gives a full and clear description of the battle and the retreat. Atossa is soul-striken, and the Elders mourn. But presently the Queen returns, and with offerings and incantations they raise the spirit of Darius. He reproves the rashness and impiety of Xerxes, and prophesies of the defeat at Plataea. Then he vanishes, and the Chorus celebrate the glories of his reign.

Xerxes now arrives, and the tragedy concludes with the mutual lamentations of the King and of his aged counsellors.

The lessons indirectly inculcated are the dangers of impiety and the blessings of constitutional freedom.

Aeschylus was himself at Salamis, according to Pausanias, and his brother Ameinias certainly took a prominent part in the engagement. The poet's account is therefore, in this instance, to be preferred to that of the historian Herodotus, which is difficult to reconcile with it at all points. See an essay on the subject by Professor Goodwin, published in the *Transactions of the Archaeological Institute of America*, vol. i. pp. 236-262.

# THE PERSIANS

## CHORUS.

WHEN the countless Persian host  
Left for Hellas' distant coast,  
We remained, a faithful band,  
Set to guard the sacred land.—  
Old, and therefore counted meet  
Watchmen of this ancient seat,  
To protect the hearths and homes  
Round the ancestral golden domes.  
Xerxes' self, Dareius' son,  
King and lord, chose forth each one.  
Now my prophet-mind within  
Darkly musing doth begin  
For our sovereign lord's return,  
With his gilded host, to yearn.  
All the youth of Asia born  
Long have left her weak and lorn.  
With a voice of piteous tone  
Cries she for her strong ones gone.  
Nor to this our citadel  
Runs or rides a man to tell  
Of the souls of priceless worth  
Who from Susa's walls went forth,  
And Ecbatana's proud hold  
And the Cissian fortress old,—  
Horsemen, shipmen, and the throng  
That on foot make armies strong :  
Haught Amistres' dignity,  
Artaphernes' chivalry,  
Megabates high in power,  
Bright Astaspes, Persia's flower.  
Kings that host were marshalling,  
Vassals of the mighty king,

Ordering troops in countless flow,—  
Masters of the twanging bow,  
Masters of the bounding steed,  
Dauntless hearts of glorious breed ;  
Dreadful in their bright array,  
Dreadful in the hurtling fray :  
Artembares of the ear,  
Stout Masistres, glad in war.  
Staunch Imaeus, archer good,  
There with Pharandaces stood,  
And Sosthanes, without peer  
As a lusty charioteer.  
Mighty Nile's life-gendering coast  
Furnished others for that host,—  
Susiscanes' self for one.  
And the Delta's true-born son  
Pegastágon ; then the power  
Of old Memphis' governour,  
Tall Arsames ; Ariomard,  
Holy Thebè's reverend guard :  
Myriad oarmen from the mere,  
Strong to row and skilled to steer.  
Then the Lydian multitude  
Who the seaboard towns subdued,  
And on all that clime doth give,  
Delicately nurtured, live.  
Joint eonmanders marshal these,  
Arcteus and Metrógäthes.  
Sardis from her stores of gold  
Sped those numbers manifold,  
Mounted men and chariots bright  
With their steeds, a perilous sight,  
Well appointed for the war,  
Four or six to every car.  
Sacred Tmolus' neighbouring folk  
Threaten Hellas with the yoke :  
Tharybis and Mardon lead,  
Anvils both, to endure at need.  
Mysian lancers next come on :  
Gold-renownèd Babylon

Marshals then her mingled train,  
 Shipmen from the Indian main,  
 And the dauntless tribes whose pride  
 On strong bows hath still relied.  
 Last, from every Asian land  
 Troop the dagger-bearing band,  
 With a dreadful summoning  
 Gathered by the mighty king.—  
 Persia's flower of youth is flown,  
 Asia mourns her nurslings gone,  
 Longing wives and parents dear  
 Count the lingering hours with fear.

Over the firth and away I 1  
 To the opposite neighbouring shore  
 That conquering host and their leader have passed in  
 royal array,  
 On the deep by the daughter of Athamas once ferried  
 o'er ;  
 He hath bridged the sea-ways with a close-framed flax-  
 bound floor,  
 And the neck of the prancing brine hath felt his  
 yoke.

For the monarch his mandate spoke, I 2  
 And innumerable Asia's lord  
 Drives over the face of the wondering world his divinest  
 flock,  
 Over lands and seas in their ordered myriads poured  
 By the aid of his war-proof leaders, who ne'er broke  
 word,  
 But obey their awful sovereign, of race divine.

With arms unnumbered, and ships in an endless  
 line, II 1  
 With the basilisk's murdering glance in his fierce dark  
 eyes,  
 Pursuing the furious course of his Syrian car.  
 He brings on the spear-famed folk overwhelming war  
 And the shaft-shower's fell surprise.

What man is of power, what army of strength or size, II 2

To stem that torrent, or bar the invincible wave ?  
What strong sea-wall shall hinder its onward course ?  
Nay, Persia's gatherèd host hath resistless force,  
And her people's hearts are brave.

By a god erewhile on the Persian this task was sent, III 1

In stress of the battle with uttermost hardiment  
To destroy fenced cities, and hurtle with chariots,  
and carry away  
Whole nations captive at once in the joy of the fray.

And they know, while the fierce winds rave on the whitening deep, III 2

To look on the forest of billows, and steadily sweep  
O'er the wide sea-paths, as they trust to the whistling cordage small

And the man-bearing slender strength of the timber-wall.

Yet, if a god deeeive, IV 1  
What mortal man may 'scape by timeliest care ?  
Whose foot so fleet his freedom then to achieve,  
Or to overleap that snare ?

With flattering smiles at first IV 2  
The feigning Fury trains the infatuate wight  
To toils remediless of folly accurst  
And long reprieveless night.

My gloom-o'ermantled heart is pricked with fear, V 1  
Ah, well-a-day ! lest the army be destroyed,  
And Susa's spacious town shall sadly hear  
Her streets of Persian men henceforth are void.

Then echoing her complaint the Cissian height— V 2  
'Ah, well-a-day !' shall ery with shrill lament,  
Crowds of lone women gathering in affright,  
With woful noise of linen garments rent.

VI 1

For over the bridge-like mole  
 Binding Asia to Europe, the whole great host  
 Are gone, every valiant soul ;  
 Horseman, and footman, and charioteer,  
 Like a swarm of bees with their leader, their myriads  
 crossed,  
 They have crossed, and left us here.

VI 2

Grief fills the bereavèd bed  
 Where the bitterly longed-for husband comes no more.  
 Each wife hath her trouble instead ;  
 Pining, she utters her anxious moan,  
 While each doth her Persian warrior with wifelike  
 tears deplore  
 As she bears her burden alone.

Then in this room of ancient state  
 Sit, Persians, and in grave debate  
 Weave we deep counsel for this need,  
 To know how fares Dareius' seed,  
 Xerxes our lord, whose royal race  
 Is shared by all within this place :  
 Whether the host whose shafts o'erwhelm  
 Or they who bear the spear and helm  
 Have mastery in that far-off fight,  
 And oversway the opposèd might.  
 But lo, where light of equal worth  
 To glances from God's eyes comes forth,  
 Our empress-mother ; kneel we here,  
 And bid her hail, with loyal fear.

*Enter ATossa.*

Princess, best of Persian women of the deeply folded  
 zone,  
 Hail, our Xerxes' reverend mother, whom Dareius  
 called his own !  
 Bedmate of a god of Persians ; mother of their god  
 even now,  
 If the Genius of our Empire frown not with distempered  
 brow

ATOSSA. Even for that I came among you, from the rooms adorned with gold,  
And the couch where with Dareius I was wont to rest of old.

Pangs of care are in my bosom ; frankly will I tell you, friends,

Thoughts whereon tormenting terror for my dearest hope attends,

Lest the downfall of great riches ventured on a perilous road

Overtur'd the wealth Dareius gathered with the help of God.

Whence a twofold thought unspoken floats before my brooding soul :

Never let me reverence riches where no strong men keep control,

Nor be it mine where riches are not to light up the lowly cot,—

If but I may choose my fortune,—where some poor man bears his lot.

Wealth is ours in full contentment ; yet we fear the fall of night ;

For the presence of its master is the palace' only light. Wherefore, faithful Persian elders, be my counsellors in this,

Since, relying on your counsel, I can never act amiss.

CHO. Empress-lady, know full surely, loyal is the aid you seek ;

Never task, that we have power for, shalt thou twice have cause to speak.

AT. I am nightly visited with haunting dreams, E'er since my son levied that host and went To sack the towns of the Iāōnes.

But last night's dream was far more clear than any. I saw two women, fairly attired, the first

In flowing Persian robes ; in Dorian garb The other ;—on they came, of stature tall,

Beyond the measure of humanity,

Faultless in beauty, sisters of one stock.

But for their native dwelling-place, methought,

The one had Grecian land allotted her,  
The other, Barbarous. Now, in my dream,  
I saw them fall to quarrel, and my son  
Perceived it, and would tame and pacify  
Their anger ; he would yoke them to his car  
And place his collar on their necks. Whereat  
The one showed pride in such accoutrement,  
With docile paces curbing to the rein.  
But the other plunged, and with rebellious force  
Wrecked the fine chariot-gear, and tore away  
From all control, sundering the equal yoke.  
My son fell headlong, and Dareius stood  
Beside and pitied him—whom Xerxes seeing  
Began to rend his garments in my dream.  
Such were my visions of the night. But when  
I had risen and dipped my hands in the pure  
fount,  
I drew towards the altar, bringing there  
Such tribute as the bane-averting powers  
Delight in—honey-cake and frankincense.  
Then at the hearth of Phoebus I beheld  
An eagle taking sanctuary,—O friends,  
My heart stood still with terror,—for a hawk  
With double speed rushed after, and with wing  
And talon ruffled him ; he all the while  
Cowering and submitting. Dreadful sight !  
Dreadful the tale, for you that hear ! For know,  
My son succeeding shall be more extolled,  
But failing, no man here may censure him :—  
Sovran no less, if he return alive.

CHO. Words of counsel, reverend mother, neither to  
affright thy heart  
Nor to hearten thee unduly, would we speak. Even  
as thou art,  
Go and pray the gods to extinguish aught that thou  
hast seen of ill ;  
But if aught of good thou dreamedst, beg them amply  
to fulfil  
For thyself and seed that vision, and your friends and  
the Empire all ;

Then to Earth and Souls departed pour forth wine,  
and kindly call  
On Dareius, late thy husband, whom thou saw'st at  
dead of night;  
Bid him send on thee and Xerxes blessing from beneath  
to light.  
But whate'er opposed to blessing by thy dream was  
signified,  
Quenched with ineffectual darkness let deep Earth for  
ever hide.  
From a loyal heart this counsel flows in rapt prophetic  
vein.  
Yet we augur from thy vision nought but blessing in  
the main.

AT. Surely with a loyal meaning to myself and house  
and son,  
Thus interpreting my vision, thou the auspice hast  
begun.  
May fulfilment crown thy présage! I, within my  
chambers hid,  
To the gods and loved ones vanished will perform what  
thou dost bid.  
Yet one doubt, dear friends, resolve me. Tell me,  
Persians, if ye may,  
Whereabout on Earth's wide bosom Athens lies, as  
travellers say.

CHO. Yonder, where our lord the Sun-god droops  
and dwindleth, far away.

AT. Wherefore was my son desirous Athens 'neath  
his power to bring?

CHO. Hellas then in all her borders would be subject  
to the King.

AT. Say; keeps Athens at her bidding such a multi-  
tudinous host?

CHO. Such a host, whose valiant prowess Persia  
knows of to her cost.

AT. What besides their men of valour? Have they  
wealth enough in store?

CHO. Yea, a vein by nature treasured in their land,  
of silver ore.

AT. Is it strength to draw the arrow that exalts  
them thus in might ?

CHO. Not the bow, but shielded armour, and the  
spear for standing fight.

AT. Say, what shepherd sways their numbers ? who  
their army's king and lord ?

CHO. They call no man lord or master, buckle under  
no man's word.

AT. Then they ne'er will stand the onset of a strange  
invading foe.

CHO. They destroyed Dareius' army, great in number,  
fair in show.

AT. Thought of terror for the parents of our warriors  
now away !

CHO. All the truth for good or evil thou wilt learn  
without delay,

For there comes a man whose running clearly proves his  
Persian breed,

And methinks some certain tidings travel on his foot  
of speed.

*Enter MESSENGER.*

MESSENGER. Imperial centre of vast Asia,  
Land of the Persians, port and haven of wealth,  
What plenitude of glory at one stroke  
Is perished ! Persia's flower is fallen and gone.

Ah me !

'Tis evil even to herald evil news.

Yet, Persians, I must open all your grief.  
The whole of the Asian army is destroyed.

CHO. O bitterness ! O mischief dire and strange ! I 1  
Flow, flow with tears, Persians ! O cruel change !

MESS. All yonder is undone. Myself behold  
The light of home and safety beyond hope.

CHO. Have I grown old to endure an age of woe ? I 2  
Too long I have lived. O sore, unlooked-for blow !

MESS. Myself the eyewitness, from no hearsay talk,  
I can describe, Persians, what ills befell.

CHO. Woe ! woe ! woe ! woe ! In vain from the  
Asian coast II 1  
Went forth erewhile the myriad-banded host,  
With various aspect, various arms,  
To ravage Hellas with alarms.  
MESS. Bodies of warriors miserably slain  
 Crowd Salamis around, and choke her bays.

CHO. Woe ! woe ! woe ! woe ! To think that,  
crimson-dyed. II 2  
The dear-loved limbs, tossed on the unfeeling tide,  
From rock to jagged rock are borne  
At random drifted, rudely torn !  
MESS. Their bows availed not. By the crashing  
prows  
Of Grecian ships that host was overcome.

CHO. Wail for that shout of dread III 1  
O'er Persians vanquishèd—  
The foemen's war-cry, fraught with utter woe.  
Wail for the host, whose warriors all lie low.  
MESS. Salamis ! hateful sound to all who hear !  
Athens ! what memories that name recalls !

CHO. Athens ! by foes abhorred ! III 2  
Clear memory doth record  
How many a blameless wife she left at once  
Of noble warrior spouse and warrior sons.

AT. I am stunned to silence ; for such weight of  
woe  
Baffles expression, making question dumb.  
Yet god-appointed griefs must be endured.  
Speak then in order, though thy faltering tongue  
May quail in the recital,—who survives,  
And whom of our commanders must we mourn ?  
What warrior, gifted with the marshal's wand,  
Hath fallen and left his post, defenceless now ?

MESS. The king yet living sees the light of day.  
AT. A light of blessing for my palace home ;  
Fair day-spring in mid-darkness ! Tell me more.  
MESS. But Artembires, of ten thousand horse

Leader and lord, 'gainst the Silenian shore  
Is driven and dashed, an unresisting bulk.  
And tall Dadáces, his chief officer,  
Leapt nimbly from the deck, smit with a spear.  
Tenagon, true-born prince of Bactria,  
Round Aias' sea-washed isle keeps wandering,  
While all about that coast, where doves abound,  
Argestes, Arsámes, Lilaeus, whirled,  
Butt the repellent earth. Adeues there,  
Arcteus, and buckler-armed Pharnuchus too,  
All three from out one self-same vessel fell.  
Chrysan Matallus, marshal for the king  
O'er thirty thousand swarthy cavalry,  
Changing his Ethiop hue to crimson there,  
Dyed his dark-shadowing beard full red in death.  
The Magian Arabus, Bactrian Artabas,  
As corpses hold the hard and alien land.  
Amphistreus, wielder of the toilsome spear,  
The valiant Ariomard, of Sardis mourned,  
And Mysian Seisámes,—and Tharábis,  
Whom five times fifty stately ships obeyed,  
Comeliest of Lyrna's sons, uncomely in death,  
Poor hapless corse, low lies. Syennesis  
Amidst his prowess perished gloriously,  
Commanding his Cilician army there;  
None, while he lived, more troublous to the foe.  
So much I have told thee of our leaders fallen;  
But woes beyond report untold remain.

AT. Alas, I have heard enough, of griefs the crown,  
All Persia bowed with shame laments her dead.  
But yet renew thy speech, and tell me, friend,  
What number of the Grecian fleet so great  
Emboldened them to meet our Persian men.  
Thus front to front, and armèd prow to prow?

MESS. For numbers, be assured, our Asian fleet  
Lacked not pre-eminence. The Greeks that day  
Had ten times thirty ships. whereof were ten  
Renowned for swiftness. Xerxes, well I wot,  
Led full a thousand,—and, of noted speed,  
Two hundred sail and seven. From such account

Judge if we seemed unequal for that fight.  
 Some power unearthly swayed the balance there  
 To countervail advantage for our loss.  
 The gods themselves proteet Athena's town.

AT. Then Athens yet remains unsacked, unrazed ?

MESS. Even unendangered while Athenians live.

AT. Whence came the encounter of the navies ? Tell.  
 Which gave the onset ? Was't the Grecian fleet ?  
 Or did my son in pride of strength begin ?

MESS. From nothing mortal, from some angry god,  
 Came the beginning of that course of woe.  
 A man of Hellas, from the Athenian host,  
 Came and told Xerxes thy great son this tale :  
 ' Let but the shades of gloomy Night come o'er,  
 The Hellenes will not bide, but, each his way,  
 Manning the benches with a rush, will seek  
 By covert flight to save themselves alive.'

Xerxes, on hearing it, perceiving not  
 The envy of Heaven, nor the Greek man's guile,  
 Forthwith to all his admirals gave command  
 That when the sun had ceased to burn the ground  
 With ardent beams, and darkness occupied  
 The aetherial realm, our navy's main should then  
 In triple line watch o'er the passages  
 Of exit from the strait, while other ships  
 All round the isle of Aias should keep guard ;  
 And if the Greeks escaped from death and doom,  
 Finding some seeret outlet for their fleet,  
 The captains all should lose their heads.

So spake he  
 With lusty cheer, knowing nought of what should be,  
 Nor what the gods had purposed. Duly then  
 Obeying their lord, while supper was prepared,  
 They tied their oars to the rowlocks.—Daylight died  
 And night came on. Each oarsman held his oar,  
 Each armèd warrior manned his post on deck,  
 And rank to rank passed on the heartening word  
 From stern to stem o' the war-ship. Under weigh  
 Each vessel held the course appointed her,  
 Whilst all the captains kept their mariners

Manceuvring all night long, a moving chain.  
The night was passing, and no sign was seen  
Of Grecian vessel bound for stealthy flight.  
But when fair day with milk-white steeds appeared  
And covered all the land with gladdening rays,  
Then rose from that Greek armament a song  
Both loud and musical, and the island rocks  
Re-echoed, shouting battle. On our side  
Fell disappointment, wonder and dismay,  
Shattering the general hope. Not as for flight  
Pealed forth the Hellenes that high Paean-hymn,  
But with good courage rallying to the fray.  
All yonder side blazed with the trumpet's blare.  
Then with one impulse, at the pilot's word,  
All oars were dipped and smote the seething brine,  
And swiftly their whole battle hove in view.  
Their right wing in good order led the way,  
Then all their navy followed; then one heard  
A cry that grew: 'Sons of Hellenes, on!  
Save Hellas, save your children, save your wives,  
Your fathers' graves, the temples of their gods,  
From slavery! Fight, to defend your all!'  
Then from a sea of Persian voices roared  
The counter clamour. For the hour was come.  
Now ship smote ship with brazen-pointed prow.  
A Greek began that onslaught, tearing off  
All the ornatue from a Sidonian hull.  
Then on and on, with ships for spears, they fought.  
The Persian fleet, in a perpetual stream,  
At first appeared invincible; but when  
Their numbers in the narrows packed and hemmed  
Grew dense, they cracked their oarage in the crowd,  
And smote each other with their beaks of brass,  
And none might help his fellow. Ware of this,  
The Grecian shipmasters with cunning skill  
Justled us round and round,—till hulls capsized,  
And all the sea was hidden from our sight,  
With wrecks and human carnage covered o'er.  
The cliffs and jutting reefs were thronged with dead,  
And every vessel left in the Asian fleet

Rowed hard for safety in disordered rout.  
 But they, like men who have tunnies in the net,  
 With fragments of snapped oars, splinters of wreck,  
 Smote, hacked and slew, that all that reach of sea  
 With wailing cries and shouts of triumphing  
 Resounded, till work-baffling night came down.  
 Ten days on end would not suffice to tell,  
 In ceaseless talk, the whole account of woe.  
 Let this suffice thee; never heretofore  
 Died in one day so vast a number of men.

AT. Woe, woe! What floods of sorrow are unbound  
 For Persia, and the whole Barbarian world!

MESS. Know thou, the grief of griefs is yet to come.  
 Such dire calamity befell them there,  
 That more than twice outweighed what hath been told.

AT. What chance could be more dire than that we  
 have heard?

Declare, what onslaught of calamity  
 Came on the host, transcending all that woe?

MESS. What Persian men were there of noblest  
 strain,  
 For birth and valour of spirit most approved,  
 Foremost in constant service to the king,  
 Most cruel deaths ingloriously have died.

AT. O loss ineffable! O cruel blow!  
 How mean'st thou these have perished? By what  
 doom?

MESS. In front of Salamis an island lies,  
 Small, rough for moorage, which dance-loving Pan  
 Haunts with light hoof, roving the seaward ground.  
 There planted Xerxes that choice band, that when  
 The broken foemen on that island shore  
 Sought refuge, they might take the helpless prey  
 And kill them, re-cuing from the narrow seas  
 What friends might drift there.

Badly he foresaw  
 Futurity. For when the God had given  
 To Greecee the glory of that fight, forthwith  
 In the afternoon, before the sun was low,  
 They cased them in their armour, and leapt forth

From shipboard, and encircled all that isle.  
Our nobles knew not where to turn. Then came  
The crashing stones from stalwart hands, then flew  
The life-destroying arrow from the string.  
Last, in one roaring flood from every side  
They rushed and closed them round with havoc dire,  
And smote and hewed them limb from limb, until  
Those princely lives, to a man, were all extinct.  
Xerxes beheld and groaned, o'erwhelmed with woe.  
A seat was his commanding all the host,  
A lofty mound near to the open sea.  
Whence, with loud cries, and rending of his robes,  
He rose in sudden haste, and passed the word  
For the land army to retreat: then rushed  
To headlong flight.—Such dire calamity  
Beside the former calls for thy lament.

AT. O sullen Fortune! How deceitfully  
Thou hast robbed the Persians of their purposes!  
To his unending sorrow hath my son  
Pursued his vengeance on the Athenians' pride!  
Too few of ours did Marathon consume,  
For whom my son planning the recompense,  
Hath brought this tumult of disasters down.

But tell us of the remnant of the fleet,  
Where didst thou leave them? Canst thou certify?

MESS. The captains of what ships remained afloat  
Sailed down the wind in rash disordered flight.

Meantime the escaping army suffered loss,  
Some perishing of thirst by the clear wells  
In wide Boeotia, while the rest of us,  
Hungry and scant of breath, passed on within  
Phocis and Doris and the Melian shore,  
Where mild Spercheius laves a smiling land.  
From thence the borders of Achaia's plain  
And towns of Thessaly received our host,  
Hardly bested and hungering: there most died,  
Of thirst and famine. Both were in the extreme.

Yet moved we onward through Magnesian wastes  
To Macedonia, crossing Axios' fords,  
And passing Bolbe's waving reeds; then came

To Mount Pangaeon and the Edonians' land.  
That night, against the season of the year,  
By Providence Divine a wintry storm  
Made hard with ice the Strymon's holy stream,  
That men who erst had set the gods at nought  
Bowed down and worshipped, praising Earth and  
Heaven.

When those loud prayers were ended, all the host  
Began to cross the ice-encrusted ford.  
But only those who started ere the sun  
Had shed abroad his beams remain alive.  
For the bright orb with radiant warmth dissolved  
And sundered the mid passage: down they fell,  
Heaped on each other: he was fortunate  
Who in that throng first yielded up his breath.

Not many are they who 'scaped, and with much toil  
Hardly have passed through Thracia to a land  
Where friendly hearths received them. Persia mourns  
The loss of all that youth, her dearest flower.

All this is true, and more I leave unsaid  
That Heaven sent down, afflicting Persian men.

CHO. Genius of ruin! with what giant force  
Thou hast set thy foot on all this Persian world!

AT. Woe, for the host destroyed! oh, woe is me!  
Night vision of my dream, too clear and true  
Thy warning! Weak interpreters were ye!  
Yet your one word of counsel firmly holds,  
And I embrace it, first entreating Heaven  
With humble prayers. Then will I fetch from home  
For Earth and parted souls an offering,—  
Too late, I know, when all is over and done,  
Yet with some hope of lessening ills to be.  
Meantime 'tis yours, in this disastrous hour,  
With loyal plans thwarting disloyalty.  
To unite in conference all faithful men.  
And should my son arrive ere my return.  
With words of comfort guide him home, lest he  
Add wilful evil to calamity.

[Exit]

## CHORUS.

Great king of all gods, thou hast ruined the Persians' pride;  
 Thou hast drained their army that flowed in a lordly tide;  
 Thou hast covered all over with grief, as a darksome shroud,  
 Ecbatana's towers and Susa's palaces proud.  
 And many a tender hand is rending the veil,  
 And many a gentle spirit doth only wail,  
 As beneath the tear-steeped bosom the heart doth fail.

Ah ! many a Persian bride in the lonely house  
 Cries 'Oh !' for the vanished face of her manly spouse.  
 In delicate sorrow they leave the coverlets fine  
 And the couches of youth's soft dalliance, while each  
 doth pine  
 With sound unending of inexhaustible moan.  
 And we with loyal spirits lament and groan  
 For the heart-overwhelming fate of the warriors gone.

Now all dispeopled and alone,  
 In all her coasts doth Asia groan.

I 1

Alas, woe worth the day !

At Xerxes' word that army crossed,  
 By Xerxes was that army lost,  
 Xerxes for all that naval host

The advantage cast away.

How Susa's children shall deplore  
 Dareius, their desire of yore,

Defending them from harm !

Oft then they triumphed with the bow,  
 But nought of loss did Persia know,  
 Secure from all alarm.

Bold mariners and men of war

I 2

On many a flax-winged, dark-prowed car,  
 (Woe worth the bitter hour !)

By ships o'er sea that army crossed,  
On shipboard all their hopes were lost,  
By ships together hurtling tossed,  
And fell Ionians' power.

Our sovereign lord himself, we are told,  
Through trackless wastes and wintry cold  
Escaped pursuing death,  
But hardly : Thracia's plains are wide,  
And till he reach the Asian side  
He draws precarious breath.

Others perforce left to their earlier doom, II 1  
Round the Cenehrean shore

Float to and fro, swayed in their wintry tomb.  
Lament them o'er and o'er !

Let poignant grief inspire the long-drawn moan,  
And nought but sobs impede the heart-derivèd groan.

Tost by the terrible waves, they are pulled and torn II 2  
By voiceless mouths—oh, weep !—

Of monstrous uncouth creatures, strangely born  
Of the unpolluted deep.

Homes mourn their masters lost, and parents old  
Lament their childless lot with agonies manifold.

Through Asian land the subject folk III 1  
Prepare them to cast off the yoke ;  
Tribute no longer will they pay  
Beneath the Persian's sovran sway,  
No longer fall in homage prone  
Before the Achaemenian throne :—  
The awe of majesty is gone.

Men's tongues henceforth are free to range III 2  
O'er possibilities of change.

The curb of licence is no more :  
The government of force is o'er ;  
Since Aias' surf-surrounded land  
Holds on her blood-bestainèd strand  
All Persia's mystery of command.

*Re-enter ATOSSA.*

AT. Friends, whosoe'er hath skill of mortal ways  
 Knows, when the tide of evils is at flood,  
 How all things terrify ; but when the life  
 Flows smoothly, men are confident and sure  
 The same fair fortune will be theirs for aye.  
 My lot this while is girt about with fears ;  
 Heaven's adverse will is plain before my sight ;  
 Mine ears are filled with inauspicious cries ;  
 And all my spirit is amazed with woe.  
 Therefore I come on foot, without my car  
 And all that former pomp, again from home,  
 Bearing unto the father of my child  
 Peace-offerings of power to allure the dead :  
 Milk rich and white from a pure cow, bright honey  
 Wrought out of flowers by the industrious bee,  
 With lustral waters from a virgin spring,  
 And living juice from an ungrafted vine,  
 Its ancient mother, bright with quickening cheer.  
 I have also from the grey-green olive-plant,  
 That carries her thick foliage ever young,  
 This fragrant oil ; and wreaths of various flowers,  
 Luxuriant offspring of all-bounteous Earth.

Ye, then, dear friends, in honour of the dead  
 Support mine offering with your pious hymn.  
 And summon up from underground to light,  
 Dareius, now a blessed spirit of good,  
 Whilst I commend unto the thirsty ground  
 These honours destined for the powers below.

## CHORUS.

Most royal lady, revered of the Persians all,  
 While thou send'st down to his dwelling beneath the  
     ground  
 That pure libation, we with a hymn will call  
 On the powers that conduct the soul o'er the darkling  
     bound  
 To be kind, and release the spirit they hold in thrall.  
 Hermes, and Earth, and King of the Powers of Night,

Great holy beings that govern the world below,  
 Send up, we pray you, his soul from beneath to light ;  
 For a cure of our troublous evil, if cure he know,  
 He alone can tell us in words of revealing might.—

Doth the sainted spirit hear us of our royal lord ? II 1  
 Hath he caught the clear-toned word  
 From our voices pealing Persian-wise in varied notes of  
 woe ?

Is my prayer by him allowed ?  
 Or mine anguish must I utter in a strain exceeding  
 loud ?

Hath he heard my supplication there below ?

Earth, and rulers of the people of the shadowy  
 place, 12

Send him upward, we implore,  
 Like to none that in past ages Persian earth has covered  
 o'er,

Persia's God, of Achaemenian race.

Loved was the hero, loved his mound of rest, II 1  
 Beloved and mourned the life it hides from day.  
 Hades, release of thy great grace, we pray,  
 Divine Dareius, of all rulers best !

He lost not lives in wars by millions rued, II 2  
 But heavenly wise the Persians found him still ;  
 Since with deep wisdom and unwavering will  
 He steered our armies, like a pilot good.

Master and lord, appear ! Our lord of old. III 1  
 Rise by the summit of thy mound of rest.  
 Lifting thy saffron slipper, edged with gold.  
 Rearing thy turban, with the imperial crest :  
 Come, father, ancient source of blessings manifold !

Come, list the woes of this strange hour of doom ! III 2  
 Lord of our lord, let us behold thy form !  
 There hovers o'er our hearts an evil gloom.  
 Our youth are perished in a withering storm.  
 Father of good, come forth ; we kneel before thy tomb !

O woe, woe, woe !  
 Twofold the blame, redoubled is the blow.  
 Thou whom thy friends must ever freshly mourn,  
 Why hast thou left thine Empire thus forlorn ?  
 Those three-tiered galleys all are gone,  
 Undone, for evermore undone !

*The Ghost of DAREIUS appears.*

DAR. O true and tried, corrivals of my youth,  
 Old now and reverend, Persians, what hath chanced ?  
 What grief afflicts the state ? Why groans the plain  
 With shuddering tramp of crowds in agony ?  
 My soul was softened by the drink-offering,  
 Yet fears, when I behold beside my tomb  
 My queen and you, that sing your dirges near,  
 And sadly summon me from where ye stand  
 With ghost-compelling anthems. Hard the road  
 From Hades forth to light ; the gods beneath  
 Are swift to seize and tardy to let go.  
 Yet hath my power with them prevailed. I am here  
 But haste, lest I be censured for delay.  
 To tell what new-born trouble weighs you down.

CHO. We fear to address the spirit of the dead ; 1  
 We tremble to behold thine honoured head ;  
 We are cowed and voiceless through long-wonted dread.

DAR. Nay, since your lament hath drawn me upward  
     from my place of rest,  
 Be not awed, but clear and briefly let your trouble be  
     expressed,  
 Nor prolong the tale unduly. Wherefore are ye sore  
     distressed ?

CHO. We shrink to obey that call ; we shrink to tell 2  
 Things hard of utterance to one loved so well.  
 Love joined with grief our silence doth compel.

DAR. Then, since ye prove speechless, daunted by  
     your long-aceustomed fears,  
 Thou, partaker of my chamber, royal lady, bowed with  
     years,

Tell me something plainly, ceasing from those deep-drawn sobs and cries.  
Direst evil to frail mortals can but come in human guise.  
If their life go lengthening onward, many griefs to mortals all,  
Some from Earth and some from Ocean, are appointed to befall.

AT. O Dareius, beyond all men blessèd in thy fortune's course,  
Envied, while thou saw'st the sunlight, like a god with radiant force  
Thou didst live a life of gladness, honoured to the tranquil close :  
Now in death, 'mid Persia's downfall, envied is thy deep repose.  
Few the words required to tell thee the full measure of our woe :—  
All thine Empire lies in ruin, crushed with cureless overthrow.

DAR. Came some plague from the destroyer ? Or hath faction torn the state ?

AT. All our army before Athens perished by the blows of Fate.

DAR. Say, what son of mine was leader of the host that ventured there ?

AT. Xerxes the impetuous, sweeping Asia of her children bare.

DAR. Was't by sea or land, infatuate ! he devised that fond intent ?

AT. Earth and Ocean felt the presence of his two-fold armament.

DAR. How could that stupendous army pass to Europe on dry land ?

AT. Made to cross the firth of Hellè, by his engineers o'erspanned.

DAR. How prevailed he such a barrier on great Bosporos to lay ?

AT. Some unearthly power was working in his breast that fatal day.

DAR. Mighty was the power that swayed him, mad  
the boldness of his thought !

AT. Now the event reveals the mischief through his  
pride for Persia wrought.

DAR. What event ? What stroke hath moved your  
mourning for that host of kings ?

AT. Ruin on the navy rushing ruin to the army  
brings.

DAR. Have my warrior people perished with de-  
struction so complete ?

AT. Susa for her vanished heroes moans in every  
vacant street.

DAR. Out, alas for our defenders ! for the army's  
staunch array !

AT. Bactria mourns her flower of manhood—not a  
head whose hair was grey.

DAR. Hapless king ! Of what prime succour feels  
he now the bitter loss ?

AT. All alone, or with few comrades, so they tell,  
he came to cross—

DAR. Whither ? Is there aught redeemed us from  
the failure ye deplore ?

AT. Gladly came he near the bridge-way yoking  
shore to hostile shore.

DAR. Passed he safely thence to Asia ? Come there  
tidings true and clear ?

AT. Yea, thereof report is certain, rumoured without  
doubt or fear.

DAR. Ah ! too soon the doom is fallen. Zeus hath  
brought upon my child

All the weight foretold of evil. I to fate was reconciled,  
Thinking Heaven would bring the burden on an issue  
far removed.

Now all otherwise, through Xerxes' rashness, hath the  
sequel proved.

When a man is bent on ruin, God will help him to his  
fall.

Now a fount of ill is opened for himself and Persians all ;  
Since, in ignorant youth o'erweening, he would fetter  
like a slave

Bosporos divinely flowing with his Hellespontine wave.  
He would alter Heaven's appointment, and with chains  
from human hands

Sought to stay the stream eternal, paving for his  
countless bands

Ample roadway, he, a mortal, rashly thinking he could  
foil

All the gods and great Poseidon by his hammers'  
impious toil.

Sure his heart by Heaven was blinded, and the wealth  
my labour won

Lies a prey for the first comer, through the madness of  
my son.

AT. This hath too impetuous Xerxes learnt from men  
of evil strain,

Ever at his ears recounting all the treasure thou didst  
gain

For thy house by foreign battles :—He, they whispered,  
within door

Craven-like his falehion brandished, adding nought to  
that fair store.

Sueh reproaches ofttimes hearing from the men of  
foward mind,

That campaign against fair Hellas and those levies he  
designed.

DAR. They have wrought a work, those counsellors,  
beyond

Imagination,—an indelible deed.

No such disaster ever heretofore

Dispeopled Susa, since the Lord of Heaven

O'er all the tribes of teeming Asia

Granted one man to wield the imperial sword.

Medus first ruled that shepherd host. His son

Confirmed the sovereignty, since with wise thought

He governed his own spirit. Cyrus then.

Third in sueeession, by his fortunate reign

Established peace through all the Persian name,

Brought in the Lydian and the Phrygian folk,

And sorely ravaged wide Ionia,—

Too righteous to provoke the gods to wrath.

Fourth ruled his son, Cambyses, great in war.  
 But Mardos, your fifth king, disgraced his land  
 And Persia's ancient palace. Him with guile  
 Brave Artaphernes in the chamber slew,  
 With his brave comrades, destined to that deed.  
 Then fell to me the lot I coveted,  
 And mighty hosts I led to fields of fame ;  
 Yet brought on Persia no such misery.  
 But my son Xerxes, young in years and mood,  
 Remembers not his father's warning rede.  
 A dire forgetting ! for of this be sure,  
 Friends of my youth, not all our royal line  
 Did harm to equal this that he hath done.

CHO. Say, Lord Dareius, what shall be the end ?  
 How shall we Persians meet the time to come,  
 How make the best of fortune ?

DAR. Nevermore  
 Wage wars on Hellas, though the Median host  
 Be thrice so many. For the country there  
 Fights for her sons.

CHO. How meanst thou that the land  
 Fights for her men ?

DAR. The more assailants come  
 The more she kills by famine.

CHO. Then we'll raise  
 A chosen band of warriors able and few.

DAR. Not even the remnant that remains behind  
 To range through Hellas, shall return alive.

CHO. How ? Doth not all that force of Eastern men  
 Pass Hellè's ford from Europe hitherward ?

DAR. Few out of all that multitude—if aught  
 Of credence to Heaven's oracles be due  
 From him who, looking on to-day's event,  
 Sees their fulfilment absolute and clear.  
 For thus 'tis prophesied. Through idle hope  
 Xerxes will leave the choicest of his men  
 To winter where Asopus with cool rills  
 Waters the plain, giving Boeotia's land  
 A draught right welcome. What awaits them there ?  
 Vengeance condign for impious violence.

They came to Hellas, and were not afraid  
 To plunder shrines and burn the temples down.  
 No reverence held them ;—altars laid in dust,  
 Statues uprooted from their pedestals,  
 All things divine o'erturned, attest their guilt.  
 Nor shall their punishment be less :—they suffer  
 Even now, and more shall suffer ; still that fount  
 Is gushing, unexhausted, unexplored.  
 Plataea's plain shall prove it, pasted over  
 With blood of slaughter from the Spartan spear.  
 Three generations hence those heaps of slain  
 Voiceless shall blazon to posterity  
 Loud warnings against human pride. That flower  
 Soon falls, and yields calamity for fruit,  
 Unlooked-for harvest of dire misery.  
 Mark well the wages of their sin, and bear  
 Hellas and Athens ever in mind. Let none,  
 Raising his heart above the things he hath  
 In passionate love for plans unrealized,  
 Make shipwreck of great fortune. Zeus brings on  
 His inquisition at the destined hour,  
 A judge severe to punish boastful thoughts.  
 Then ye who may, supplying his chief need,  
 Spend your well-reasoned counsels on my son,  
 And bid him cease provoking Heaven with pride.  
 Dear agèd queen, mother of Xerxes, thou  
 Bring forth the seemliest raiment from thy store  
 And go to meet thy child. O'er all his frame  
 The broidered garments, rent in sorrow's rage,  
 Hang raggedly, showing the sundered woof.  
 Soothe him to mildness with consoling words :  
 No other voicee but thine will he endure.  
 I pass to nether darkness. Agèd friends,  
 Though in affliction, give your hearts to joy,  
 And cheer your souls with comforts day by day,  
 Since wealth avails not in the world of death.

*[Ghost vanishes]*

CHO. How many griefs, that are and are to be  
 For the Eastern race, afflict my hearkening mind !  
 AT. Sorrows are thronging to my heart, but one

Touches me nearest,—oh, the cruel blow!—  
 Xerxes in rags,—all shame is in that word,  
 All ruin, all despair, all misery!  
 I will bring forth the costliest ornaments  
 And go with them to meet and comfort him—  
 I'll not forsake my loved one in his woe. [Exit]

## CHORUS.

Ah, glorious was the life of Persia then, I 1  
 Untold the blessedness her children found.  
 When the agèd, the all-conquering, the renowned  
 Stainless Dareius, god-like among men,  
 Repeller of all harms, ruled Asian ground.

Our armies' prowess then was famed afar, I 2  
 The strongholds of our foes were razed and burned,  
 And when the host with happy speed returned  
 Unworn and scathless from the field of war,  
 Each homestead welcomed all for whom it yearned.

How many a tribe Dareius erst subdued! II 1  
 Yet passed not westward over Halys' ford  
 Nor stirred from home:—The Acheloian brood  
 Of hamlets pight on spreading Strymon's flood  
 Hard by the huts of Thracia's warrior horde;

And towns, with towers begirt, on the firm earth II 2  
 Beyond that pool, and many on either side  
 With spacious gardens fringing Hellè's firth  
 Obeyed his voice, and, far from pinching dearth,  
 Propontis' coves, and Pontus' opening wide;

And the isles that,—where the shores of Asian land III 1  
 With jutting cliffs o'erlook the broadening brine,—  
 Surrounded still by surging billows stand,  
 As Lesbos, Samos rich in olive and vine,  
 Chios and Paros, Naxos, Myconos,  
 Tenos, with rustic Andros nestling close.

And those midway across, whose bright abodes III 2  
 Teem with sea-produce,—Lemnos, once the seat

Of wax-winged Icarus, Cnidos and Rhodes,  
 And Cyprus,—with full many a fair retreat,  
 Paphos the blest, Soli, and Salamis,  
 Whose parent isle has brought our land to this :—

O grief ! And those rich towns he governed then IV  
 With Persian justice and wise Persian care,  
 Peopled with myriads of Hellenic men  
 Throughout Ionia's province large and fair.  
 Boundless resourcee for war was harboured there,  
 Of shielded spearmen and all manner of arms.  
 But now by Heaven's fell spite and naval harms  
 That hope is killed, never to live again.

*Enter XERXES.*

XER. Ay me,  
 All hapless for the hateful blow  
 That came ere I the signs might know  
 Of the dire rage of that harsh power  
 Minded to wither Persia's flower.  
 Our stock is blasted. Woe is me !  
 How shall I face my destiny ?  
 When I behold yon reverend train.  
 Strength fails my limbs. My heart were fain,  
 O Zeus, that I were buried deep  
 With those who sleep the warrior's sleep.

CHO. Woe, Xerxes, for that staunch array !  
 Woe, for the Persian's honoured sway !  
 Woe, for the men of chief renown,  
 By ruthless Destiny mown down !  
 Our country groans for the young life  
 She reared in vain, in Xerxes' strife  
 Destroyed, for he hath crammed the grave  
 With Persian bodies many and brave :  
 Many are gone, our country's bloom,  
 Darkly to dwell within the tomb.  
 Archers of might, a countless host,  
 Have perished ;—their brave help is lost.  
 Alas, the heavy hour !

O sovereign lord, thine Asian land  
 Sinks on her knee, strengthless to stand,  
 Strangely bereft of power.

XER. Alas ! To the Achaemenian name, I 1  
 I, ill-starred mortal, born to shame,  
 Have caused nought else but loud lament,  
 With hatred from all Asia blent.

CHO. Like Mariandynian mourner, I  
 Greet thy returning with a cry  
 Of mourning, meditated well,  
 As to prolong some funeral knell.

XER. Weep on. Let the harsh notes abound I 2  
 With endless, iterative sound.  
 On me, on me, the destinies turn  
 Their rage, 'gainst me their ire doth burn.

CHO. I'll utter, then, the hopeless cry  
 Of a whole race in agony ;  
 Such meed of mourning is their due  
 Whom war 'mid seething waters slew.

XER. So wrought the Ionian's might, II 1  
 Whom in that gloomy fight  
 Strong Ares made prevail.  
 Their armèd prows with shocks  
 Drave on those hapless rocks  
 Our men, and turned the scale.

CHO. Then, weeping, I would ask thee more,  
 Where are the chieftains we deplore,  
 Thy comrades ? Where is Susas gone,  
 Where Pharandaces, Pelagon,  
 And Psammis ? Where Agdabātas ?  
 Where Susiscanes, Dotamas,  
 Leaving Ecbatana to moan ?

XER. Fallen from a ship of Tyre II 2  
 I left them, soon to expire,  
 A prey to hopeless griefs ;  
 Beating their helpless forms,  
 Playthings of ruthless storms,  
 On Salaminian reefs.

CHO. Again with tears I ask, where stood  
Pharnuchus, Ariomardus good,  
Princely Senalkes, form divine,  
Lilaeus of the lordly line,  
Masistras, Memphis, Tharybis.  
Hystaechmas, Artembares ;—this  
I bid thee tell me, sovereign mine.

XER. Ay me, ay me !  
Athena's ancient town  
They saw, then plunged adown  
With plashing not of the oar.  
They saw her to their death.  
Now, spent their latest breath,  
They welter on that shore.

CHO. And him, too, didst thou there forsake,  
Whose eye would still for Persia wake,  
And reckon o'er at thy bhest  
Her millions ? Him, of viziers best,  
Alpistus good, Sesámes' child,  
Grandson of Megabates mild ?  
And didst thou leave brave Parthus there ?  
And tall Arsámes ? O despair !  
Evil on evil, woe on woe,  
To Persia's pride thy tale doth show.

XER. As on the witch's wheel,  
Thy cruel words reveal  
My comrades to mine eye.  
Why must I see again  
That scene of boundless pain ?  
My heart for them doth cry.

CHO. Not these alone mine eye demands ;  
For where are Xanthus and his bands.  
Ten thousand Mardian warriors ? where  
Anchares, brave beyond compare,  
Arsaces and Diaesis, bold  
Leaders of mounted troops untold ?  
Cegdabás', Lythimnas' truth,  
Keen Tolmus' spear, I miss with ruth,

III 1

III 2

Wondering why they came not in  
Behind the royal baldachin.

XER. Gone are they who raised the host. IV 1

CHO. Gone, alas, to nameless gloom.

XER. Oh, that levy's bitter cost!

CHO. Oh, the cruel hand of doom!

Ills beyond the reach of thought,  
Grim as Atè's glance, it brought.

XER. Stroke too deep for time to change! IV 2

CHO. All too plain the tentless wound.

XER. Strange affliction; heavy as strange!

CHO. Shipmen from the Ionian sound

Met them in disastrous hour.

Woe, for Persia's war-stained flower!

XER. Even so. I am foiled with all that mighty host. V 1

CHO. To Persia what remains, O man of woe?

XER. See'st thou this remnant of my robe?

CHO. I see.

XER. This quiver unsupplied?

CHO. Another waif

Snatched from the wreck?

XER. This empty treasure-house  
For arrows vainly spent?

CHO. A scanty store

To save from all that wealth!

XER. My helpers all  
Are stripped from me.

CHO. Brave are the Ionian men  
In battle, well they stand the brunt of war.

XER. Too brave! I ne'er had looked for that I found. V 2

CHO. Mean'st thou thy navy routed, all that fleet?

XER. I saw it, and rent my robes thereat.

CHO. Ah, woe!

XER. Woe, beyond all lament.

CHO. Twofold the stroke,  
Yea, and threefold.

XER. Bitter indeed to us,  
But gladsome for our foes.

CHO. Our prime of strength  
Was there lopped off and crushed.

XER. Yea, all my train  
Are torn from me.

CHO. Thy best of Persian friends  
Failed thee through dire disasters of the deep.

XER. Drench sorrow with your tears. Conduet me  
home. VI 1

CPO. I am steeped with tears that well from sorrow's  
depth.

XER. Re-echo now my wailing.

CHO. With good will.

XER. Wail now in unison.

CHO. Ah me ! ah me !

Full heavy is the weight of grief I bear,  
And heavier that to come which I foresee.

XER. Strike now in time, and groan for my be-  
hoof. VI 2

CPO. Sad gift that sorrow gives to misery !

XER. Re-echo now my groaning.

CHO. Woe, woe, woe !

XER. Now lift the wailing cry.

CHO. Ah me ! ah me !

And mingled with our wail shall come the stroke,  
(Ah me, alas !) blackening the burdened breast.

XER. Beat now your breasts and raise the Mysian  
cry. VII 1

CHO. O grief, grief, grief !

XER. And ravage your white beards.

CHO. Ay, with clenched hand and sorrow-swollen  
heart.

XER. And lift your high-pitched tones.

CHO. I will, I will.

XER. Rend now with might the folds upon your  
breast. VII 2

CHO. O grief, grief, grief !

XER. Ply hand on hair for ruth.  
CHO. Ay, with clenched hand and pity-laden heart.  
XER. And let your tears run down.  
CHO. They fall, they fall.

XER. Re-echo now my groaning. VIII  
CHO. Woe, woe, woe !

XER. Lead home with lamentation.

CHO. Ah ! alas !

XER. Unwelcome is my tread to Persian ground.

CHO. . . . .

XER. One cry holds all the city.

CHO. One loud cry.

XER. Wail, then, approaching softly.

CHO. Woe, ah ! woe !

For those who perished with the three-tiered hulls !

XER. Ay me !

Reluctantly I tread on Persian ground.

CHO. I will conduct thee with sad mourning sound.



# SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

## PERSONS OF THE DRAMA

ETEOCLES.

*Messenger.*

CHORUS of *Theban Maidens.*

*2nd Messenger.*

ISMENE.

ANTIGONE.

*Herald.*

*There were also some mute persons to represent the  
Theban Elders.*

The SCENE is laid in the Cadmeia, or Citadel of Thebes, in an open space before the palace of the Labdacidae.

TIME—during the generation before the Trojan War.

THIS play, which was performed in 467 B.C., is known to have been the third play of a trilogy on the 'Tale of Thebes,' consisting of the *Laius*, the *Oedipus*, and the *Seven*, and having the *Sphinx* associated with it as a Satyric drama.

Although lyrical declamation and narrative have still a large place, this tragedy shows a decided advance on those preceding it, in the development of the action and in power of characterization.

Eteocles, the central figure, is nobly imagined. Knowing himself to be the victim of a cruel destiny, and fighting under the shadow of his father's curse, he presents a dauntless brow to the enmity of the skies, and acts with unabated heroism both as a patriot and as a warrior. Even in going forth to the unnatural encounter with his younger brother (Polynices, in Aeschylus, is still the younger), he bears himself with unimpeachable dignity. The trepidation of the Theban women forms the dramatic contrast to this terrible self-possession. The whole tragedy is well described by Aristophanes as 'Αρέως μεστόν, 'crammed full with the very spirit of war.'

Although the final drama of a trilogy, this ends, like the *Suppliants*, with divergent utterances on the part of the two halves of the Chorus, such as might have prepared the way for an *Antigone*. The art of Aeschylus retains something of the grandeur, and also of the indeterminateness, of Epic poetry.

The six leaders whom Polynices, with the aid of Adrastus of Argos, his brother-in-law, has succeeded in leaguing against his country are, (1) Tydeus, the Aetolian, who had also taken refuge with Adrastus; (2) Capaneus, the son-in-law, and (3) Eteocles, the son of Iphis, late King of Argos; (4) Hippomedon, son of Talaus, an Argive; (5) Parthenopaeus, the Arcadian, son of Atalanta and Meilanion, (6) Amphiaraus, the prophet, who had been induced to take the fatal step, of which he foreknew the issue, by his treacherous wife Eriphyle, the sister of Adrastus. The lines in which his noble integrity are described are said to have been applied by the Athenian audience to Aristides.

## SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

ETEOCLES.

CADMEIAN citizens, what man soe'er  
Hath charge to wield aright the helm of state,  
Must keep strict watch, nor once offend in word.  
His eyelids may not slumber. If success  
Be ours, 'Some god has done it.' If mishap,  
Which Heaven forefend, should visit us, then I,  
One man in many mouths, through all this town  
Shall hear myself decried with hymns of hate  
And fierce reverberate groans. May Warden Zeus,  
True to his name, ward such from Cadmus' town!  
Meantime 'tis yours, according to your might,  
Whether now in the prime age beseeming war,  
Or of young limbs and tender, or in eld  
Still nourishing strong nerves with vigorous blood,  
To aid your city and your country's gods,—  
Whose altars here are threatened with disgrace,—  
And your own offspring, and your native land,  
Mother and nurse, that, while in infancy  
Ye crept about on her kind bosom, took  
The burden of your nurture all on her,  
And reared you up, her trusty shield-bearers,  
To stead her in this day of her distress.  
So far, the gods are with us. To this hour,  
Beleaguered all this while, the chance of war,  
With Heaven's consent, hath most inclined our way  
Then rise to what ensues. For now the seer,  
Shepherd of birds, who, in his ears and mind,  
With art infallible discerns their flight,  
Nor needs flame-tokens,—he, Tiresias, saith—  
By divination thus assured and clear—  
To-night the Achaean host, in council met,

Are planning their main onset 'gainst our town.  
Come, man the battlements, crowd every port,  
Each to his post in panoply go forth.  
Line well the ramparts, mount the flanking towers,  
Meet them undaunted at the gates, nor fear  
Their foreign numbers. God shall guide the event.  
For my part I have sent my scouts to scan  
Yond' host ;—nor idly, if my faith be true.  
Their sure report shall guard us from surprise.

*Enter MESSENGER.*

MESS. Dread Lord Eteocles, our people's king,  
From yonder host I come with tidings clear,  
Myself the eyewitness of the things I tell.  
Seven goodly champions, chiefs of seven bands.  
Shed blood of bulls in hollow dark-rimmed shield,  
And dipped their fingers in the crimson gore,  
And sware by all the powers of murdering war  
Either to raze this city to the ground  
And ravage Thebes with hostile violence,  
Or stain our clime with carnage in their death.  
Then fastened they around Adrastus' ear  
Mementos of themselves to travel home  
Unto their parents,—wherewithal they wept.  
But never sound of sorrow left their lips,  
Since the high temper of their iron hearts  
Aflame with valour, breathed the dauntless mood  
Of lions glaring with intent of war.  
Nor halt they to fulfil their oath. The lot  
Was falling as I left them, that should 'point  
Each chief the port whereon to march his men ;  
Wherefore, at every gateway's going forth,  
Set thou with speed our city's noblest sons ;  
Since now at hand their host with spear and shield  
Tramples the ground : on yonder plain are cast  
White foam-like flakes from throats of armèd steeds.  
Thou then, our pilot, make the bulwarks firm  
Of this our vessel, ere the blast of war  
Descend on her : full loudly yonder surge  
Roars from the land. Seize thou the present hour,

While I shall keep, as heretofore, the glance  
 Of a true watchman, that intelligence  
 Of things without may shield thee well from harm.

[Exit]

ETEOCLES. Zeus, Earth, ye guardian deities, and thou

Mightiest of all for ill, curse of my sire,  
 Exirpate not with ravage of the foe  
 My country, I entreat you : spare her fall !  
 Destroy not homes where Grecian voices sound.  
 Let Cadmus' town still live at liberty  
 From foreign domination ; nor impose  
 On Thebes the yoke of bondage. Be her aid !  
 Methinks my prayer must suit with your own wills ;  
 For countries fortunate give gods their due.

CHORUS (*entering*).

We cry aloud for fear. O day of woe !  
 They have left the camp. They are on their way.

The host

Is streaming hither, horsemen in the van,  
 A mounted multitude. The dust persuades me,  
 Seen in the sky, dumb harbinger, but sure.  
 The tramp of hoofs upon the nearer plain  
 Falls on mine ear, threatening captivity.  
 It hovers close at hand, the heightening roar  
 As of wild waters irresistible  
 Rending the hills. Ah gods ! Ah goddess-powers !  
 Avert the coming woe ! With deafening shouts  
 They are rushing on to scale our city walls,  
 Armed all in white, armed for pursuit, for capture !  
 Who shall defend us, who shall save ? what god,  
 What goddess-power ? Where shall I kneel and pray ?  
 Which shrine shall serve ? O blessed ones, I hail  
 Your holy presences ! 'Tis time, 'tis time  
 To cling to present gods. Why do we groan  
 And linger ? Hear ye not the smitten shield ?  
 When, if not now, should supplicating robes  
 And wreaths be in request ? The sound is clear,  
 Nay visible ! the clash of many a spear !

War-god, that from of old inheritest  
 Our Theban earth, wilt thou betray her now ?  
 What wilt thou do ? Desert thine own ? Bright  
 god

Of the golden helm, look on the land, the town,  
 Long since thy well-belovèd. One and all,  
 God-guardians of our city, come, behold  
 This maiden-league against captivity !

Wild waves around the wall, borne on by blasts  
 Of Ares' breath, slant-crested waves of men,  
 Are flashing at the gate. Father of all,  
 Save us from capture ; stay the enemy's hand !

Round Cadmus' citadel with dire alarms I 1

The Argive foemen close with terror of arms.

The curb-chains of their chargers as they ride  
 Ring knells of warriors clad in mailed pride.

Seven valiant chiefs before them, spear in hand,  
 Each at the allotted gateway, take their stand.

O daughter of the Highest, lover of fight,

Pallas, defend our country with thy might,  
 And thou, Poseidon, ruler of the deep,

Let thy shark-spearing weapon through them sweep,  
 And free us from this tyranny of fear.

O Lord of war, deliver Cadmus' town, I 2

The city from of old declared thine own :

Let thy fond care for her to sight appear.  
 First mother of Cadmeians old and young,

Cypris, defend us all ! From thee we are sprung,  
 Who now, with prayers that pierce the immortal ear,  
 Meekly surround thy sacred altars here.

O wolf-slaying lord, stirred by our groans and cries,  
 Send slaughter on our wolvish enemies !

Kind maiden, daughter of Latona, thou  
 Make ready for the fight thy silver bow.

Ah, ah ! All round I hear the rattling car, II 1  
 (Hera, dread lady of the skies !)

The wheels about the burdened axles jar,  
 (Kind maiden, Artemis, arise !),

All the air is hurtling with their brandished spears.  
Where stands our city's weal ? What shall be done ?  
What issue of our fears  
Will the everlasting gods bring on ?

Ah, ah ! they come ! Slung stones are glancing o'er II 2  
Our battlements (Apollo kind !)  
Through every gate is heard the rising roar,  
Borne inward on the troubled wind,  
From myriad brazen shields beaten in scorn.  
Yea, but of war the righteous last event  
In highest Heaven is born,  
And from great Zeus with saving power is sent.  
O blessed Onka, that o'erlook'st our town,  
Protect thy seven-gated home's renown.

III 1

Divine defenders all,  
Come at our maiden call,  
Warders sublime of Thebe's holy land,  
Leave not in war's alarms  
Your city to dire harms  
Of cruel onslaught by an alien band ;  
But hear our cry : mark well the uplifted hand.

III 2

Keep watch around the gate,  
Save Thebes in her dire strait,  
Kind powers that ever shield her from above !  
Recall each hallowed rite  
And aid in stress of fight  
This people that have shown you faithful love :  
Think of your altars, and our saviours prove !

### ETEOCLES.

Tell me, ye creatures unendurable,  
Is this the noblest course, the State's defence,  
The rallying note for our beleaguered men,  
That ye should fall before each public shrine,  
With your shrill outcry, hated of the wise ?  
Neither in trouble nor kind prosperous days  
Let me be housed with women ! When they rule  
Their boldness is the bane of peaceful life ;

And once afraid, they bring worse misery  
 To home and country. Even as ye to-day,  
 Coursing with senseless hurry to and fro,  
 Set up a noise that genders heartless fear ;  
 Whereby the foreigner's advantage grows,  
 And Thebes is ravaged inly by ourselves.  
 So fares the man whom women dwell withal.  
 Howbeit, what soul soe'er defies my sway,  
 Woman or man or neither, if so be,  
 The doom of ruin with fell purpose waits  
 To o'erwhelm them with dire stoning of the folk.  
 For business out of door let men have care,  
 And let not women be our counsellors ;  
 Bide within doors, nor hinder us. Do ye hear ?  
 Or do I prate all idly to deaf ears ?

## CHORUS.

Dear prince of Laius' line, my spirits sank I 1  
 To hear the rattling chariot, the harsh clank  
 Of nave on axle of the whirling wheel.

Hark, hark ! the fire-forged steel  
 That rudder-like controls the hard-mouthed steed  
 Is jangling with his motion of dire speed.

ET. And when the ship is labouring in mid seas,  
 Say, doth the sailor fly from stem to stern,  
 So to find rescue from a watery death ?

CHO. Firmly believing in the powers divine I 2  
 I hurried forward to each ancient shrine ;  
 When round our gates the deadly hail-shower flew,

Nearer in prayer I drew  
 To the blest gods, driven by my fears, that they  
 Might shield our town with their immortal sway.

ET. Pray that these walls may fend the foeman's  
 spear.

CHO. Yea, while the gods uphold them.

ET. Nay, the gods  
 Desert, 'tis said, the conquered country's domes.

CNO. Ne'er in my lifetime let yond' holy throng II 1  
 Desert my land, nor let me see the foe

Scouring these streets, quelling the bold and strong  
In fiery overthrow !

Et. Temper with prudence your fond piety.  
Obedience is the mother of success—  
A helpful offspring. So tradition holds.

Cho. True—but the strength of Heaven is over  
all, II 2

And often out of depths of dire despair,  
God lifts the hopeless after heaviest fall,  
Though dark clouds choke the air.

Et. Leave it to men to render sacrifice  
And victims to the gods ; when foemen strive,  
'Tis thine to keep indoors and hold thy peace.

Cho. Through gods we hold our city unsubdued, III 1  
And these towers brave the tide of foemen rude.

What wrath can that call down ?

Et. I grudge no honour thou wouldest pay to Heaven ;  
But keep thy panic within bounds, nor move  
Our men to cowardice. Therefore be calm.

Cho. Hearing the unwonted din, with fears dis-  
traught III 2  
The topmost sanctuary I straightway sought—  
Dread seat of blest renown.

Et. Now then, if ye be told that some are slain  
Or wounded, catch not at the news with cries.  
The War-god feeds him with the slaughter of men.

Cho. Lo, there ! I hear the chargers neighing high !

Et. Then make not too apparent what ye hear.

Cho. The town's foundation groans ! They close us  
round !

Et. Is't not enough I am taking thought for that ?

Cho. Battering at gates grows loud ! I am full of  
dread !

Et. Go to ! speak nought of this for Thebes to hear.

Cho. O gathered powers, forsake not our strong wall !

Et. A plague on you ! Be silent and endure.

Cho. Dear fellow-Theban gods ! No bonds for me !

Et. You bring them on yourself and all the town.

CHO. Almighty Zeus, send lightning on our foes !

ET. O Zeus, in women what a race thou gavest !

CHO. Wretched, as men are, in captivity.

ET. Again you cling to yonder shrines and cry.

CHO. My heart is weak : terror usurps my tongue.

ET. Yet grant to my desire one light request.

CHO. Wouldst thou but name it ! Let me hear and know.

ET. Cease talking, wretched one, fright not thy friends.

CHO. I have done. With others I will bear my doom.

ET. That speech of thine I am better pleased withal.  
 Besides, I bid you, standing well away  
 From the images, hope ever for the best,  
 Looking to Heaven for succour. Hear my vow,  
 And answer it with joyous voiceful hymn,  
 As wont is at Hellenic sacrifice,  
 Heartening to friends, dispersing hostile fear  
 I vow to all our land-sustaining gods,  
 Both of the plain, and the mid-market-place,  
 To Dirce's fountain and Ismenus' stream,  
 When all is well, and Thebè rests secure.  
 That we will stain with blood of bulls and sheep  
 The hearths and homes of the gods, and thereabove  
 Uprear our trophies, fastening to their walls,  
 With captive spears, the raiment of our foes  
 Festooned around their temples. Hereunto  
 Add ye your prayers and offerings, not with groans  
 Or vain repeating of wild babblement,  
 Seeing nought hereof will alter destiny.  
 I go to find six champions who, with me  
 For seventh, shall stand at our seven outward ports ;  
 Ere hurried message and swift-rumoured news  
 Astound us with the blaze of utmost need. [Exit]

### CHORUS.

My reason yields, but soothes not these alarms. I 1  
 For anxious thoughts, close to my spirit's core,  
 Rekindle evermore

The flame of terror for these leaguering arms ;  
 Even as some dove beside the serpent's lair  
 Broods all a-tremble o'er her nestlings there.

What shall be done ? Our walls are strong ;

Yet onward moves their countless throng,

A firm compacted ring !

While, cresting that tumultuous tide,

Their hurrying bands from every side

The deadly hand-stone fling.

O Zeus-born powers, from heaven descend,  
 And Cadmus' children mightily defend !—

Say, to what land of warriors should ye go      I 2  
 Forsaking Thebè's plain of fertile soil,

And yielding to the foe

Dircè's dear fountain, to the sons of toil

Most nourishing of all the streams that flow

By gift of him whose waves enfold the earth,

Or that from sons of Tethys have their birth ?

Then, guarding still this ancient town,

Win from our citizens renown,

Sending on yonder host

The homicidal power of flight

That guides nor shield nor spear aright,

But yields all arms for lost.

Then 'mid loud praises shall ye stand

On lofty thrones, defenders of our land.

'Twere full of pity, sure, to plunge in night      II 1

A land thus grey with time, the Achaians' prey

And spear-driven captive, in forlorn despite

Heaven-strewn with ashes in her evil day,—

To see dragged off to bondage by the hair,

As fillies by the mane—their garments fair

Being rent around them—maids and elder dames ;

While all the city that escapes the flames

Is filled with outcry, ransacked and laid bare,

'Midst clamour of wild rapine, waste, despair,

Confusion !—I foresee with fear

The heavy hand of ruin hovering near.—

Piteous, ere lawful rites may cull the flower, II 2  
 Fresh from child-nurture, for a journey strange  
 And horrible to leave the virgin-bower ;  
 Nay, death were better than such forceful change.  
 Ah, much unhappiness, when cities fall,  
 Finds harbourage within the battered wall ;  
 Slaughter, captivity, the flaring brand,  
 Death, rapine, conflagration on each hand,  
 While the mad War-god, breathing hate to all  
 The reverence he besmires, hastens to enthral

The people, and with blood and smoke  
 Mars the fair town, that quails beneath the stroke.

Weird, hollow noises haunt the frightened streets, III 1

Where man his foeman meets

And falls ; the fenced towers are netted round,  
 While tender cries resound

From infant throats, late feeding at the breast,  
 Bleeding and torn from the maternal nest.

Plunder and hurly-burly hand in hand,

Own sisters, range the land :

As robber upon burdened robber falls,

And greed on hunger calls

For partner of his booty and his toil.—

Each eager to have most when all divide the spoil.

How fares it with the spoiled ? I need not tell :  
 Whoe'er can reason may conjecture well.—

All manner of produce lying at random round, III 2

Cast forth upon the ground,

Cuts to the heart sad seneschals who gaze,

And see in tangled maze

The precious poison of all bounteous Earth

On that rough surge drifted, as nothing worth.

Young captive maids find for their earliest grief

A sorrow past relief,

The rude lust of an overbearing lord.

What help can hope afford ?

Ruthless in triumph is the exulting foe,

Death is their only hope, the only friend they know.

For him they look to close their eyes in night  
And free them from wild weeping and affright.

**LEADER OF CHORUS.** Dear maids, methinks the  
scout from the army brings  
New tidings for our ears. His nimble feet  
Run as on wheels, urged by his eager will.  
And lo ! the prince himself, of Laius' line,  
Comes fittingly to take the man's report.  
He, too, moves eagerly with steps of haste.

**MESS.** With perfect knowledge I will tell thee now  
The purpose of the foe : which port by lot  
Each chief assails.—Tydeus already shouts  
To assault the Proetan gate, but the wise seer  
Forbids to cross the Ismenus, for the signs  
Are adverse. Tydeus, mad with battle-thirst,  
A noon-day dragon, screams, reviling sore  
The prophet Amphiäráïs, Oecles' son,  
With taunts of cowardice, as tendering life  
Too dearly ; thus he roars, and proudly waves  
The triply-shadowing plume of his bright helm.  
Beneath his buckler bells of brazen tone  
Clang terror, and it bears this haughty sign—  
A heaven ablaze with stars, cunningly wrought,  
While beaming on mid-shield the orbèd moon,  
Eye of the night, queen among stars, appears.  
Thus rampant in his over-daring arms  
Shouts on the river brink this lover of war,  
Like fiery steed that pants upon the bit  
And strains to start, hearing the trumpet sound.  
What adversary, when the Proetan gate  
Is opened, wilt thou trust to oppose him there ?

**Er.** I blench at no man's blazon, fear no wound  
From emblems : plumes and bells without the spear  
Hurt not. Nay, more. This *night* whereof thou tellest  
Portrayed upon his shield with heavenly signs,  
May hold a mystic meaning, rightly weighed.  
If night shall fall upon his eyes in death,  
This proud device will designate aright  
The destined downfall of the shield-bearer,

Whose insolent thought thus prophesies his end.  
 For adversary to defend the gate  
 I will appoint the son of Astacus,  
 Melanippus here, a man of noble strain,  
 One who reveres the throne of modesty,  
 And hates high-vaunting words; of bearing still  
 And quiet, save where honour stirs him on:  
 Sprung from that remnant whom the War-god spared  
 Of the earth-born seed,—a true son of the soil.  
 The powers of war shall rule the event; but he  
 By law of kindred predetermined stands  
 From his own mother to repel the foe.

CHO. Gods, grant our warrior good success! He  
                   goes

11

A rightful champion to withstand our foes.  
 Trembling I look, lest precious lives be spent  
 For precious lives in bootless hardiment.

MESS. Well may he prosper with the help of Heaven!  
 The Eleetran gate hath fallen to Capaneus,  
 A Titan form yet taller than the first,  
 Whose threatful vaunt surpasses human pride.  
 Fortune forbid the accomplishment: He swears,  
 God willing or not willing, he will scale  
 The wall and sack the city, though from Heaven  
 Dread Discord stalk the plain to beat him back.  
 Zeus' thunderbolts and lightning he compares  
 To beams of summer noon-day. For a sign  
 He bears a man unarmed with lighted brand  
 For single weapon, whose announcement runs  
 In golden letters, 'I WILL BURN YOUR TOWN.'  
 What adversary shall cope with one so bold  
 Or bide undaunted such a challenger?

ET. This blazon, too, breeds profit for our cause,  
 Since of vain thoughts men's tongues accusing them  
 Fail not of judgement. Capaneus is loud  
 In threats which he will wreak in scorn of Heaven.  
 Through foolish transport his incautious tongue  
 With mortal venom hurls against the sky  
 Big billowy words to offend the supreme ear.

But I am confident the flash will come  
 Of righteous vengeance to transpierce his pride,  
 Armed with a flame in no wise comparable  
 To Helios' noontide warmth. Yet, man to man,  
 He, too, though proud, shall find his opposite,  
 Burning with valour, Polyphontes fierce,  
 Well warranted for wardship, by the grace  
 Of Artemis, with other powers to aid.  
 Now tell us of another challenger  
 Standing for Argos at a different port.

CHO. Perish the man who vaunts his impious force I 2  
 Against our town ! May Heaven arrest his course  
 With lightning, ere his over-mastering power  
 Have torn my life from the protecting bower !

MESS. I'll tell thee who stands next to assault a gate.  
 The third lot from the upturned brazen helm  
 Leapt for Etéocles, whom Fortune bids  
 Assail the port Neistan with his troop.  
 Thither he wheels his chargers, snorting loud  
 With eagerness to dash against the gate.  
 Their nozzle-pipes, in savage fashion filled  
 With boastful breath, give forth a shrilly sound ;  
 And on his shield no mean device is shown :—  
 A warrior, armed, climbs up a ladder set  
 Against a tower manned by his enemies,  
 As bound to carry it by storm, and cries  
 (Here too the legend is distinct and clear),  
 ' NOT ARES' SELF SHALL THROW ME FROM THE WALL ! '  
 To oppose him, too, send one well-warranted  
 To ward from Thebes the yoke of servitude.

ET. I would send him without fail, but by good hap  
 He is passed already forth, great Creon's son  
 Megareus, of th' earthborn seed, who shall not yield  
 His station at the gate for any steed's  
 Wild snortings, but will either die and pay  
 The boon land for his nurture, or will take  
 Two armours and the city on the shield  
 For his own prize to adorn his father's hall.

He bears no blazon but his own right arm.  
Brag now—and stint not—the next challenger.

CHO. May fortune speed thee ('tis my fervent  
prayer) II 1

O champion of our homes; ill may they fare  
Who vaunt high words against our city's peace!  
According to their madness of intent  
May wrathful Zeus look down in punishment  
And cause their pride to cease.

MESS. Fourth challenger, with noisy vehemence,  
At the gate neighbouring Pallas Onka, stands  
The portly stature of Hippómēdon.  
I will e'en confess I shuddered as he whirled  
That disk so vast, I mean his orbèd shield.  
No commonplace engraver framed the sign  
On that circumference. 'Tis Typhon, pouring  
Through fiery jaws black smoke—to flickering flame  
Own sister. And about the hollow womb  
Of that firm orb are fixed, as on a ground,  
Twined wreaths of serpents. He himself moreover,  
Shouted, as with the War-god's spirit possessed.  
He raves for conflict with fear-striking glance  
As of a Bacchanal. Such foe's assault  
Calls for much care in the defence. Already  
Menace of rout is rise at yonder gate.

ET. First, Pallas Onka shall defend her own,  
Hating the man's insensate arrogance.  
She dwells beside our city at that gate,  
To guard her brood as from the serpent's tooth.  
Then for a man to meet him, Oenops' son,  
Valiant Hyperbius hath been chosen, a man  
Willing to know Fate's pleasure in the event:—  
In form and spirit, as in panoply,  
Flawless. The lottery's chance by Hermes' skill  
Hath matched them not amiss. The men are foes,  
And hostile each to each the gods they'll bear  
Grappling together on their shields: the one  
Typhon, flame-breathing, whilst Hyperbius  
Hath father Zeus for blazon, seated firm,

In act of onset, lightning-bolt in hand.  
 And no man yet hath seen Zeus overcome.  
 Such benefit of aid divine have we :—  
 Victorious powers for us ; vanquished for them.  
 Whence one may argue that the men opposed  
 May likewise fare :—Zeus is a combatant  
 Of valour more than Typhon, and shall save  
 Hyperbius with the blazoned lightning there.

CHO. I firmly hope the warrior who doth wield II 2  
 The rebel monster's form upon his shield—  
 The foe of Zeus that gods and mortals hate,  
 The loveless earthborn power whom one and all,  
 Divine and human, execrate,—shall fall

Head-first before the gate.

MESS. Even so may it prove ! And now the fifth  
 I name,

Appointed to the fifth, the northward port,  
 Hard by Zeus-born Amphion's holy tomb.  
 He by the spear he wields, which he doth worship  
 Beyond all gods, prizing it more than sight,  
 Swears he will sack Thebè by force of war.  
 Such vow, such prayer is his, the fair-faced man  
 Of boyish mien, the mountain mother's pride.  
 The downy growth of genial youthful bloom  
 Peers freshly on his cheek, but lush and full.  
 With spirit unlike his maiden-sounding name,  
 With ruthless heart and flashing glance, he comes.  
 Nor without blazon stands he at your gate,  
 Since on the brass-forged rounded shield he throws  
 Before his goodly person, he displays  
 Thebè's reproach, the live-devouring Sphinx,  
 Riveted on, a bright embossed device,  
 Beneath whose figure a Cadmeian man  
 Is so disposed that of all shafts i' the fight  
 Most shall be hurled at him. This hero moves  
 As minded to deal wholesale with his foes,  
 Nor bring disgrace on his long journeying  
 From far Arcadia, whence to Argolis  
 Parthenopaeus came ; a sojourner

Who means to pay his debt of maintenance  
By wreaking on these towers such menace huge  
As I pray Heaven the gods may render void.

ER. Ay, let the gods but visit their intents  
With like for like ; they and their impious vaunts  
Shall utterly be quenched in misery.  
For your Arcadian, he too hath his match :  
A man not given to boasting, but whose arm  
Fails not at need ; brother of him last named,  
Actor. No deedless tongue, how bold soe'er,  
Shall by his leave rush in to vex our town  
With evil menace ; nor will he permit  
The man who bears upon his hostile shield  
That hateful ravening plague, to enter here.  
But she without shall wrangle with the chief  
Who brings her Thebes-ward, since beneath these walls  
She is battered so unsparingly. May Heaven  
But grant my bold vaticination true !

CHO. My bosom thrills, pierced through with words  
of fear : III 1

My plaited hair starts upright, when I hear  
The high-voiced vauntings of that impious band.  
May Heaven destroy them yonder in our land !

MESS. I come to the sixth challenger, a man  
Of perfect temperance, most brave in war,  
The valiant prophet Amphiaráüs : he,  
Embattled at the Homoloian gate,  
Breaks forth on Tydeus with reproaches loud  
And manifold : ‘ Author of many deaths,  
Mover of Argos unto evil ways,  
The fury’s summoner, grim slaughter’s page,  
Adrastus’ counsellor in all this ill ; ’  
Then calling on thy brother, glancing back  
On your sire’s awful fate, naming the son  
In the end twice o’er,—‘ Polynices, fraught with  
strife.’—

He thus denounces him : ‘ A goodly deed,  
Admired of Heaven, well-fitting to be told  
And heard by times to come, to sack and burn

One's native town, profaning all the gods  
Of one's own race, ruining hearth and home  
With rash invasion of an alien league !  
What right may countervail a mother's claim,  
Or dry that well-spring ? How then shall the land  
Whence thou art sprung, made captive by thy will,  
E'er be thy friend to fight for thee ?—'Tis mine  
To enrich this soil, a prophet underground  
Within the border of my foes. Then, on !  
I hail the battle, hoping for an end  
Not void of honour.' Thus the prophet cried,  
And reared his shield of massy bronze. No sign  
Blazed on that orb, for 'tis his firm intent  
Not to seem noblest, but to be ; so reaping  
Rich harvest of deep-furrowed thoughtfulness  
That brings forth fruit of counsel wise and true.  
Send, then, to labour at the opposing oar,  
Men of tried skill and trust. The righteous man  
Who fears the blessed gods, is to be feared.

ET. Woe worth the auspice of the day that joins  
The righteous with the worst of evil men !  
That grain hath no ingathering. The tilth  
Of madness brings forth death. Either at sea,  
Embarked with hot-brained sailors bent on crime,  
The pious perisheth with that fell crew  
Abhorred of Heaven ; or, loving righteousness,  
But dwelling in a city of bad men  
Forgetful of the gods, inhospitable,  
He is caught in the same toils of vengeful doom,  
And, by the universal scourge o'er taken,  
Is quelled. Even so this prophet, Oeclcs' son,  
Just, faithful, temperate, pious and brave,  
Potent with inspiration, being conjoined  
Maugre his judgement with their impious threats  
Who lead from far this onslaught on our land.  
Shall with them be o'erwhelmed by the act of Heaven ?  
Yet hardly can I think he will come near  
To assail the gate,—not through faint-heartedness,  
But knowing he must die in that assault,  
Or else make void the word of Loxias,

Who speaks not save in season. Ne'er the less  
 We will appoint his match, tall Lasthenes,  
 A gate-keeper not kind to comers-in,  
 One old in wisdom though of youthful frame,  
 An eye of nimble range, a hand not slow  
 To wrest the spear uncovered of the shield.  
 Howbeit, good fortune is the gift of Heaven.

CHO. Hearken, ye gods, to our most rightful  
 prayer!

III 2

Grant that our city nobly still may fare;  
 Against the invader turn the troublous fight,  
 Heaven-smitten beyond the barriers, in our sight!

MESS. Seventh by lot to the seventh gate assigned  
 Is thine own brother. Listen, while I tell  
 What issue he desires, what cause he invokes:  
 Either to set his foot upon your wall  
 Proclaimed your city's lord, and, with a shout  
 Of triumph in her capture, there to meet  
 With thee in conflict, slay thee, and be slain  
 Together; or, both living, be revenged,  
 Banishing thee his banisher, even so  
 As thou didst outrage kinship on his head.  
 So Polynices cries, and in his rage  
 Bids all the gods of his own land and race  
 Visit his prayer with full accomplishment.  
 His new-wrought buckler, lightly swayed, hath on it  
 A twofold token, to the purpose framed;  
 A man of beaten gold, in panoply,  
 As 'twould appear, is led by a fair dame  
 Full modestly attired, whose legend runs,  
 In letters all of gold.—‘JUSTICE AM I!

AND I WILL RE-ESTABLISH IN HIS RIGHT  
 THIS WARRIOR HERE; HE SHALL RETURN AND RULE  
 HIS NATIVE CITY AND HIS FATHER'S HOUSE.’  
 I tell thee their devices; 'tis for thee  
 To judge whom thou wilt send:—mine to report;  
 And thou shalt find all my reporting true:—  
 Thine to be Thebè's pilot in the storm.

ET. O Heaven-infatuate, God-abandonèd!

O race of Oedipus, our race, ill-starred !  
Woe's me. my father's curse even now comes true.

Yet ill would it beseem me here to weep :  
Lest tears give birth to heavier cause of woe.  
But for this man of strife, for Polynices,  
Soon shall be known the end of that device,  
If the gold writing on his shield emblazed,  
And blatant with wild hopes, shall bring him home.  
Had Justice, virgin daughter of the Highest,  
Truly attended him in thought and deed,  
This might have been. But never upon him,  
Neither in issuing from the darkling womb,  
Nor in the dawn and springtime of his youth,  
Nor when the manly growth upon his chin  
Was gathering, hath great Justice looked and smiled.  
Nor in his native country's sore distress  
May I believe she'll stand by him to-day.  
Unjustly would she bear the honoured name  
Of Justice, to consort with that rash mind.  
Whereon relying, I will go forth and stand  
Myself to oppose him :—who more fit than I ?  
Commander with commander, foe with foe,  
Brother with brother, I will conflict. Bring forth  
My greaves, to fend the sling-stone and the spear !

CHO. Dear son of Oedipus, let not thy mood  
Be like to his of the ill-omened name !  
Enough that Argive and Cadmeian come  
To the issue : blood so shed hath power to cleanse.  
But death of brothers, each by a brother's hand,—  
That were a stain no time could purify.

ET. If ill must come, let honour be secure ;  
No other gain accrues to men when dead.  
The craven dastard hath no glory in death.

CHO. Dear prince, what wouldst thou do ? Let not  
the force I I  
Of this war-fever rule thy headlong course,  
But quench this fatal longing at the source.

ET. Since Heaven this consummation hastens on,

Let Laius' seed, caught by Cocytus' flood,  
Drift down the tide, victims of Phoebus' ire.

CHO. Too sharply urgeth thee the savage sting I 2  
Of strong desire unto thy home to bring  
Dire harvest of unlawful blood-shedding.

ER. Cruelly near in kin, my father's curse,  
Close on fulfilment, with dry tearless look  
Tells of things more desired than death's delay.

CHO. Yet haste not thou, but win both life and fame ! II 1

No taint of cowardice shall touch thy name.  
The Erinys-storm shall leave thy home and land  
When Heaven hath free-will offerings from thy hand.

ER. Heaven hath forgotten us, or with blank stare  
Wonders at sacrifice from men fore-doomed.  
Why fawn on Fate when in the grips of Death ?

CHO. Nay, seize the time that offers ; Heaven, though late, II 2

May veer and alter ; even the blast of Fate,  
That now against thy peace blows fiercer and rude.  
May change hereafter to some milder mood.

ER. Fate rages, for the curse of Oedipus  
Is come to ripeness, and the visioned dream,  
Parting our patrimony, was too true.

CHO. Let women rule thee, though thou rail'st on them.

ER. Speak, then, to purpose and be brief.

CHO. Go not  
On this emprise to guard the seventh gate.

ER. I am too sharp set for words to blunt mine edge.

CHO. Heaven favours victory though won by fear.  
ER. A maxim not for warriors to approve !

CHO. And wilt thou reap the life of thine own brother?  
ER. God willing, he shall not escape his doom.

[Exit]

## CHORUS.

I am shuddering with sad fear  
 Of the ruin hovering near,  
 Lest the power of godless might  
 Alien from the lords of light,  
 Seer infallible of ill,  
 Dark Erinys, should fulfil  
 Oedipus' infatuate vows  
 'Gainst the children of his house.  
 Still she holds her destined path  
 Prompted by a father's wrath :  
 Now this child-destroying strife  
 Lends her purpose instant life.

I 1

Ruthless Iron sways the lot  
 That shall portion them the plot  
 Each shall hold ; a stranger he  
 From the Scythian colony  
 That came o'er the Pontic deep  
 To Chalybia's country steep :  
 Stern divider, judge severe !  
 What possession find they here ?  
 What their heritage ? So much  
 As the dead man's corse may touch,  
 So much either shall obtain,  
 Nothing more of all yon plain.

I 2

When fratricidal death  
 Hath stopped their raging breath,  
 And Earth's dust drunk dark draughts of sinful gore,  
 What charm may purge the guilt  
 Of blood so foully spilt ?  
 Whose hand shall bathe them ? O unhappy store  
 Of fresh woes for this house, blent with the woes before !

II 1

I mourn that ancient crime  
 Rued by all after-time,—  
 Three generations now have borne the weight,  
 Since—maugre Phoebus' word  
 Thrice from the tripod heard.

II 2

How 'twas the constant will of sovran Fate,  
That, dying without seed, he should preserve the  
state—

Laius, by love o'ercome,  
Begat his own sure doom,

III 1

Sad Oedipus, the slayer of his sire,  
Who ploughed the field where erst  
His embryo bones were nurst.

And reared a crop that bloomed in murderous ire.  
Infatuate bride and groom, so drawn by mad desire!

Evils are like a surge

III 2

Where billows billows urge:

Each peers three-crested o'er the wave that's gone,  
Thundering abaft the helm.

And threatening to o'erwhelm

The frail defence that braves that waste alone.

I fear lest, with her kings, Thebes may be now o'er-  
thrown.

When dawns the Fate-appointed day,

IV 1

The agèd curse is hard to allay.

Once here, Destruction rides not past

Till those are fallen beneath the blast

Whose toil-earned wealth, too highly heaped,

Brings ruin, and the man hath reaped

But sacrifice of all at last.

Who more admired of gods and men

IV 2

Than Oedipus was honoured then,

By all who shared the city's hearth,

Drawing rich life from Theban earth.

When he had freed the land from fear

Of the Sphinx-monster seated near,

Dire minister of death and dearth?

But when he came to know

V 1

The measure of his woe,

That wretched wedlock with dire anguish fraught,

Unequal to sustain

The stress of that sore pain

A twofold evil his rash spirit wrought.

First, with the hand that smote his sire, he left  
Himself of sight, his only comfort left.

Then with his children wroth  
He fiercely launched on both  
A savage curse for their unfilial ways:  
How with steel-furnished hand  
They should divide his land  
And heritage in lapse of after days.  
Even now the fear works strongly in my soul,  
The Eriny of that curse runs close upon her goal.

V 2

*Enter 2ND MESSENGER.*

2ND MESS. Take courage, children, whom the mother's care  
Keeps tender; Thebè hath escaped the yoke  
Of threatened bondage; her impetuous foes  
Are fallen from their pitch of vaunting pride,  
While she sails onward under smiling skies,  
No water shipped from that sore buffeting,  
No breach in all her towers, no port unsure:  
So firm the warrant of those bulwarks set  
Singly to guard them. All but all is well—  
All in six gateways. But the seventh was held  
By a dread champion self-appointed there.  
For there Apollo chose to bring to pass  
Of Laius' ancient folly the last meed,  
Accomplished on the stock of Oedipus.

CHO. What worse than heretofore afflicts the state?

2ND MESS. They are fallen in death, by their own  
kindred slain.

CHO. Who are fallen? What say'st thou? I am  
wild with dread.

2ND MESS. Be tame, and hearken. Oedipus' two  
sons—

CHO. Lie yonder? Terrible! Yet tell it forth.

2ND MESS. In equal soilure of indifferent dust.

CHO. Too near in dreadful kinship! slaying and  
slain!

2ND MESS. The Genius of them both was even so dire,  
 So undistinguishing : and with one stroke  
 Consigns to nothingness that hapless race.  
 Thus joy and weeping mingle. We rejoice  
 For Thebè faring gloriously, but weep  
 For her two chieftains, generals of this war,  
 Who with the hammered strength of Seythian steel  
 Have so divided their inheritanee,  
 That, carried headlong by their father's curse,  
 Ill-fated, each inherits so much earth  
 As in his burial he may occupy.  
 Thebè is rescued : but her princes twain  
 By mutual slaughter fratricidally  
 Are perished : their own land hath drunk their blood.

## CHORUS.

Mighty Zeus and guardian powers  
 Rescuers of Cadmus' towers,  
 Shall I raise the joyous cry  
 For the seathless victory  
 Thebes hath won, or weep and mourn  
 For the hapless chiefs forlorn  
 Dying, in an ill-starred strife,  
 Childless in the morn of life ?  
 Impious was their purpose proud,  
 Dire the fate whereto they bowed,  
 Rightly answering either name :  
 Keen in strife and true in fame.

O fraught with gloom I 1  
 Curse of the sire upon the race fulfilled !  
 With horror at my heart my veins are chilled.  
 A funeral Bacchantè, for their tomb  
 A dirge I have framed, how on the battle floor,  
 Dreadfully slain, their bodies lie in gore.

Sure ominous of evil doom  
 This warrior fellowship i' the open field.

The father's prayer I 2  
 For evil hath full course and doth prevail ;  
 Nor doth the faithless folly of Laius fail,

Surrounding Thebè close with anxious care,  
Since the oracles lose nothing of their power.  
Past thought is the affliction of this hour,—

The deed of that ill-omened pair,  
No tragic burden of a poet's tale.

CHO. 1. Our horror heaves in sight. They come,  
they are here.

CHO. 2. Two cares, two proud heroic themes of woe.

CHO. 1. An impious-fatal end on either bier.

CHO. 2. What shall I say ? These halls their sorrow  
know.

Come, let the measured stroke of hand on brow  
Guide the sad convoy with the formless prow  
And sable canvas, on her sunless way  
Where bright Apollo never brings the day,  
O'er Acheron with winds of sighing fanned  
Unto the viewless, all-receiving strand.

See ! with reluctant steps and slow  
Proportioned to the task of woe,  
Antigonè, Ismenè, come,  
Bringing their brethren to the tomb.  
Surely from either virgin breast  
Deep-shrouded in ambrosial vest,  
Rich strains of heart-felt grief will ring  
Noble as they for whom they spring.

[*The CHORUS range themselves in two divisions,  
accompanying ANTIGONE and ISMENE  
severally.*

CHO. Oh ! most unhappy in your brethren's will  
Of all that round their robes the cineture wind,  
Our tears, our groans, our lamentations shrill  
Shall prove our perfect soul and faithful mind.

ANT. O men perverse, stubborn to friendly rede, I 1  
Not to be daunted from your evil deed,  
The war ye levied hath procured the fall,  
O most unhappy ! of your father's hall.

H. CHO. I. Yea most unhappy, whose all-hapless  
doom  
Brings shame and ruin on their natal home.

Is. Ye that have ruined what your fathers built, I 2  
 With fell ambition for dire ends ye spilt  
 Each the other's blood. By sovereignty beguiled,  
 With interchange of steel ye are reconciled.

H. CHO. 2. Well doth the fury of Oedipus fulfil  
 The dread presaging of a father's will.

ANT. Through the left side each brother took the  
 harm II 1

Launched from the brother's arm.

Omen twofold of monstrous woe.

O curse of maddening power, directing blow for blow !

H. CHO. 1. That stroke with voiceless force  
 Did both from life, from home, from kin, divorce,  
 Possessed through their own father's curse  
 With jarring destiny of passionate thoughts perverse.

Is. Grief holds the town, the wall, the peopled  
 plain, II 2

While to their heirs remain

The riches whence the quarrel grew

That found no end of broils, till each his brother slew.

H. CHO. 2. Their eager hearts of rage  
 With equal hand have shared their heritage ;  
 Yet the arbiter their friends may blame,  
 Nor love they that grim power who sets the spirit  
 aflame.

ANT. Thrust through with steel they lie III 1  
 Spear-stricken : then what doom  
 Waits them ? Will none reply ?

H. CHO. 1. Peace in their father's tomb.  
 Now for their convoy comes from forth their hall  
 Heart-rending grief's true note of melancholy  
 With gloomy cheer, and tears of passion holy  
 Wrung from my heart that pines as I lament their fall.

Is. Their funeral dirge may say— III 2  
 ' Much harm they did the state.  
 But more, in bloody fray,  
 To strange hosts at the gate.'

H. CHO. 2. To an evil fate their mother gave them birth,  
 Beyond all wives who have won the name of mother :  
 She wedded her own child, and, each by other,  
 Their offspring now have died, slain on their native  
 earth.

Close kinship merged in ruin unalloyed ! IV 1  
 Mad strife that ends but with the lives destroyed !  
 Fierce arbitrator of insensate feud,  
 Divider of the rights of brotherhood !

H. CHO. 1. Their hatred ceases in the crimsoned soil.  
 Full brotherly their blood is mingling now.  
 A cruel judge to arbitrate their ire,  
 That Pontic guest was moulded in the fire.  
 Cruel and hard in portioning the spoil  
 The War-god, making good the vengeful father's vow.  
 What gifts from Heaven are yours, O hapless  
 pair ! IV 2

Each finds his equal portion in despair ;  
 Of earth your having shall be rich and deep,  
 Piled underneath your everlasting sleep.

H. CHO. 2. With many an ill from both they have  
 chequered o'er  
 The story of their line, till at the last  
 A troop of curses shrilled the battle-shout  
 Putting that race to a perpetual rout.  
 The trophy of Mischance is reared before  
 The gate where, both o'erthrown, the conquering Genius  
 passed.

ANT. Smitten thou didst smite.

Is. In dying thou didst slay.

ANT. With spear thou slewest.

Is. With spear passedst away.

ANT. Sad quest,

Is. Sad fate,

ANT. Was thine who liest low.

Groans—

Is. Tears—

ANT. For thec,—

Is. For thee who gavest the blow.

ANT. My vexed soul raves— V 1

Is. My heart doth only mourn—

ANT. For thee } ANT. Once Thebè's pride—

Is. For thee } Is. To misery born.

ANT. Killed by thine own.

Is. Destined thine own to quell.

ANT. A twofold sorrow—

Is. To behold—

ANT. To tell.—

The burden of our grief is drawing near.

Is. Brother to sisters. Brother, I am here.

CHO. Fate, o'er our heads thy potent frown doth lower;

O shade of Oedipus, this is thine hour!

O dark Eriny, dreadful is thy power!

ANT. Horrors to sight.—

V 2

Is. Returning, thou didst bring.

ANT. Slaying, but not saved.

Is. Lost in thy home-coming.

ANT. Lost and destroying.

Is. He, too, gave the blow.

ANT. O troublous family!

Is. O end of woe!

ANT. Like tale of sorrows that the spirit quell!

Is. Like dreadful to behold, like dire to tell.

CHO. Fate, o'er our heads thy potent frown doth lower;

O shade of Oedipus, this is thine hour!

O dark Eriny, dreadful is thy power!

ANT. Thou knowest the worst.

Is. And thou, in one event.

ANT. Since thou camest home.

Is. To oppose him with the spear.

ANT. To afflict thy house with evil hardiment.

Is. To afflict thy land that mourns around thy bier.

ANT. To afflict me most.

Is. And me too, more than all.

ANT. Of all ill-fated ones—

Is.

Eteocles first!

ANT. O ye, most deeply mourned for in your fall.

Is. O ye, with fratricidal fury accurst!

Where shall we lay them?

ANT.

In the holiest ground.

Is. Beside their sire? Horrors will there abound.

HERALD.

'Tis mine to announce the will and firm decrees  
 Of the high council of this Theban state.  
 Eteocles, as loyal to his land,  
 Shall be insepulchred beneath her shade:  
 Free from offence against her holy things  
 He died where most beseems young men to die.  
 So much I am charged to speak concerning him.  
 But this, his brother Polynices' corpse,  
 Graveless shall be cast forth for dogs to tear,  
 As minded to lay waste our Theban land,  
 Had not some god stood in his path and foiled  
 His spear: dead though he be, his country's gods  
 Shall ban him, since he brought in their despite  
 A foreign host to invade and subjugate  
 Their city. Wherefore 'tis decreed for him  
 To reap his recompense from fowls of the air  
 In shameful burial. No drink-offerings  
 Poured on his tomb by careful hands, no sound  
 Of dirgeful wailing shall enhance his fame,  
 Nor following of dear footsteps honour him.  
 So runs the enactment of our Theban lords.

ANT. But I make answer to the lords of Thebes,  
 Though none beside consent to bury him,  
 I will provide my brother's funeral.  
 I will face that danger, recking not of shame  
 In disobeying so the state's behest.  
 Too strong for that the tie of kindred blood  
 Which binds us, sprung from two unfortunates,  
 That mother and that sire. Then, O my soul,  
 Of thine own living will, share thou the wrongs  
 Forced on the helpless dead: be leal and true.  
 My brother's flesh no meagre-bellied wolves

Shalt tear and pull. Let no man dream of it.  
 I, though a woman, will prepare his mound,  
 Carrying the earth in this fine garment's fold.  
 I will cover him, let none think otherwise.

Nay, doubt me not! Will shall devise a way.

HER. I bid thee spare this violence to the state.

ANT. I bid thee spare commands beyond thy sphere.

HER. Be warned; a people rescued knows not ruth.

ANT. Be ruthless, but he shall have burial.

HER. How? Whom the city hates thou'lt thus exalt?

ANT. Heaven hath already meted him his due.

HER. But first he had endangered this fair land.

ANT. He answered wrong with hostile violence.

HER. 'Gainst all he wrestled for the fault of one.

ANT. Contention ever seeks the latest word.

I will bury him that's here; enough! No more!

HER. Take thine own course; my voice forbids the deed.

CHO. Proud powers of ruin that have blasted all  
 The deeply-rooted stock of Laius' race!

What counsel, what device, shall we embrace,

What destined course? Must we not weep thy fall,  
 Nor follow to thy final resting-place?

The people's anger is of power to appal.

*Thou* shalt have many mourners, but *thy* fate

A sister's lonely voice shall celebrate.

O hapless corse! O stern deeree!

What heart but yields reluctantly?

II. CHO. 1. Nay, let the city visit those that weep  
 For Polynices, howsce'er it may,

We will escort him on his funeral way,

And lull him to his everlasting sleep.

All Thebans own this grief, and wavering still  
 Are rules of right set by the popular will.

II. CHO. 2. Right and the people's will one counsel urge,  
 And we will follow his renowned bier,  
 Who under Heaven saved Cadmus' town from fear  
 Of overthrow beneath the whelming surge  
 Of foreign foemen. From those threatening seas  
 Zeus rescued us, and brave Eteocles.

## THE ORESTEIAN TRILOGY

ONE only trilogy of Aeschylus remains complete (or nearly so); but it is fortunately one composed by him in the maturity of his powers, and is universally acknowledged to take rank amongst the world's masterpieces.

The subject is the troublous history of 'Pelops' line,' of which the unnatural horrors are regarded as culminating in the matricide of Orestes. Of the whole trilogy, considered as one three-act tragedy, the crisis and turning-point is at line 889 of the 'Choephoroc,' where Clytemnestra calls for an axe, wherewith to defend herself against her son.

The first of the three acts, or dramas, concludes with the murder of Agamemnon by his wife Clytemnestra, and the usurpation by Aegisthus, her paramour, of the Argive throne. The second ends with the flight of Orestes, pursued by the Erinyes, or Furies, after his unnatural act. They are 'his mother's furies' because she has invoked them, and they are in so far the personification of her vengeful wrath. But these dread forms have also a wider significance, embodying the principle of retribution (1) for violation of domestic sanctities, and (2) for all unrighteous action.

The third drama, *The Eumenides*, aims at reconciling conflicting principles, and at softening retribution through equity. The Erinyes, who appear at first implacable, are pacified by the interposition of Athena. And the Court of Areopagus is founded by her, to determine future cases of homicide.

In the Satyric drama, 'Proteus,' which completed the tetralogy, some reference was probably made to the fortunes of Menelaus, whose continued absence had been commented on in the 'Agamemnon,' and referred to (probably) in the 'Choephoroe' (l. 1038—see note).



# AGAMEMNON

## PERSONS OF THE DRAMA

*A Watchman.*

*CHORUS of the Argive Elders.*

CLYTEMNESTRA.

*Herald.*

AGAMEMNON.

CASSANDRA.

AEGISTHUS.

SCENE.—Argos, before the palace of the Atridae.

TIME.—After the fall of Troy.



ARGOS is still the metropolis of Hellas, and the palace is occupied by the two sons of Atreus, Agamemnon and Menelaus, as joint kings. They have married sisters, Clytemnestra and Helenè, daughters of Tyndareus. But Helen has been carried off by Paris, and the two brothers are described as having together departed on the Trojan expedition. But the fleet was delayed at Aulis, and Agamemnon was induced to sacrifice his daughter Iphigenia, or Iphianassa. This act has awakened an inextinguishable hatred in the breast of her mother Clytemnestra, who remains in sole possession of the vast palace of the Pelopidae—that home which has already witnessed the banquet of Thyestes and other nameless iniquities. She sends away her son Orestes, and, amongst the horror-breathing silences, remains alone, possessed with the one thought, the one constant resolve, to take condign vengeance for her child.

But while alone in the palace, she is not alone in her desire of revenge. Aegisthus, the son of Thyestes, is bound in honour to be avenged for his brothers, whom Atreus massacred. He has returned to Argolis, but is still an outcast from the palace of the Pelopidae.

During the absence of Agamemnon and Menelaus these two hatreds have coalesced in one,—Clytemnestra, reckless of all but vengeance, Aegisthus, likewise loving revenge but not insensible to the charms of the kingdom and the Queen.

Their plot is favoured by the circumstance that, when Agamemnon returns, his brother Menelaus is still absent, having been intercepted by a violent storm. Although suspicion is rife, there has been no overt act either of adultery or usurpation. But after one of his secret visits, Aegisthus has left with Clytemnestra his sword. (Choeph. 1008.)

After entangling her husband in the rich hangings, or carpetings, over which she has persuaded him to walk in entering the palace, the Queen dispatches him with the sword of Aegisthus.

The King had brought home with him Cassandra, the

daughter of Priam. This insult serves to whet the Queen's revenge. And the character of the prophetic maiden, her destined victim, stands in pathetic contrast to that of the royal murderer.

The King's death-shriek is, of course, the crisis of the play, and more than justifies the gloomy presentiments which damp all attempts at cheerfulness on the part of the Watchman, the Chorus, and the Herald. For this culminating horror the mind of the spectator has been further prepared, first by certain lurid flashes of Clytemnestra's demoniac joy, and then by a scene in which the growing apprehension of the event is mingled with the most poignant tenderness of pity, as Cassandra, the captive princess, whom Apollo has inspired and forsaken, prophetically describes both the past abominations of the house of Atreus, and the cruel doom that is immediately impending over Agamemnon and herself.

## AGAMEMNON

### WATCHMAN.

I ASK the gods deliverance from the toil  
Of these long watchings. Through twelve weary moons  
Couched on the Atridae's house-top, like a dog,  
With head on hand, and ever-wakeful eye,  
I have conned the nightly concourse of the stars  
That shine majestic in yon clear heaven,  
And by their risings and their settings bring  
Summer and winter to the world. To-night  
I watch for the flame-signal that shall tell  
To us in Argos tidings borne from Troy,  
Voicing her capture. Such the strong command  
Of an expectant, passionate, man-souled woman,  
This bed of mine beneath the dews of night  
Conduces not to rest. Dreams come not near it.  
Else they are warned off by the sentinel Fear,  
That will not let my lids securely close.  
Then if I whistle, or soothe a tune, providing  
Such antidote 'gainst slumber, my sad heart  
Checks me with groans for the calamities  
That haunt this house,—not guided for the best  
As once it was.—Well! may the nightly flame  
Soon, with glad news, release me from my toil.

[*The beacon is seen.*

All hail! thou light in darkness, harbinger  
Of day indeed, author of many a song  
And dance in Argos, born of this event!  
Solá, solá!

I cry aloud to Agamemnon's queen  
That from her couch she spring with speed, and raise  
Clamour of joy to hail this beacon-light,  
For Troy is taken; so the fires declare.

Nay, I'll begin, and dance by way of prelude.  
 Marking my master's game, I'll cry 'Huzzá !  
 Good luck ! Three sixes, thrown by Bonfire-blaze !'—  
 Good luck, do I say ? 'Twill be some joy to hold  
 The kind hand of this kingdom's lord in mine.  
 Beyond that, I am silent. A strange weight  
 Oppresses heart and tongue. Could the house speak,  
 It might have much to tell. My lips will open,  
 With my good will, only to those that know.

CHORUS (*entering*).

Nine years are gone, and the tenth is here,  
 Since he whom Priam had cause to fear,  
 Menelaus, wreaking a mighty wrong,  
 And Agamemnon, in glory strong,  
 With twofold sceptre and throne secure  
 Gifted by Him whose gifts are sure—  
 Two sons of Atreus leagued in power,  
 Of Argive youth led forth the flower,  
 Well armed for aid, the Aegean o'er.  
 In a thousand ships from yonder shore.

Shouting they went, with hearts aflame  
 For the furious War-god's eager game.  
 Like eagles, that over their eyrie wheel,  
 Driven wide by the sudden pang they feel  
 For their eaglets torn from the long-watched nest,  
 Oaring their path in wild unrest  
 With pens for oar-blades,—till one on high,  
 Pan or Apollo, hearing the cry  
 Of the birds who tenant his realm of air,  
 Is moved by the sound of their shrill despair,  
 And sends on the sinner, albeit too late,  
 To redress that wrong, an avenging fate.

So mightier Zeus, who guards the home  
 From outrage of guests that idly roam,  
 'Gainst Paris both the Atridae brought,  
 For a woman, whose marriage vows were naught,  
 Broaching a flood of toils, to flow  
 For Greek and Trojan with equal woe,—

When the knee outwore should press the dust,  
And the spear be snapped in his virgin thrust.—  
Each hour hath proof of the daily state.  
But the end shall be as 'tis ruled by Fate.  
No late libation, or incense-fume,  
Avails to save from a ruthless doom  
The man who has angered, through mad desire,  
The Powers that burn, but need no fire.  
Now we, discarded through Time's decay,  
Dropt from the roll that mustering day,  
Remain, supporting, as weakness craves,  
Our child-like gait upon walking-staves.  
For the sap that sprang in our breasts of yore  
Knows of his youthful might no more,  
And the warlike spirit hath left his seat.  
What task for withering Eld is meet ?  
Doting, he wanders his three-foot way,  
Proving such valour as children may,  
Of no more strength than a dream in the day.

But thou, Clytemnestra, royal dame,  
What cause hath kindled thine altar-flame ?  
What new hath fallen ? What tidings heard  
With sudden motion thy heart have stirred,  
To raise by thy missives ranging wide  
Frankincense fuming on every side ?  
Of all the gods that in Argos dwell,  
Gods of Olympus, and gods of Hell,  
Gods of the palace, gods of the street,  
Gods who preside where the people meet,  
Where'er is harboured a power divine,  
Thy gifts are blazing at every shrine.  
Here, there, and yonder, on high doth spira  
With holy meaning the fragrant fire,  
Fed with rich oils, that mildly soothe  
Our doubtful hearts with warrant of truth :  
Since the royal perfume with potent spell  
From the palace whispers that all is well.—  
Whate'er thou mayest, to our minds reveal,  
O queen, of thy bounty, and timely heal

Our heart's foreboding, that riseth still  
 One while with thoughts of impending ill,  
 Till Hope, appearing with kindly light  
 From the altar, greets our reviving sight,  
 And strives to banish the carking care  
 That fiercely feeds on the soul's despair.

Full power is mine to sing what heartening sign I I

Ushered the flower of warriors on their way :—  
 Yet soars my spirit ; yet, from springs divine,

Life yields me valour to uplift the lay,

Telling how, on a day,

The king of birds marshalled two kings of men,—

Joint leaders of the youth of Hellas, then

On ship-board led against the Teucrian land

With store of vengeance in each spear-armed hand :—

A warlike sign ! Two eagles on the right :

Full in the army's sight,

Hard by yon royal roof they took their place

(One black in all his plumes, one flecked with white),  
 Gorging together on a brooding hare,

O'ertaken in her latest chase,

A creature of despair !

Then be your burden sad with sounds of wail,

But let the happier note prevail.

The careful prophet saw the Atridae twain, I 2

And straightway in the hare-devourers scanned  
 Those warlike leaders with their differing strain ;

Then thus he spake prophetic : ' Yonder band

In time shall take the land

Of royal Priam : and the public store

Wherewith the towers of Troy were filled before,

Stern fate through violent shocks of arm'd power

Shall pitilessly ransack and devour.

Only, may no offence from Heaven distain

The bridle of Ilion's plain,

That brilliant army, crossed by heavenly ire !

Since holiest Artemis, with wrath o'erta'en,

Frowns as they feast on yon poor trembler's brood,

Those wingèd minions of her Sire.

She abhors the eagles' food.'

Then be your burden sad with sounds of wail,

But let the happier note prevail.

\* The beauteous goddess, though so kind

To eanlings of the ravening lion-race,

And tender sucklings of all beasts of chase,

Doth yet accord her mind

To fair fulfilment of the favouring sign.

Ah ! but on Phoebus yet I call,

Healer in dangers all,

Lest for the Argives, with intent malign,

She raise contrarious winds of dire delay,

Minded another victim to exchange

In sacrifice unauthorized and strange,

Attended with no festival,

Breeding dark strife within the hall,

Hardening the wife against the husband's sway.

A mindful keeper of the house shall burn

To avenge her offspring at her lord's return.'

Such words of doom, mingled with fortunate things,

Calchas outspake, touching our race of kings.

Then be your burden sad with sounds of wail

But let the happier note prevail.

Zeus—by what name soe'er

He glories being addressed.

Even by that holiest name

I name the Highest and Best.

On Him I cast my troublous care,

My only refuge from despair :

Weighing all else, in Him alone I find

Relief from this vain burden of the mind.

One erst appeared supreme,

Bold with abounding might,

But like a darkling dream

Vanished in long past night,

Powerless to save ; and he is gone

Who flourished since, in turn to own

His conqueror, to whom with soul on fire  
Man crying aloud shall gain his heart's desire,—

Zeus, who prepared for men IV 1

The path of wisdom, binding fast  
Learning to suffering. In their sleep  
The mind is visited again  
With memory of affliction past.

Without the will, reflection deep  
Reads lessons that perforce shall last,  
Thanks to the power that wields the sovran oar,  
Resistless, toward the eternal shore.

And the elder leader then IV 2

Of all the Achaeans, blaming not  
The prophet, but with quivering lips  
Bending his spirit to the strain  
Of that unlooked-for, adverse lot,—

What time the Achaeans by their ships  
Were sore distressed with anxious thought,  
By baffling winds, that drained that opulent host,  
Storm-stayed on Aulis' weary coast.

For fronting Chalkis' bay, V 1

Helpless as logs the Achaean galleys lay;  
While blasts of dire delay from Strymon's mouth,  
Authors of hunger, weariness and drouth,  
Driving poor wights from hospitable shores,  
Doubling the loss of time through waste of stores,  
Sparing nor ships nor cordage, wore away  
The flower of Argive youth.—

And when the prophet cried,  
Voicing a plan to cure the army's pain,  
Even than that cruel wind  
More cruel to the chieftains in their pride,  
Recalling Artemis to mind,  
Whereat the Atridae with their sceptres twain  
Striking the ground, from tears could not refrain;

“Twere hard to disobey,” V 2  
These words the elder chieftain spake that day,

' But were 't not hard on the altar-step to stand  
 And stain with virgin streams a father's hand ?  
 O heavy doom ! if I my child must slay,  
 Who sheds upon my home its brightest ray !  
 Which way I turn is fraught with evil still,  
 No course exempt from ill.  
 How should I fail the fleet ?  
 How sin against the bond myself impressed ?  
 This blood will stay the storm :  
 Then for the blood of maiden pure and sweet,  
 The ruin of a faultless form,  
 Sorrow must yield to passionate unrest  
 Of strong desire. May all be for the best !

So when his neck received the fatal yoke, VI 1  
 Within his breast arose the counter-gale,  
 And impious thoughts from lurking depths up-  
 broke,

Unholy and fraught with bale.

An altered man, he recked no more of crime.  
 For the first shock of grief before unfelt  
 Hardens the spirit, that erewhile could melt,  
 With maddening counsel. He, that dreadful time,  
 Endured to slay his daughter, so to aid  
 The warfare in a woman's cause arrayed,—

So to advance the fleet

With favouring auspice meet !

What cared that council, eager for the strife, VI 2  
 That on her lip the name of father hung,  
 That unpolluted was her virgin life,

So pure, so bright, so young !

The father bade those priests, after the prayer,  
 Above the altar, face to earth, on high,  
 Like kidling there to lift her ruthlessly,  
 With garments drooping round her, and the fair  
 Sweet mouth to bridle with speech-stifling force,  
 Lest some faint cry, heard in that ritual's course,

Might bring disastrous doom  
 Upon her father's home.

She shed to earth her veil of saffron dye,  
And smote her sacrificers one by one  
With pity-kindling arrows from her eye,  
Willing to speak, as if some artist hand  
That dumb fair piecee had done.

VII 1

How often in her own dear land  
She charmed the feasters in her father's hall,  
With fresh young voice honouring his festival,  
And with her loving presence graced the store  
Of seathless plenty on that palace-floor !

What followed then I saw not, nor will tell ; VII 2  
The mystic arts of Calehas won their way.  
Nor on things future boots it now to dwell ;  
Farewell to that ! Clear, in the history's close,  
'Twill dawn with the new day.

Knowledge belongs of right to those  
Who read the lesson of the fact they feel.  
Fore-thinking were fore-sorrowing. May the wheel  
Bring round good fortune ! such the wishful mind  
Of us, last guards of Argos left behind.

*Enter CLYTEMNESTRA.*

LEADER OF CHO. Queen Clytemnestra, we are come  
to render

Our duties to thy royalty. For when  
The kingly throne is vacant, it is meet  
The consort of the prince should have all homage.  
We are here with loyal hearts intent to learn  
If some good tidings coming to thine ear  
Have prompted thine auspicious sacrifice.  
Speak, if thou wilt. If not, we rest content.

Cly. 'With glad intelligence,' the proverb saith,  
'Let Morning issue from the womb of Night.'  
A joy beyond your hope 'tis yours to hear.  
Our Argive host hath taken Priam's town.

Cho. How ? 'Tis incredible. Speak yet again.

Cly. Troy is in Grecian hands. Are those words  
plain ?

Cho. Unlooked for joy brings tears into mine eye.

CLY. Those tears attest your loyalty of heart.

CHO. But hast thou proof that may be trusted, lady?

CLY. Unless some god have been deceiving me.

CHO. Hast thou then hearkened to some flattering dream?

CLY. No slumbrous fancies work on my belief.

CHO. But some speech-omen, lighting on thy soul—

CLY. Should that elate me like a girl? Ye mock me!

CHO. Say, then, how long ago the city fell.

CLY. In the same night that now brings forth the day.

CHO. What messenger could bear the news so swiftly?

CLY. The Fire-god flashed it hither from Mount Ida.

Fire was the post, and beacons were the stages.

First Ida sent him to the Hermaean bluff

Of Lemnos, whence the flaring torch that rose

Was caught by Athos, Zeus's promontory;

Thence high aloft, far-glancing o'er the sea,

The blazing pine sped on the traveller-flame,

Making strange sunrise on Makistus' height,

Who, ready for that dawn, neglected not

A courier's office, but gave signal far

Across Euripus to the watchmen set

On wild Messapius. They replied and sent

The glad news onward, kindling a dry heap

Of aged heather. And the mighty flame,

Nought bating of his radiant power, o'erleapt

Asopus' flats, and, like a brilliant moon

Silvering the forehead of Cithaeron, waked

A fresh relay of courier torches there:

Nor was the far-sped beacon-flame denied;

But re-inforcing it beyond command,

That mountain guard upreared a royal blaze,

To shoot beyond Gorgopis' bay and strike

The mount of Aegiplanctus, where it roused

Loyal renewal of the appointed fire.

Heaping on fuel with unsparing hand,

They raised a beard-like pyramid of flame,

Whose light rushed past the foreland that looks forth

Towards Aegina, till it reached the height

That crowns our city, this Arachnian hill:—

Whence, lastly, on the Atridae's roof lights down  
 That lineal offspring of the Idaean flame.  
 Such torch-race had we ordered and prepared,  
 In bright successive courses ministered.  
 But here one runner, first and last i' the race,  
 Hath touched the goal and shouted 'Victory !'  
 This is the proof and token I proclaim,  
 Sent by my husband from the heart of Troy.

CHO. O lady, our thanksgivings shall be paid  
 To Heaven, hereafter. We would hear thee still,  
 Listening and wondering,—so thou wouldest speak  
 anew.

CLY. To-day the Achaeans are possessed of Troy.  
 A jarring din, methinks, is rising there !  
 Into one vessel pouring oil and vinegar  
 You will not see them lovingly combine.  
 Even so the captives' and the captors' cries  
 Tell diverse tales of Fortune's twofold power.  
 Those now are fallen about the prostrate forms  
 Of husbands, brothers, friends,—young children, too,  
 Clinging to grey-haired fathers,—and from throats  
 No longer free, lament their dearest slain.  
 But these, being wearied with the night's exploit,  
 O'er-watched and hungry, break their fast i' the town  
 On what is yet to be found there,—not by rule—  
 No order, no precedence, no degree.—  
 But even as each hath plucked the lot of chance.  
 So now inhabiting the ransacked homes  
 Of captive Trojans, sheltered from the dews  
 And frosts of the open field, as men released  
 From toil, they will sleep all night, nor dream of  
 danger.  
 And if they reverence well the gods that hold  
 The captured city, and the temples there,  
 The spoiler may escape being spoiled. But let  
 No lust seduce that host to plunder things  
 Inviolable, as overcome by greed.  
 The race is not yet over. Still remains  
 The home-return, to round their emulous course.  
 Yea, even without offended Deity

Or tricks of chance, the spirits of the slain  
 May wake in wrath and bar the homeward way.  
 Thus.—if ye list to hear a woman's word.—  
 Would run my counsel. But may good prevail  
 Without a flaw ! The blessings of my home  
 Are manifold, and I would keep them still.

[*Exit CLYTEMNESTRA.*

LEADER OF CHO. All praise to thee, Zeus, king supreme!  
 and, O night, kind protectress, to thee !  
 How rich were thy splendours, when over the bulwarks  
     of Troy  
 Thou didst drop the wide net of destruction, that none,  
     great or small, man or boy,  
 Fled beyond, but was taken or perished, none crept  
     through the meshes of doom.  
 All praise to the power everlasting that punishes perfidy  
     home !  
 Long since on the string was the arrow, that neither too  
     feeble should fly,  
 Nor idly o'er head of the sinner should mount, as if  
     aimed at the sky,  
 But should pierce through the bosom of Paris.—The  
     hour and the death-stroke are come !

### CHORUS.

From Zeus came down the stroke that lowered their  
     pride. II

So much may be discerned beyond dispute.  
 They fared as he determined. One denied  
 Gods could be thought to care, when man or brute  
 Had trampled o'er the grace of holiest things.  
 He knew not reverence. But the truth is shown  
 In judgement failing on proud warrior-kings  
 Who, when their halls were bursting with excess  
 Beyond the limit of true happiness,  
 Defied all laws to gods or mortals known.  
 Where is the limit ? Let but sorrow cease  
 And all within be peace,  
 The wise in heart shall be well satisfied.

For wealth ne'er proved a fortress for the man  
 Who, mad with having, insolently ran  
 At Right's high altar, in his impious thought  
 Minded to hurl it into nought.

But strong Delusion, Sin's disastrous child,      I 2  
 Brooding o'er future trespass, works her will  
 Remediless. Not to be reconciled  
 Nor yet concealed, the bane is shining still,  
 As in the assaying peers the base alloy,  
 With lurid brilliance ruinously clear.  
 Even so he fares, who, like a wanton boy,  
 Chases the bird that mocks his eager hand,  
 And on his people brings a curseless brand.  
 Loudly he prays, but none in heaven will hear,  
 God strikes to earth the man of unjust ways,  
 Outcast from hope of praise.  
 So Paris, harboured in these halls, defiled  
 With base ingratitude the Atridae's home.  
 He wronged the chieftain of yon stately dome,  
 Stealing with robber guile the beauteous wife,  
 Unfaithful cause of future strife.

She left unto her friends in Argos here      II 1  
 Clashing of shields, arming of ships and men,  
 And, taking to the city of her new lord  
 Destruction for a dowry, lightly then  
 She passed the portal, sinning without fear,  
 Whilst ominous voices there that flight deplored :  
 ' Woe for the palace home ! Woe for her spouse !  
 Woe for her wifely ways within the house !  
 He stands dishonoured, silent, murmuring not,  
 Soul-stricken before that unremovèd blot,  
 While longing for the lost one over seas  
 Shall banish all heart's-ease.  
 That some unbodied ghost shall seem  
 To rule the house, as in a dream.  
 The loveliest forms of stone  
 To that deserted one  
 Are hateful. In the spirit's listless void  
 All sense of beauty sinks destroyed.

' Yet visions of the night, born of regret,  
 Bring to his saddened soul a vain delight.  
 Is it not vain if, when one thinks to reap  
 Strange joy, the cherished object fleets from sight  
 (Even while with gladdening tears the eyes are  
 wet)

On wings that follow with the steps of sleep ?'  
 Such homefelt wounds within the palace wall  
 Are bleeding. Ay, and would that these were all !—  
 Nay, everywhere through Grecian lands is seen,  
 In each man's home, much heart-corroding teen.  
 From Grecian lands together forth they went,  
 Each by their loved ones sent,  
 And now the soul of friends is sore  
 To think whom they shall see no more.  
 Whom they sent forth they know,  
 But to their bitter woe,  
 No well-loved form, but urns of crumbling earth  
 Return to each man's natal hearth.

Ares, grim usurer of blood and breath,                   III 1  
 That swings his balance o'er the field of death,  
 Sends back from Ilium to their friends  
 (For warriors' loss no just amends)  
 Their ashes blackened by the funeral fire,—  
 Poor dust ! so heavy not with gold but grief,  
 Affording to the dumb desire  
 Of tears but scant relief.  
 Then as with tender heed they store away  
 Each precious burden in its vase of clay,  
 They groan, while praising one for skill in fight  
 And one for his brave conduct in the strife,  
 ' Fallen to avenge another warrior's wife.'  
 This last is murmured low,  
 While silent wrath doth grow  
 'Gainst Atreus' sons, great champions of their right.  
 Others, with limbs unravaged, in the shade  
 By Ilion's bulwarks made,  
 Rest undisturbed :—the hostile land they hold  
 Hides them beneath her kindly mould.

Ah ! dangerous are the murmurs of the town ! III 2  
 A nation's curse lives in the people's frown.  
 One thought of mine night yet doth shroud :  
 It would be spoken, but not loud :  
 Great bloodshed draws the gaze of Deity.  
 The dark Eriny in long lapse of time  
 Grinds down to helpless poverty  
 Him who in ways of crime  
 Hath flourished, but in dim reverse of doom  
 Shall stain the lustre of that odious bloom :  
 And, once among the lost, he hath no more force.  
 Danger is theirs, too, that are praised by all :  
 From jealous eyes the fire of Heaven doth fall.  
 Mine be the moderate lot  
 That envy blasteth not !  
 I would not run the royal conqueror's course,  
 Nor yet would I be conquered, and behold  
 The life I shared of old  
 Subdued to strangers, and my country's folk  
 Writting beneath an alien yoke.

Good news delivered by the beacon flash IV 1  
 Shot through the city a rumour swift and rash,  
 Yet who can tell if things be as they seem,  
 Or God have sent us a deccitful gleam ?  
 'Twere childish or insensate to allow  
 One's heart to kindlo at that cheering glow,  
 And quenche it when a word  
 Of differing note is heard.

None but a woman, framed of hopes and fears, IV 2  
 Should yield assent before the fact appears.  
 Persuasion soon invades the female's realm :  
 Her judgment's pale is quickly overthrown ;  
 Feebly she holds an unresisting helm :  
 But fading soon to nothing the renown  
 Told by a woman's tongue  
 Will not endure for long.

*Enter the HERALD.*

LEADER OF CHO. Ha !

Now we shall know for certain how to deem  
Of those bright signals of transmitted fire,  
Whether truth is in them, or this light of joy,  
Dreamlike, cajoled our minds with empty hope.  
I see a herald coming from the shore  
With olive-boughs o'ershadowed, and the dust  
(Clay's thirsty neighbouring sister) tells me plain  
This is no voiceless phantom-messenger  
Of smoke and blaze from mountain bonfire sprung,  
But will speak audibly,—whether of joy,  
Or—but I waive the less auspicious word.  
May that fair token now be crowned with good !—  
Whoso prays otherwise for this our state,  
Heaven visit his soul's trespass on himself.

HER. O Fatherland of Argos, dearly loved,  
In this tenth year I tread thy hallowed ground :  
Though many a hope hath snapped, this anchor holds  
Beyond expectance. I had long despaired  
E'en of kind burial in my native earth.  
Hail, Argive country, Argive light, and thou,  
Zeus over all !—thou too, great Pythian king,  
Let thy keen darts no longer fly our way.  
Enough they vexed us before Troy. But now,  
Apollo, heal and save us ! Yea, all ye  
Gods of our thoroughfares,—thou above all,  
Hermes, dear herald, whom we heralds worship,—  
And ye, great warriors of old time, whose spirits  
Followed us forth,—receive again from war  
With kindly thoughts this remnant of the host.  
O well-loved palace of our kings, and ye,  
Dread thrones of judgment, and great Powers that face  
The morning, with your brightest glances greet  
Our Sovereign in his triumph of to-day.  
He comes, long waited for, bringing to you  
And all this people glory out of gloom,  
Light for long darkness. Then salute him well  
Who well deserves it, having ransacked Troy,

And dug the ground there with the spade of Doom,  
 That, by the righteous will of Zeus most high,  
 Temples and altars are no more, no more  
 A germ of life in all the desolate land.  
 Such yoke is cast upon proud Ilion's neck  
 By the elder son of Atreus, who this day  
 Returns, a happy warrior, of all men  
 Most to be honoured, having wreaked in full  
 The rape of Helen on all the Trojan name.  
 Not Paris, or all his people leagued in one,  
 May boast their suffering lighter than their deed.  
 Proclaimed a thief and robber, he hath lost  
 More than his booty, having razed to the earth  
 His father's house and ravaged his own land.  
 Priam's sons have paid the penalty twice o'er.

CHO. Hail ! herald of the host ; I bid thee joy.

HER. Yea; from this moment I could welcome death.

CHO. Didst thou so yearn for this thy fatherland ?

HER. So that warm tears stand in mine eyes for  
 gladness.

CHO. Then in that trouble ye were not unblest.

HER. Let me be master of that speech. Explain.

CHO. Being touched with love of those who longed  
 for you.

HER. Mean you the land yearned likewise for her  
 sons ?

CHO. Ay ! these dim souls have often sighed for you.

HER. Whence came this cloud upon your spirits ?  
 Tell !

CHO. Silence hath long been our best remedy.

HER. How ? Feared ye any man, your lord away ?

CHO. In thine own words—we could have welcomed  
 death.

HER. I spake that in my joy. Yet looking back-  
 ward,

Doubtless, our hap was chequered with some woe.  
 Who, save the gods, eternally command  
 Pleasure unmixed ? Were I now to tell  
 Our toils and hardships 'neath the open sky,  
 Lying on narrow bunks, ill-lined and bare,

Lamenting each day's lack of every store;  
Then on firm land, still worse, to lodge i' the field,  
Close under the enemy's wall, with rain from heaven  
Or dews from the damp meadow, drizzling over  
Our clothes, our bodies, and our clotted hair:—  
Or should one tell o' the storm-wind, striking down  
The falcon from her pride, with icy power  
Swooping from Ida's snows; or of the heat,  
When idle Ocean in his bed at noon  
Lay motionless, and not an air might breathe——  
But no! Why grieve o'er troubles that are past?—  
*So past for some, as never any more*  
They will care to rise from where they lie. But we,  
The living, why should we to-day count over  
The lost, or mourn malignant Fortune's power?  
Farewell, say I, to sorrow! We survive:  
Our gain o'erweighs past trouble, and to-day  
On land, or coursing over seas, we call  
This morning's sun to look upon the host  
Returning with triumphant spoils from Troy,  
By us at length subdued,—to hang them up  
In all the temples of Hellenic gods  
A bright and everlasting monument.  
Hear this, ye people, and extol your State  
And our great leaders, duly rendering praise  
To Zeus, first author of these gifts. I have said.

*Enter CLYTEMNESTRA.*

CHO. Your happy tidings have prevailed to cheer me.  
The old are ever young enough to learn  
When good approaches. And thy words bring good,  
To our queen and palace first, and then to me.

CLY. Long since I raised the shout of joy, when  
came

The first night-messenger of fire to tell  
That Troy was taken, Ilion overthrown.  
Men chid me, saying, 'Dost thou now believe,  
Persuaded by a bonfire, Troy is fallen?  
How like a woman to be thus elate!'  
Yet brought I mine oblation, and glad cries

In female notes were sounded here and there  
 About the city,—as with incense poured  
 They soothed, at every shrine, the odorous flame.  
 Now, why ask more of thee ? I shall hear all  
 From mine own husband when he comes. I will haste  
 Nobly to meet my lord's return. What light  
 Is sweeter to a woman's eyes than that  
 Which floods the opening gate when Heaven brings  
 home

Her husband from the war ? Bear back this word.  
 Let him come quickly, loved of all the land.  
 And may he find the wife he left behind  
 Unchanged, still faithful ; watching o'er his home,  
 Like a good house-dog, fierce to his enemies,  
 But kind to him ; and holding unprofaned  
 So long, the pressure of his last embrace.  
 Of joys with other men, or guilty word,  
 I know no more than of the blacksmith's art.  
 Such boast, instinct with honest truthfulness,  
 A noble wife may utter without blame. [Exit.]

CHO. Herald, thine ear, a sound interpreter,  
 Hath taught thee the fair meanings of the queen.  
 But tell us now, we pray thee, of the prince  
 This land delights to honour, Menelaüs,—  
 Comes he with you in safety to his home ?

HER. Were I to utter false glad tidings here,  
 Short-lived were that delight for those I love.

CHO. Ah then ! let what is good be likewise true !  
 Goodness and truth dissevered are soon known.

HER. I tell the simple truth. The man is lost,  
 Gone from the fleet. His ship is no more seen.

CHO. Say, launched he forth from Troy in sight of  
 men,  
 Or did a storm, that troubled all your host,  
 Snatch him away ?

HER. You hit the centre there,  
 Condensing in brief words a world of woe.

CHO. How ? What report from other mariners  
 Was noised about him as alive or dead ?

HER. One only can with surety answer you,  
The Sun, who nourishes Earth's various brood.

CHO. How mean you that the storm assailed the fleet  
And proved the exécuter of wrath from Heaven ?

HER. A day of blessing ought not to be stained  
With news of bale. Heaven's honour should be clear.  
An evil messenger with darkened brow  
That brought you tidings of an army's fall,  
A twofold horror, doubly charged with woe,  
First for the country's wound, then for the homes  
Whose men had been devoted to the scourge  
Loved of the War-god, armed with death and dole—  
The tongue so laden with calamities  
Might chant this hymn of heavenly wrath.

But I,

Who come with news of peace and bright success  
To a city smiling with prosperity,  
Why must I dash my good with ill, by telling  
Of the dire storm Heaven sent to plague our fleet ?  
Fire and the sea, those ancient foes, were leagued  
In firm alliance visibly fulfilled  
To wreck our ill-starred navy. 'Twas i' the night  
Came the onset of the billowy adversary,  
Big with disaster, for the Thracian blast  
Smote ship 'gainst ship, that gored and butted each  
Her neighbour, buffeted with swilling brine  
And raging tempest, till they passed from sight  
Like kine a madman drives. On that wild scene  
The sun arising cloudless, showed us all  
The Aegean strewn with wreaths of floating wreck,  
And bodies of Achaean men. Our vessel,  
Some power divine, or pleading with the storm  
Or thwarting him, made scathless. 'Twas no mariner,  
But saving Providence, stood by our helm,  
And steered us, neither to a boisterous road-stead,  
Nor on the breakers of a rock-lanced shore.  
Then, rescued from that watery death, amidst  
Fair daylight, not believing our escape,  
Our thoughts were mindful of a new distress,  
Mourning the wreck and havoc of our fleet.

May Heaven still work us good ! So much is clear.  
 If any of those we parted from still breathe,  
 They reason of our death as we of theirs.  
 And as for Menelaus, let us hope  
 He above all may be preserved, and come  
 Back to his home. Zeus wills not yet, we trust,  
 His race should perish,—and will find some means  
 To keep him still in life. Somewhere the sun  
 Beholds him, and his eyes enjoy the day.  
 Now, Argives, I have told you all the truth.

## CHORUS.

I I

Who gave the ill-omened name,  
 So fraught with terror for the time to be,  
 So true to her career of blame ?  
 War-won, war-wed, war-wakening Helenè ?  
 Was he some prophet-spirit unknown to fame,  
 With sure presentiment  
 Fore-speaking Time's event ?  
 The name of Helen tells of ships aflame,  
 Of souls to Hades sent,  
 Of countries ravaged, cities overthrown.  
 From out the delicately curtained bower,  
 Borne by the West-wind's earthborn power,  
 In Paris' nimble galley forth she went,  
 And when they touched on Simois' shore,  
 With cytisus and myrtle overgrown,  
 A many-shielded paek  
 Following the viewless track  
 Of their swift oar,  
 Came bent on slaughterous feud and fierce arbitrament.

I 2

That bond, so rightly styled,  
 Bound Ilium with a chain of endless care,  
 Sent by some spirit of anger wild  
 Resolved on ruin, minded to prepare  
 Revenge for hospitality defiled  
 On those who sang that day  
 The lawless marriage-lay,  
 Provoking wrath hard to be reconciled.

Her new-found brethren gay  
 Thought not if Zeus approved the enforced song.  
 Now they and theirs have learned a different strain,  
 And Priam's ancient town with pain  
 Groans heavily from forth her ashes grey,  
 Calling on Paris the accurst,  
 The guilty cause of unforgiven wrong ;—  
 She that in wild despair  
 For generations fair  
 Herself had nursed,  
 Had spent long years of wailing 'midst the fray.

What image fits Troy's fall ?

II 1

A man, I will say,  
 Cherished within his hall  
 A cub, for play,  
 Just weaned, but hardly, from the lioness.  
 The prelude of his life  
 Was far from cruel strife ;  
 The darling of young boys, a thing of sportiveness !  
 Even old men felt the charm ;  
 Oft in the nestling arm  
 'Twas dandled, like to human babyhood ;  
 When stroked, he made reply  
 With fondly brightening eye ;  
 When hunger pressed, he crouched and fawned for food.

But as with time he grew

II 2

He showed his stock,  
 And with dire outrage slew  
 The home-bred flock,  
 So making ill return for all that care ;  
 Till all the peaceful floor  
 With blood was dabbled o'er :  
 The household slaves beheld in mute despair.  
 The self-provided feast  
 Of that unbidden guest  
 Spread havoc round him wheresoe'er he moved.  
 Sent by some god to earth  
 To plague a sinful hearth,  
 A priest of Atè's self that nursling proved.

Even so methinks there came to Troia's town, III 1

One tempered like the calm on windless seas,  
A face to smite the soul but ne'er to frown,

A joy luxurious, crowning wealth with ease.

Love there in bloom entranced the passionate mind.

But soon she turned and made a bitter end  
Of nuptial, in old Ilion's hour of need;

By Zeus who punisheth where guests offend  
Brought thither as a bane to Priam's seed :  
Kinship unblest ! companionship unkind,  
Sad bride of tears, fell fury unconfined !

Wise lips declared, and 'tis an aged saw. III 2

That man's prosperity, maturely grown,  
Hath offspring that succeeds by Heaven's high law,—

From happy fortune misery full-blown :

A different thought by me shall be confessed ;

The issue of impious deeds is evil still,  
With plenteous increase, like to like succeeding ;

Not so begets its race the righteous will,  
But the fair life fair fortune aye is breeding.  
No evil brood disturbs that peaceful nest.  
The house of the upright evermore is blest.

The pride of former years engendereth pride IV 1

Youngly insulting o'er calamity :

Or soon or late, what matters ? When the tide

Of time brings on the day of destiny

For that fell birth, even then is born the Power,  
Unblest, resistless, making warriors cower,  
Infatuate Boldness, whose o'ershadowing gloom  
Veils all the house with darkness of the tomb;  
Such parentage hath bloomed in such fell flower.

The light of Righteousness in smoky homes IV 2

Shines unimpaired, honouring the humble lot ;

From gilded halls impure, as Earth she roams,

She turns her gaze to bless the pious cot ;

The power of riches falsely stamp't with praise  
Wins not her worship by its spurious blaze ;

Her judgement ever points to the far goal  
Whereto she leads all lives with sure control,  
Shaping the hour to suit with distant days.

*Enter AGAMEMNON, in a chariot, with CASSANDRA  
beside him.*

LEADER OF CHO. King of Argos and scion of Atreus,  
destroyer of Ilios' town,  
With what words shall I greet thee aright, how award  
thee thy meed of renown,  
Neither shortening thy merits unduly, nor aimlessly  
rushing beyond ?  
Our race oft transgresseth in judgement. Too many  
weak mortals are fond  
Of the seeming of right, not regarding how Justice  
offended may frown.

Men are ready with sighs for the fall of a friend, while  
the heart is unwrung ;  
And with smiles for success, where the face is com-  
pelled to accord with the tongue.  
But the shepherd who tells o'er his flock with due heed  
cannot fail to discern  
The eyes that in waterish kindness pretend with affection  
to burn.

Then know, for I will not dissemble, when once thou  
didst marshal the host  
Thou hadst levied to fight for fair Helen, providing at  
infinite cost  
Forced courage in soldierly bosoms of thousands pre-  
pared to be slain,  
Unlovely to me looked thine image, unskilful thy hand  
to maintain  
Thy spirit's true course, as thy bark on that weltering  
ocean was tossed.

But now from my soul's depth arises a voice of warm  
welcome for those  
Whose labour, of doubtful beginning, is fortunate here  
at the close.

And in time thou shalt clearly discover, of all thou didst  
leave in command,  
Who have failed or been faithful in keeping their charge  
and protecting the land.

AGAM. Argos, dear country, and my country's gods !  
Ye claim my foremost word. Without your aid  
I had ne'er returned, nor wrought on Priam's town  
This righteous retribution. Yea, the gods,  
Moved by the unspoken pleadings, one and all  
Gave sentence for the slaughterous sack of Troy.  
The blood-stained Vase had all the votes. I' the other  
'Hope lingered,' while no plenishing hand came near.—

Her smoke still shows the desolate city's fall.  
'Tis Ruin's altar, whence the dying ashes  
Of wealth consumed spout forth voluminous breath.  
For this we are bound to recompense the gods  
With mindful thank-offerings. Our vengeful snare  
Held firm, that none escaped, but glorious Ilium  
Was, for a woman's sake, ground into dust  
By the apparition of the monstrous birth  
That, whilst Orion sank, one autumn night,  
Leapt from the Horse in Argive panoply.  
A ravening lion, o'er the walls he sprang,  
And lapped rich largess of the blood of princes.

So far forth I address the gods. Meanwhile,  
I bear in mind your moderate words, and like  
The spirit they convey. Your thoughts are mine.  
Few men are born so tempered, as to look  
Without some envy on a prosperous friend.  
The venom of unkindness, lodged within.  
Clings to the heart and doubles all annoy ;  
While men not only mind their own distress,  
But groan at other men's prosperity.  
How well I know, and could describe, the friend  
In name, the mirror of companionship—  
Indeed a mirror, a mere fleeting shade.  
Odysseus only, who sailed against his will,  
Once yoked with me, was ever staunch and true.

I say it of one of whom to-day I know not

If he be dead or yet alive.

For the rest,

Touching the city and the gods, we will call  
Our larger council, and deliberate there  
In full assembly, studying to preserve  
Whatever in the present state is well;  
And where some cure is needed, we will try,  
With remedies gently administered,  
Though sometime sharp and painful, to prevent  
All dangerous malady.—Now, to my hall,  
Where my first greeting shall again be made  
To the kind gods, who sent me safely forth,  
And bring me home in peace. May Victory,  
Since hither she attends us, here remain!

*Re-enter CLYTEMNESTRA.*

CLY. Ye men of Argos, elders of our state,  
I will not shame to tell before your face  
My wifely love. The fear of man wears off  
With time. My heart instructs me to declare  
How, while your sovereign tarried before Troy,  
My life was doleful. 'Tis no light distress  
To sit at home forlorn, the man away,  
Malignant rumours ever in one's ears,  
One crying he came; another, he had brought  
Dishonour, worse even than his death. Moreover,  
Had he as many wounds as loose-tongued Fame  
Gave forth, a net had fewer holes than he.  
And had he died as often as 'twas said,  
A second Geryon, with three bodies, he  
Had donned a threefold mantle of earth,—I pass  
The abyss of ground beneath him,—in each form  
Dying once at least. Vexed by such wild reports,  
I had often tied the noose above my head  
Which others took perforce from off my neck.  
Hence, too, Orestes is not here, our son,  
The pledge of both our loves. Nay, marvel not!  
Our kind ally and friend, Strophius in Phocis,  
Keeps him in ward. 'Twas he admonished me  
Of a twofold danger, thine beneath Troy-wall,

And of this Argive realm, lest popular fury  
 Upset the Council ;—as mankind are apt,  
 When one is down, to trample him the more.  
 None can suspect a shallow pretext there.  
 As for my tears, they spouted till the fount  
 Ran dry, and kept no drop. But on my bed  
 Mine eyes were worn with watching, early and late,  
 Grieving because the fires of thy return  
 Were still unkindled. And amidst my dreams  
 The gnat's small peremptory tones would wake me,  
 While seeing more dangers than the time could hold  
 Assailing thee. But now those weary days  
 Are over, and I shout, exempt from care,  
 'Here stands the watch-dog of the fold ; the mainstay  
 That saves the vessel ; yea, the lofty pillar  
 That holds the roof from ground :—an only son  
 Returning to his father ; or, to mariners,  
 Firm land appearing beyond hope, fair day  
 Seen after tempest ; to the thirsty traveller,  
 A spring of running water 'mid the sand.  
 To escape from wretchedness is always joy.'  
 Such terms of greeting have I for my lord.  
 Let envy rest aloof, since in the past  
 We have borne much misery. But now, dear king,  
 Light from that ear, not setting foot on earth,  
 Thou, that hast trodden down the strength of Troy !  
 Maidens, why tarry ye, that have command  
 To pave the floor of his path with cloth of grain ?  
 Let there be made forthwith a purple road,  
 That, to complete the Day's surprise, great Justice  
 May lead him to his home.

For what remains,

Considerate thought, not giving way to slumber,  
 Shall order well whate'er the gods decree.

[The female attendants prepare to lay the carpet

AGAM. Daughter of Leda, guardian of my Hall,  
 Thy welcome, like mine absence, hath been long.  
 Yet praise that rightly squares with my desert  
 Must come to me from others. Furthermore,  
 Do not, I pray thee, like some eastern slave,

Meet me with loud and prostrate courtesies,  
Nor with this woman-pleasing luxury  
Of purple trappings, pluck down on my path  
An eye of envy. To the gods alone  
Such tribute should be paid. For mortal man  
To trample on rich webs of varied hue  
To me is a thing by no means void of fear.  
I seek for human honours, not divine.  
Fame needs no carpets nor embroidered wefts  
Beneath her feet, to sound her note of praise  
And modesty is Heaven's best gift. When one  
Shall end a happy life in peace and joy,  
Then celebrate his glory! By this rule  
We still may live and prosper, safe from harm.

CLY. Come, tell me this, and hide not your true thought.

AGAM. With mind unaltered I will answer thee.

CLY. You might have vowed this in some hour of peril?

AGAM. I know it. None better. Prompt is that reply.

CLY. And what of Priam, were he conqueror now?

AGAM. He had paved his path with broiderries, I believe.

CLY. Be not too sensitive to vulgar blame.

AGAM. The people's muttered verdict hath great power.

CLY. Who is not envied, ne'er will be admired.

AGAM. Contentiousness in woman is not well.

CLY. Nay, but 'tis gracious, when a victor yields.

AGAM. Is this a battle in which you care to win?

CLY. Come, let me triumph on the taker of Troy!

AGAM. If you must have it so, let some one loose  
The shoe that like a slave supports my tread;  
Lest, trampling o'er these royal dyes, some god  
Smite me with envious glances from afar.

It awes me not a little thus to plunge  
In luxury, walking on webs of price.

[*His slippers are removed*

So, that is settled. But receive, I pray thee,

This stranger-woman kindly. Heaven still smiles  
When power is used with gentleness. No mortal  
Is willingly a captive, but this maid,  
Of countless spoils the flower and crown, was  
given

To me by the army, and attends me home.

[*He descends, while CASSANDRA remains upon the car*  
Now, since you have subdued me, I obey,  
Thus pacing over purple to my hall.

CLY. Of purple, 'neath the inexhaustible sea,  
Enough remains to garnish many a realm  
With precious dye for raiment oft renewed.  
We too, my monarch, by the help of Heaven,  
Possess our share. No poverty is here !

I had vowed to trample many a gorgeous robe,  
Had oracles enjoined it on our house,  
In hope of bringing home this glorious head.  
Our root was still i' the ground. But now returns  
The foliage, that gives shadow from the heat.  
Thy coming is our warmth in winter time :  
But at the season when Zeus turns the grape  
From sour green sap to wine, 'tis shady and cool  
I' the palace, while its lord is walking there.

[*He goes in*

Zeus—thou fulfillest all—fulfil my prayer !  
And take good heed of all thou doest herein !

[*Exit CLYTEMNESTRA*

### CHORUS.

What means this haunting Fear Incessant hovering near To scare my prescient heart with vague unrest ? This hymn, unhired, unbidden, of bodings drear ? Why may not Hope renewed With bold belief of good Regain her wonted seat in my dear breast ? Away, dim dreams ! Cease from your vain annoy ! The time is past, when on the sandy coast, Together moored, the ships their beauty lost,	II
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Ageing, or ere the host  
Might reach their haven 'neath the walls of Troy.

Not by report I learn  
Our hero's home return.

I 2

Myself the eye-witness, I beheld him come.  
Yet ne'ertheless my spirit doth inly burn,

And holding firm no more  
Hope's confidence of yore,

Sings without lyre that self-taught strain of doom.  
Not idly stir these inward monishings  
Within the throbbing heart that beats on thought  
Of judgement, with prophetic dreams distraught.

Yet may they come to nought,  
And let my fears be unaccomplished things !

Great health is prone to end in boundless woe. II 1

Disease weighs hard on the thin partner-wall.  
And when that neighbour hath looked in, we know  
The man's full fortune but prepares his fall.  
His ship in her fair course with sudden shock  
Strikes on the viewless rock.

Even then, if caution from a timely sling  
Some portion of his wealth to the ocean fling,  
His vessel, lightened of her fateful load,  
Shall save her timbers from the raging flood,  
Her fabric shall not founder in the deep.  
Heaven's ample gifts with the revolving years  
Shall banish hunger with his brood of fears.  
Full harvest from rich furrows they shall reap.

But once let blood of man drop to the ground II 2

Before his time, and darken all the sod,  
What spell to call it upward shall be found ?  
What leech so wise ? Though he were all but God  
Who learned the secret of restoring breath

To mortals sunk in death,  
Zeus put an end to that for evermore.  
The bound is set, and none may pass it o'er.  
Else ere the tongue could move, the heart should speak  
Of the sore burden, that now bids her break,

As, darkly muttering her dim desire,  
 O'er-fraught with pain, she may not hope to unwind  
 The ravelled ponderings of her seeret mind,  
 That inly burns as with consuming fire.

*Re-enter CLYTEMNESTRA.*

CLY. In with thee too, Cassandra ! Get thee in !  
 Since Heaven in mercy hath consigned thee here  
 To share our household's lustral waters, one  
 Of many slaves that stand around our hearth.  
 Come from that carriage. Be not proud. Descend !  
 Have we not heard, Alcmena's offspring once  
 Was sold a slave and felt the galling yoke ?  
 But when misfortune brings one to this pass,  
 'Tis no small boon to serve an aneient house :  
 Since they who have harvested beyond their hope  
 Make cruel masters and exceed the bound.  
 Thou hast such greeting as I use to a slave.

CHO. She hath said and thou hast heard. Her words  
 are clear.

And now thou art in the fatal toils, perchance  
 Thou mayst obey her. But, methinks, thou art loth.

CLY. Well, if she be not, like the immigrant bird,  
 Possessor of a strange outlandish tongue,  
 My words must find their way and move her will.

CHO. (*to CASS.*) Go with her ! What she sayeth is for  
 the best,

As things are now. Come down, and leave that car !

CLY. I have not time to waste out here with her.  
 By this the victims at our midmost hearth  
 Stand ready for the slaughter and the fire ;—  
 Rich thank-offerings for mercies long despaired.  
 Then, if thou wilt obey me, do it with speed.  
 But if thou wilt not understand nor speak,  
 Declare it with the gesture of thy race !

CHO. 'Twould seem she needs a clear interpreter.  
 Her ways are as of a creature newly caught.

CLY. Sure she is mad, and follows crazy thoughts,  
 Who, leaving her own city newly ta'en,  
 Comes hither, and hath not the sense to pace

In harness, till she foam away in blood  
Her spirit upon the bit.

I'll not demean myself  
By throwing more words away. [Exit CLYTEMNESTRA.

CHO. But I, unhappy one,  
Will not be angry, for I feel for thee.  
Come, leave that car deserted, yield to Fate,  
And prove the unaccustomed yoke. Descend.

CASS. (*from the car*). Ai, ai ! O Apollo ! Apollo !

CHO. Wherefore *that* cry to Phoebus ? Not for him  
The voice of mourning.

CASS. Ai ! Apollo ! Apollo !  
Ai ! Ai ! O Apollo !

CHO. Again she summons with that sound of woe  
The god whose ears detest it.

CASS. O my Apollo !  
Builder ! Destroyer !  
Builder of Troy ! Destroyer of me !  
Once more thy heavy hand with ease hath ruined me.

CHO. Hark ! She will prophesy of her despair.  
A captive, yet she holds the heavenly fire !

CASS. Apollo ! Apollo !  
Troy-builder ! Destroyer of me !  
Ha ! What is here ? What roof ? Whither hast thou  
brought me ?

CHO. The Atridae's palace. If thou know'st it not,  
I tell thee plainly ; and thou wilt find it true.

CASS. Ah !  
Nay, but a hideous den, abhorred of Heaven ;  
Guilt-stained with strangled lives, with kinsmen's  
blood ;

A place of sprinkled gore, of clotted horror !  
Ah ! Faugh !

CHO. Her scent is keen, this stranger's ! Like a  
hound

She snuffs for blood. And she will find, I doubt me.

CASS. Yea ! There, there, there ! Here's evidence  
enough !

Smell ? Nay—I see, I hear them ! Little children

Whose throats are cut, still wailing of their murder,  
And the roast flesh, a father tasted—swallowed !

CHO. We have heard of thy renown in prophecy.  
But yet forbear. There needs no prophet here.

CASS. Ah ! what is this ? Oh me !

What strange new grief is risen ?

A deed of might ! She plans it there even now  
Beneath yon roof, a plague

Hard to remove, not to be borne ; an act  
Of hate for love ; and succour bides aloof,

Far, far away !

CHO. This prophecy is dark to me. The last  
Was clear. Our city rings with that old woe.

CASS. Wretch ! Wilt thou do it ? Ah me !

The lord of thine embracc,

When thou hast bathed him that his bright limbs glow,—  
How shall I tell it ? 'Twill come !

'Tis here ! She lifts her hand ; she launches at him  
Blow following blow.

CHO. I understand not yet. The oracular word  
Blinds with its riddling purport : I am perplexed.

CASS. What apparition ? Oh the pain ! What is it ?  
Some net of Death and Hell ?

Nay, 'tis the snare o' the chamber, th' accessory  
O' the murder. Let yon pack that ravins on the race  
Howl, 'Out upon the butchery ! Stone her ! Stone her !'

CHO. What cry of ban-dogs bid'st thou curse the  
house ?

Thy speech appals me. To my heart runs back  
The death-drop, that when life is ebbing fast  
From mortal wounds, and his last beam is pale,  
Falls with his setting. Oh ! how swift is sorrow !

CASS. What do I see ? Ah, keep away the cow  
From the lordly bull ! Look, look !

She hath caught him in the garment, smites, and gores  
him

With that black weapon of hers. He falls, he falls  
I' the watery tun, the guileful, fatal cauldron !

CHO. I would boast of little skill in prophecies ;  
But I may guess, this raving bodes no good.

Yet when was soothsaying bright ?  
What sound of cheer have prophets for the world ?  
Ills are their stock-in-trade ; words are their tools.

With chanted strains of woe  
They strike vain terror into mortal mind.

CASS. Woe ! for my hapless doom !

To fill the cup, I tell my own sad tale !  
Why hast thou brought me to this place ? Oh misery !  
To die with thee ? What else ? To die ! to die !

CHO. Thou art distraught, or else possessed. Some  
god

Bears thee away to sing of thine own doom  
A wild untutored song, like her  
The brown sweet nightingale,—once a princess yonder,  
Insatiable of wailing, her sad heart  
Still set on sorrow, mourning evermore  
For Itys, Itys ! 'Tis her life. She blooms  
With misery.

CASS. Oh ! for a lot like hers !  
The clear-voiced maid, to whom kind gods have given  
A feathery form and wings ! Safe, calm, sweet life !  
Mine, to be cleft in twain with two-edged brand.

CHO. Whence this returning trouble of thy soul,  
This god-fraught, vain distress, the ill-omened cry

That peals in terrifying song ?  
Whence comes thy music, whence thy thrilling lay ?  
What limits hath thy Heaven-inspired way ?  
Who set them ? Who hath given the evil word  
Wherewith thy breast is stirred ?

CASS. Paris, thy wedding hath destroyed thy house,  
Yea, and thy sister !—O Scamander-stream !  
Our fathers drank of thee, and by thy shore  
I grew, I flourished, oh unhappy I !  
But now by dark Cocytus and the banks  
Of Acheron, my prophecies shall sound.

CHO. Now speak'st thou plainly. Even a child might  
know ;

And when I hear that word,  
Thy plaintive notes strike me with cruel stings  
Of pity and wonder for thy life of pain.

CASS. Troy, thou art fallen, never to rise. Thy woes

No sacrifice abated nor reprieved  
Of all my father slew before the towers,  
Poor herb-fed victims ! Troy is fallen in fire ;  
And I, on fire, ere long shall fall in blood.

CHO. That strain agreeth to thy former words.

Some god of cruel mind

With mighty force impels thee to this dirge,  
As if thy life were doomed. The end I know not.

CASS. No longer, like a newly married girl,  
My word shall peep behind a veil, but, flashing  
With panted vehemence to meet the day,  
'Twill dash, against the shores of Light, a sorrow  
Of mightier volume.

I will expound it. Mark me !  
No riddling now ! Bear witness if ye find me  
Keen to discern or agile to pursue  
The trail of long-past crime.

There bides within  
A band of voices,—all in unison,  
Yet neither sweet nor tuneful, for their song  
Is not of blessing. Ay, a revel-rout,  
Ever emboldened with new draughts of blood.  
Within these walls, a furious multitude,  
Hard to drive forth, keeps haunt, all of one kin.  
They cling to the walls : they hymn the primal curse,  
Their fatal hymn ; then in due course they spurn  
A brother's bed, by a hateful brother mounted.

Say, was that shaft well aimed ? Or am I proved  
No seer,—a forward babbler at the door ?  
Deelare this on your oath : Have I, or not,  
Learnt one old secret of this house of sin ?

CHO. How should an oath, the noblest ever sworn,  
Prove healing in this case ?

Howbeit, I marvel,

Reared overseas, thou shouldst portray the state  
Of a strange people, as thou hadst heard and seen.

CASS. Prophet Apollo thus empowered my soul.

CHO. Was he, although a god, smit with thy love ?

CASS. Time was, I had blushed to utter such a word.

CHO. Well-being is daintier than adversity.

CASS. Sweet was it when he wrestled for my heart.

CHO. Came ye to close embraces, as men use ?

CASS. I promised Phoebus, but belied my troth.

CHO. When fired already by the Spirit Divine ?

CASS. Already I foretold my country's woe.

CHO. How couldst thou 'scape the wrath of Phoebus,  
then ?

CASS. No man believed me from that fatal hour.

CHO. To us, methinks, thy words seem true.

CASS. Oh ! oh !

Alas ! my misery !

Again the terrible whirlwind comes ! the pain  
Of 'Truth's deliverance, troubling all within me.

See ! the beginning of sorrows ! What are these  
What dreamlike forms kneel on yon roof ? Young boys,  
As they'd been slain by those who should have loved  
them,

Holding a burden piteous to be borne,  
Gobbets of flesh, their very own, their entrails,  
Clearly discernible,—the heart, the liver,  
Of which their father ate !

For this, I say,

Vengeance is plotted by a craven lion  
That tumbled in the lordly monarch's lair  
In his absence,—so kept house for *him*,—alas ?  
My master. Once a captive, one must bear it !  
He ruled the fleet, and razed the towers of Ilium,  
But knows not what the monster-woman dares ;  
What sequel to her garrulous speech and face  
Of welcome, brightening as the moon,—like Atè  
Lurking in night,—she'll work with wicked speed.  
The man-slaying woman ! To what horrid form  
Shall I compare her, and be true ? To Scylla,

That raging mother of death, dwelling in rocks,  
Now rending the poor mariner, but once  
A pitiless curse to her own? —or Amphisbaena?

Heard ye her triumph? Even as warriors shout  
Who turn the battle, so the woman cried,  
Seeming to joy in his return from war.

Ye are still incredulous. It makes no difference.  
What is to come, will come,—and soon. Thou, seeing,  
Shalt pity, and say, ‘Her soothsaying was too true!’

CHO. Thyestes’ banquet of his children’s flesh  
I understood, and shuddered. Fear possessed me  
To hear it truly given, each point observed.  
But as I listened further, I was lost.

CASS. Agamemnon’s death, I tell thee, thou shalt see.

CHO. Unhappy one! Speak no ill-omened word!

CASS. This time I summon not the god of healing!

CHO. Death has no healer. But be it far, I pray!

CASS. Ye pray, while others slay; or are about it.

CHO. What man can be the author of this woe?

CASS. What man? Far wide indeed that arrow flew!

CHO. Yea, for I cannot guess who is to do it.

CASS. And yet I have learnt too well the speech of  
Hellas.

CHO. So hath the Pythoness. Yet her words are dark.

CASS. Oh pain! What burning fire! It comes, it  
comes!

Lykian Apollo! Woe! me miserable!

This human lioness, couching with a wolf  
While the noble lion was away, will kill  
Me the unfortunate, a fair prize, to make  
One more ingredient in her chalice of bane.

Sharpening her husband’s death-knife, she declares  
My death, too, shall requite his bringing me.

—Why wear I still these mockeries of my soul,  
This wand, these fillets round my neck? I tear ye  
Thus! Go to your destruction ere I die!

To pieces with you! Lead the way! I follow!  
Enrich some other life with misery!

See ! see ! Apollo ! he is stripping from me  
This prophet-mantle.

Ay, thou didst visit me  
Thine eye beheld me, even in these hallowed weeds,  
Insulted, spurned, with those who loved me well,  
By our enemies who swept in like a flood.  
They called me beggar-priestess, roving seer ;  
I bore it,—dying with hunger, poor, dismayed !  
And now the Seer of seers, Prophet supreme,  
Disrobing here his prophetess, conducts me  
To this dark ending. For my father's altar,  
What waits me now ? The block, the bloody knife,  
The hot last blow that ends the sacrifice.  
Yet shall we die not unobserved of Heaven.  
*He* lives, who shall avenge us. Come he shall,  
The mother-slaying scion of his race,  
Redeemer of his sire's renown. From far  
The wanderer shall return, and put the cope  
On these home troubles. For the gods in Heaven  
Have sworn a mighty oath, his father's fall  
Shall draw him from his alien dwelling-place.  
Why do I linger thus and mourn, since first  
I saw my city's ruin ; and again  
Her captor, judged of the gods, receives this doom ?  
I will go forward ! I will dare to die !  
Hail, then, thou gate of Hell !

But first, one prayer !

Oh, grant me, all ye gods ! a mortal wound !  
That with no struggling, while the deathful stream  
Flows painlessly away, these eyes may close !

CHO. Deep-thoughted, deeply suffering maid, thy  
words

Have far extended. If thou know'st thy doom  
For certain, how canst thou, like god-driven victim,  
Walk boldly toward the altar of thy death ?

CASS. It may not be avoided. 'Tis the hour !

CHO. But every moment's respite has some worth.

CASS. The time is come. Small gain were flight to me.

CHO. A bold heart hast thou for thy bitter woe.

CASS. None but the wretched hear such benison.

CHO. Yet mortal life is graced by a noble death.  
 CASS. Woe for thee, father, and thy noble sons !

[*She is approaching the palace-gate—then turns away.*  
 CHO. What terror turns thee backward from the gate?  
 CASS. Ah woe !

CHO. What's thine abhorrence? or why criest thou thus?

CASS. These halls exhale with murder! drip with death!

CHO. 'Tis but the reek of household sacrifice.

CASS. 'Tis like a charnel-room. It steams with gore.

CHO. Other than Syrian perfume find'st thou, then?

CASS. Nay, I will go within, and there bewail Agamemnon's fate and mine. I have done with life!

Oh strangers! friends!

I shrink not idly, like some timorous bird  
 Before a bush! Bear record in that day  
 When I am dead, and for this woman slain  
 A woman's life is taken, and, for the man  
 Whose wife was naught, a man shall meet his doom.  
 Ye hear my last request before I die.

CHO. Poor maid! We pity thy prophetic fall.

CASS. Once more I would speak, not now with tears,  
 but firmly,

Touching myself. To thee, O Sun, I pray,  
 Looking my last on thee, that when the Hour  
 Is here, and vengeance tarries not, I, too,  
 A captive prey,—soon quelled,—may be avenged. [*Exit.*]

CHO. Ah! What is mortal life? When prosperous,  
 A shadow can o'erturn it, and, when fallen,  
 A throw o' the wet sponge blurs the picture out.  
 This is more pitous than the ruin of pride.

Who hath e'er been content with his triumph, or spoken  
 to Fortune this word,

—While men point with the finger of envy at halls he  
 hath reared for his pride.—

'Tis enough! Come not hither again!'

To this king the immortals have given to vanquish  
 the glory of Troy,

And, favoured of Heaven, with honour he comes from  
the war to his home.

But if now to requite ancient murders he die in the  
midst of his joy,

Who shall boast to be free from disaster ?

AGAM. (*within*). Ah ! Ah ! I am mortally stricken,  
here, in the palace !

CHO. 1. Hush ! Who cries that he is wounded,  
stricken with a mortal stroke ?

AGAM. Oh me ! Again I am smitten, to the death !

CHO. 1. It was the king. That groan concluded all.  
'Tis finished ! Let us join safe counsels here.

CHO. 2. Then, hear my judgement. Sound we an  
alarm,

And draw the city to the palace-gate !

CHO. 3. Nay, let us break within immediately,  
And prove the fact before the knife be cold.

CHO. 4. That likes me better. Let us act, say I,  
In some way. 'Tis no time for long debate.

CHO. 5. One may see plainly, when such signs  
appear,

Treason and tyranny are near at hand.

CHO. 6. Ay, we lose time, whilst others are in act  
And triumph o'er our solemn feebleness.

CHO. 7. I know not what to say. To advise is  
hard,

Since counsel is forestalled by action here.

CHO. 8. Hard, say you ! So think I ! 'Twere hard, I  
trow,

With reasoned words to raise the dead to life.

CHO. 9. Then must we all our days be over-awed  
To their subjection who have stained the throne ?

CHO. 10. To die were more endurable than so.  
Death is a milder doom than tyranny.

CHO. 11. Are we diviners, to conclude from groans  
He, that so cried, fell with a mortal stroke ?

CHO. 12. Let's talk no more of this until we know.  
Barren conjecture is a treacherous guide.

LEADER OF CHO. The sum of all your counsels, then,  
is this :

That we make certain how it goes with the king.

[*They are approaching the gate, when CLYTEMNESTRA is discovered with the dead body of AGAMEMNON enveloped in the embroidered web.*

CLY. I, who spake much before to serve my need,  
Will here unspeak it,—unappalled by shame.  
How else prepare the hostile net to slay  
One's foe, supposed one's friend, and fence it high  
Beyond o'erleaping?—Time, and thought still brooding  
On that old quarrel, brought me to this blow.  
'Tis done, and here I stand: here where I smote him!—  
I so contrived it,—that I'll ne'er deny,—  
As neither loophole nor defence was left him.  
I had set round, like a stake-net for fish,  
A labyrinth of hangings, with no outlet,  
A limb-embarrassing wealth of woven folds.  
I smote him, twice: and with the second groan  
He sank: and when he had fallen, I gave a third  
Last stroke, to crown the sacrifice, and grace  
Pluto, preserver of the dead. Even then,  
His soul on wing for Hades, his keen breath  
Smote me with drops of slaughter, whose dark dew  
Refreshed my spirit, even as the bladed corn  
That swells to the ear, delighteth in heaven's rain.  
Such—oh ye Argive elders who stand here,—  
Such is the fact. Whereat, an if ye will,  
Rejoice ye! Howsoe'er, it is my boast.  
Yea, were libation meet o'er human victim,  
Here 'twere most righteous. Such a cup of death  
He filled with household crime, and now, returning,  
Has drained in retribution.

CHO. Wondrous bold

Of tongue art thou, to boast thus o'er thy lord!

CLY. Presume ye, as though my thoughts were  
womanish?

I dare your wisdoms. Ye know all, and—blame me  
Or praise,—'tis one to me. This corpse, I tell you,  
Is Agamemnon, once my lord;—his death  
The work of this right hand, proud to have wrought  
A masterpiece so righteous. Ay, 'tis true.

CHO. Woman, what evil food    1  
 From either element, of earth or sea,  
 Solid or liquid, mingling with thy blood  
 Hath prompted thee  
 To kill such sacrifice, and then  
 Fling back from thee the muttered curse of men ?  
 Hast thou cut him off ? Thou shalt be cut off from the  
 state ;  
 Our citizens shall hate thee with firm hate.

CLY. That is your sentence. I must fly the land  
 With public execration on my head.  
 Wise justicers ! what said ye, then, to him  
 Who slew his child, nor recked of her dear blood  
 More than if sacrificing some ewe-lamb  
 From countless flocks that choked the teeming fold,  
 But slew the priceless travail of my womb  
 For a charm, to allay the wind from Thrace ? How say  
 you ?  
 Should he not have been banished by your voice  
 To purge the state ? Yet, hearing of my deed,  
 Ye are swift and harsh in judgement.

Threaten, then,  
 Even as ye list ; but so as, being assured,  
 That force must win the day. If so ye win,  
 I yield. But if Zeus give my plans success,—  
 And they are deeply laid,—you shall be taught,  
 Old as ye are to learn, the path of peace.

CHO. Haughty thy spirit, and proud                                    2  
 Thy vaunting. But as thine infatuate soul  
 Inflamed with murder, in defiance loud  
 Contemns control,  
 While lurid light is in thine eye,  
 Intoxicate with impious butchery,—  
 Unavenged, with no lover at hand, in thy Destiny's  
 day,  
 With blow for blow the forfeit thou shalt pay.

CLY. Say you ? Then hear mine oath. By mighty  
 Justice,

Final avenger of my murdered child,  
 By Até and Eriny, gods of power,  
 To whom I sacrificed this man, I look not  
 For danger as an inmate, whiles our hearth  
 Is lightened by Aegisthus, evermore,  
 As hitherto, eonstant in love to me ;  
 My shield, my courage ! He is fallen, who shamed me  
 In dalliance with Chryséis and the rest  
 Before the Trojan wall. Ay, and that other,  
 His prophet-mistress, his oracular love,  
 His captive-conqueress, that shared his bed  
 On shore, his bench i' the ship :—she too now lies  
 In death. They have full recompense. You see  
 His fortune—as for her, she tuned her lay  
 Most swanlike for her end, wailing their doom.  
 So died the damsel this man brought to lend  
 New savour to the softness of my bed.

CHO. O for some speedy stroke,                                   I 1  
 Not of sharp agony nor lingering pain,  
 To bring on us the unawakening sleep !  
 Since he, our gentlest guardian, is subdued,  
 And through a woman's guilt.—A woman slew him !  
 Infatuate Helen, who alone didst send  
 So many souls to Hades before Troy !  
 A life worth all the rest thy sister's deed  
 Hath quenched in darkness. From one little seed  
 Is grown a strong and ever-spreading tree  
 Of man-destroying strife and misery.

CLY. Pray not for your death, overburdened with  
       what hath been done :  
 Neither turn your displeasure on Helen, of Hellas the  
       bane,  
 Who sped many souls to destruction and caused unen-  
       durable pain !

CHO. O demon of the home,                                   I 2  
 That with alternate violence doth fall  
 On either branch of Pelops' aneient line,  
 Thou to my bitter sorrow wieldest here

Man-braving boldness in a woman's mind.  
Like hateful raven, o'er her husband's corse  
She stands and croaks at us, in accents hoarse,  
Her proudly inharmonious funeral hymn.

CLY. At length there is truth on your lips. Ye name  
rightly the Fiend overgrown  
Whose seed in this mansion was sown.  
'Tis of him that the blood-lapping lust at its core hath  
been nursed.  
Ere the grief from old wounds hath abated, fresh foun-  
tains of bloodshed are burst.

CHO. Mighty and fell of wrath II 1  
Declar'st thou then the Genius of the race;  
Recalling a disastrous history  
Of dire offences irremediable  
And endless. Zeus the cause :—for what in man  
Eludes the author of the Eternal Plan ?

Oh king, my king, how shall I weep for thee ?  
What words of affection shall flow from my heart?  
Thou art there in that web of the spider, dishonoured in  
death,  
Oh horror ! oh murderous guile !  
Dishonoured, and cleft with the sword,  
The warm life yet running from thee !

CLY. Ye proclaim it my deed. Yet beware !  
Say not I was wife to the king.  
'Tis the spirit of Vengeance awaking from sleep  
For the banquet by Atreus of old to Thyestes cruelly  
given,  
Putting on the resemblance of her that was queen to  
the dead,  
That hath visited all upon him,  
And hath sternly repaid a grown victim for little ones  
slain.

CNO. That this is not thy work II 2  
Who will bear witness ? The offence is thine,  
Whatever spirit of hoarded recompense

From elder ages may have wrought with thee.  
 Not yet accomplished is the course of strife,  
 The clotted guilt of infant gore yet cries  
 For kindred streams of bloody sacrifice,  
 All from one source, life rendered still for life.

Oh king, my king, how shall I weep for thee ?  
 What words of affection shall flow from my heart ?  
 Thou art there in that web of the spider, dishonoured in  
 death,

Oh horror ! oh murderous guile !  
 Dishonoured, and cleft with the sword,  
 The warm life yet running from thee !

Cly. Prate not of dishonour ! ‘ Deserving ’ were  
 rather the word. III  
 Had he not prepared for his house an encumbrance of  
 woe ?

Let him not loudly plead there below  
 That in paying the price of her death whom a nation  
 deplored,  
 The branch I had reared from his loins, he is slain with  
 iniquitous sword.

Men shall reap what they sow !

Cho. I am baffled and amazed, and know not whither  
 To turn me now the house begins to totter  
 Lashed with red rain, that saps it to the fall.  
 I fear it ! This is no mere drizzling shower.  
 Fate now is whetting Justice’ heavy sword  
 On a new whetstone, for fresh deeds of harm.

O Earth, Earth ! would thou hadst covered me,  
 Ere I saw in his low-lying bed,  
 'Twixt the sides of yon bath-tub of silver, the king whom  
 I love !

Who shall bury his corpse, who lament him ?  
 Wilt thou have the heart,  
 Having slain thine own husband, to peal forth his dirge  
 And atone with light breath for the heavy offence  
 thou hast done ?

Ah, who shall be found to repeat for the man now  
divine

The due praise o'er his grave, pouring tears with each  
word sorely wrung

By deep thought from the truth of his soul ?

CLY. Have no care. 'Tis not yours to provide. I will  
bury the man whom I slew.

No train from the palace shall wail round his bier. But  
his daughter, to yield him his due,

Running forward to welcome her sire at the quickly  
passed ford of the dead,—

His Iphianassa,—shall open her arms and shall cling,  
With a kiss, to the king !

CHO. Reproaches cross. The battle is hard to judge.  
Robber is robbed, slayer slain. Revenge is sure.  
Firm stands, while Zeus remains upon his throne,  
One law, 'Who doeth shall suffer.' Who may cast  
The brood of curses from yon roof ? The race  
Is joined and welded to calamity.

CLY. Therein thou hast prophesied aright. But I  
Here make my compact with the hellish Power  
That haunts the house of Atreus. What has been,  
Though hard, we will endure. But let him leave  
This roof, and plague some other race henceforth  
With kindred-harrowing strife. Small share of wealth  
Shall amply serve, now I have made an end  
Of mutual-murdering madness in this hall.

*Enter AEGISTHUS.*

AEG. Sweet day of recompense, I hail thy light !  
Now, lords of yon wide heaven, I recognize  
Your jurisdiction o'er the griefs of men,  
When I behold this man, to my great joy.  
Laid in yon shroud of the Erinyes,  
So punished for his father's act of guile.  
Atreus his father, ruling the Argive land,  
But challenged of his right, to tell it plainly,  
By his own brother and my sire, Thyestes,  
Drove him an exile from his country and home.

Then poor Thyestes, coming back to Argos  
 A humble suppliant at his brother's hearth,  
 Obtained remission of the doom of death.  
 And Atreus, feigning gladness that these fields  
 Should not be darkened with fraternal blood,  
 Received him at a banquet, with great show,  
 But little heart, of hospitality.  
 As holding a high day of sacrifice,  
 He set before him—his own children's flesh.  
 The feet and hands with tell-tale finger-tips  
 He kept concealed where by himself he sate  
 At head o' the board : and with those marks away  
 My father knew not, but received and ate  
 What brought unbounded sorrow, as thou seëst,  
 To all our race. For when he came to know  
 The horror that was wrought, sickening he fell  
 Back from that carnage with a cry, and laid  
 This dreadful curse on the Pelopidae,  
 That as he kicked the banquet to the ground,  
 All Pelops' line might have like overthrow.  
 Hence came *his* fall you now behold.

And I

Have the best right to have contrived his death.  
 I, my poor father's thirteenth child, was driven  
 Along with him, a babe in swaddling bands.  
 Now, Justice brings me home, a man indeed.  
 And while still out of doors I laid my hand  
 On this mine enemy, with plans secure  
 Weaving the plot that should entangle him  
 So that to-day I were not loth to die,  
 Seeing him fast in Retribution's net.

CHO. Aegisthus, to insult over the fallen  
 Wins not my homage. You confess to have slain  
 Agamemnon by your will ; alone to have planned  
 This piteous massacre ! The people's curse  
 Awaits thee, be thou sure, with stones to boot.

AEG. Thou say'st it ! thou, that pliest the nether  
 oar,  
 While those on the top-bench manage the spear !  
 Thine age shall find how hard a lesson 'tis

When old men have to learn obedience.  
 Bondage and prison-fare combined with eld  
 Work miracles in healing froward spirits.  
 Behold the proverb here exemplified :—

‘ Kick not at goad-pricks, else your heels shall rue ! ’

CHO. (*to CLY.*) Woman, and when the king returned  
 from war,

Hadst thou, that kept his house, shaming moreover  
 Thy husband’s bed, prepared for him this death ?

[CLYTEMNESTRA remains silent.]

AEG. Again your tongue leads you the way to woe !  
 The opposite of Orpheus’ voice is thine.  
 He drew all after him with charming lay,  
 But thou, with foolish clamour rousing wrath,  
 Shalt be dragged off, that power may humble thee.

CHO. Methinks I see thee lord of Argive men !  
 That, when thou hadst devised this massacre,  
 Too craven wert thyself to strike the blow.

AEG. Guile was the woman’s function. I, more-  
 over,

Had waked suspicion from our ancient feud.—  
 His wealth is mine to use, and I will use it  
 To rule your city. He that disobeys  
 Shall be bowed down beneath my heavy yoke,  
 No minion of the side-trace and the stall !  
 Darkness and hunger, grooming him together,  
 In harsh consent shall join to make him tame.

CHO. Thou didst not quell him, coward that thou  
 wert,

Thou durst not cope with him ; a woman slew him,  
 Staining our country and our country’s gods !  
 O that Orestes, if he lives to-day,  
 Might yet return auspiciously to Argos,  
 And kill both tyrants in his prime of power !

AEG. So, ye choose that line of talk and conduct ! Ye  
 shall quickly find—

HO, brave guards, come rally round me ! Here’s a field-  
 day to your mind.

CHO. Come, let every man make ready for the en-  
 counter, sword in hand !

AEG. Come, I dare the death in combat for mine empire o'er the land.

CHO. Death !' that word is right : I embrace it.  
Fortune, let the omen stand !

CLY. Dearest one, let strife have ending. Add not to the heap of ill :

As it is, of troublous labour we are doomed to reap our fill.

Woes enow are here already ; let not blood o'erpass the bound.

Back, ye dotards ; know your places ! Run in your appointed round,

Lest ye rue the deeds ye ponder ; let your rude contention cease !

Might but this be all of sorrow, we would bargain now for peace,

Harassed by the heavy heel of God that trampled on our lot.

So resolves my woman's wisdom, whether men give heed or not.

AEG. Can I bear that these should idly from submission break away.

Flaunting proud rebellious phrases in defiance of my sway,

Holding light the Power that guides us as our Providence to-day ?

CHO. Men of Argos ne'er will cringe in homage to a man of crime.

AEG. You shall yet repent that language, visited in aftertime.

CHO. Not if God direct Orestes homeward for his people's good.

AEG. Well I know that men in exile make of Hope their daily food.

CHO. Do thy worst ! Grow fat, polluting Justice. It is now thine hour.

AEG. Know that one day for this folly thou shalt answer to my power.

CHO. Boast thee without fear exulting, like a cock  
beside the hen !

CLY. Care not for the idle yelpings of these old and  
feeble men.

I and thou together ruling with a firm and even hand  
Will control and keep in order both the palace and the  
land.



THE CHOEPHOROE  
OR  
LIBATION-BEARERS  
PERSONS OF THE DRAMA

ORESTES.

PYLADES.

CHORUS *of Trojan Captives.*

ELECTRA.

*The Nurse of Orestes.*

CLYTEMNESTRA.

AEGISTHUS.

*A Porter.*

*An Attendant.*

SCENE—(1) Before the tombs of the Pelopidae. The tomb of Agamemnon and a bust of Hermes are in the foreground. (2) Afterwards, before the palace of the Pelopidae.

TIME—About ten years after the death of Agamemnon.



AFTER the murder of Agamemnon Aegisthus and Clytemnestra have been reigning for some years at Argos. The people are discontented, but on the whole submissive. Menelaus is still absent. The only friends of Agamemnon in the Palace are (1) *Electra*, whom her mother treats as a slave; (2) the Trojan captive women whom he had brought home with Cassandra (these form the *Chorus* of the *Choephoroe*); and (3) the *Nurse* of Orestes, who is retained as one of the household. Orestes is now grown to manhood, and, impelled by the oracle of Delphi, returns from Phocis, with his friend Pylades, to execute vengeance on the murderers of his father. Electra and the Trojan women have been sent by Clytemnestra with an offering to the shade of Agamemnon, who is more likely to be propitious to them than to his murderer,—in consequence of an alarming vision, in which the Queen has dreamt of giving birth to a serpent, and taking it to her breast. Electra pours the libation with very different prayers from those intended by Clytemnestra,—above all for her brother's return; whereupon Orestes reveals himself, and declares his purpose. He is urged to the fulfilment of it by Electra and by the Trojan women, who join with him in a solemn and earnest appeal to the soul of the dead to assist his avengers.

Orestes then approaches the palace-gate. The gate-keeper at length opens to him, and Clytemnestra comes forth. Orestes in disguise reports his own death. His mother receives the news with well-feigned grief: but gives a good reception to the supposed messenger. They go into the Palace: Clytemnestra to her own apartments, Orestes and Pylades to the guest-chambers.

Aegisthus, summoned by the Nurse, arrives from out of doors, and follows them. Shortly afterwards, his death-shriek is heard. Clytemnestra is called in haste from the women's apartments, and at once realizes the truth. She cries out for an axe, but before it is brought, Orestes is discovered, with the corpse of Aegisthus beside him. Clytemnestra wails over the death of her lover. This

rouses the fury of Orestes. But his mother uncovers her breast, and appeals to that sacred symbol of maternity. The son is for a moment shaken. But Pylades (who speaks only here) recalls to his friend's mind the oracle of Apollo. From this point, pleading and menace are alike in vain. In her extremity, the courage of Clytemnestra rises to its former height, and she threatens Orestes with the furies that wait on matricide. The dreadful act is accomplished within the Palace, and the Chorus utter a strain of mingled sadness and joy--in which, however, joy is predominant. But a change is at hand. Orestes is again discovered, with the dead bodies of both his victims, and vindicates his action by displaying the fatal garment in which Agamemnon had been slain. In the midst of his self-defence, however, his mind falters, and, when he has declared his purpose of going to Delphi for purgation, he sees the Erinyes advancing towards him, and he flees forth as pursued by them.

# THE CHOEPHOROE

OR

## LIBATION-BEARERS

ORESTES (*with PYLADES*).

ORESTES. O Hermes of the Shades, that watchest  
over  
My buried father's right, be now mine aid.  
I come from exile to this land. Oh save me !

Father, here standing at thy tomb, I bid thee  
Hear me ! Oh, hear !

[*He lays two locks of hair on the grave.*

One lock for Inachus,  
Whose waters nursed my growing life ; and one  
In mourning for the dead. . . .  
Father, I was not here to wail thy death.  
I stretched no hand of farewell to thy bier.

Soft ! What are these ? I see a company  
Of women, whose dark raiment should portend  
Some wintry mission. What can be the cause ?  
Is some new sorrow fallen upon the house ?  
Or may I trust my mind's presage, that these  
Are laden with drink-offerings for my sire,  
Such as appease the wrath of powers below ?  
It must be so. For look ! Electra there,  
Distinguished by deep grief, comes slowly on ;  
My sister ! Zeus ! grant me to wreak the death  
Of my great father : give me gracious aid !  
Dear Pylades, let us withdraw, and mark  
What means this female supplication here.

[*They retire.*

*Enter ELECTRA: after her the CHORUS.*

CHORUS.

In haste from yonder halls we are sped  
Bearing libation for the dead.

My head resounds with many a blow,  
And on my cheek the crimson glow  
Doth shine, that hands have printed fresh  
With furrowing nails on tender flesh.  
(Groans are my spirit's lifelong food,  
By haunting sorrow still renewed.)

These modest folds that shroud my breast I tear  
With deafening noise that echoes my despair,

Rending the flaxen woof,  
Because the palace-roof  
Knows one more stroke to-day  
Of laughterless dismay.

A dream-born cry at dead of night,  
Stiffening the hair with wild affright,  
Fiercely rushing with tempestuous blast  
Throughout the women's chamber passed.  
Bursting from out the inmost room,  
It scattered sleep, it pierced the gloom :  
A prophet dread was the dire dream  
That in the house raised that fell scream.  
And when the dream-interpreters were found,  
They cried aloud, by heavenly sureties bound,—

‘One rages there beneath  
Menacing death for death.  
He never will forgive  
His slayers, die they, or live.’

Hence the unblest mission for averting bane  
The godless woman sends me to sustain.  
O holiest Earth, she is eager ! But I fear  
To broach this word for divine ears to hear.

What gifts can stay the rod,  
When blood hath stained the sod ?

II 1

I 2

II 1

[*Here they point to the palace.*

O home of despair, undermined to thy fall  
By a hate long engendered in freeman and thrall,  
What horror enshrouds thee ! It blots out the sun.

Sorrow reigns. Joy is done !

Gross darkness envelops the mansion, abhorred  
For the death of its lord.

The majesty that once subdued this folk      II 2  
In speechless awe beneath the unquestioned yoke,  
With listening ear and humbled heart, is gone !  
Trembling hath seized on Argos' ancient throne !

Where Fortune makes abode,  
There is the people's god !

But Justice her balancee is holding above :  
She will visit for sin, whether slowly she move,  
Or swift ;—noon or evening, what matters the hour ?  
Whether twilight have power,  
Or night have come down ere the doom be declared,  
Not a soul shall be spared.

Blood is decreed (as if with iron pen      III 1  
'Twere graven on brass) to atone for blood of men,  
Deep Earth once drank and shall not lose again.  
Sorrow shall tear his heart who made to flow  
That bitter fount of still upswelling woe.

He who hath once unsealed the virgin bower,      III 2  
Can ne'er undo his deed : nor shall the power  
Of all Earth's rivers, in one flood, restore  
To purity the hand once tinged with gore !

LEADER OF CHO. But helpless is my lot      The gods  
let down      IV

A cruel net round all our town,  
And I was borne, far from my father's hall,  
Where I, a foreign thrall,  
Must pass my life obedient to the sway  
Of powers that reign to-day.  
Just or perverse, their bidding must be done.

Howe'er my heart reluctant groan  
 With hatred of their violent will,  
 My passion must be still.  
 But shivering sobs within my garments' fold  
 Mourn secretly the righteous cause grown cold,  
 Of him, my lord of old.

EL. Ministrant women, orderers of the house,  
 Since ye move with me to this suppliant rite,  
 Be ye my counsellors, how I must perform it.  
 When I shall pour this tribute at the grave,  
 What words will be in tune, what prayer will please ?  
 Shall I say, Father, from a loving wife  
 This comes to thy dear soul : yea, from my mother ?  
 That dare I not.—I know not how to speak.  
 Shedding this draught upon my father's tomb.  
 Or shall I say, as mortals use, Give back  
 The giver meet return ? to wit, some evil ?  
 Or in dishonoured silence, as he fell,  
 Shall I give Earth to drink of this, and go,  
 Like one who carries offal forth and jerks  
 The jar behind with unregarding eye ?  
 Be sharers of this counsel, dear my friends !  
 We bear a common hatred in the hall.  
 Hide not your thoughts within for fear of any.  
 Since Destiny holds in her iron grasp  
 Sovereign and slave alike. Be kind, and speak.

CHO. Yea, from the heart we will speak. Thy  
 father's tomb

With sacred awe constrains us to thy will.

EL. Speak, as ye fear my father's resting-place !

Cno. So pray that friends may hear with reverent  
 heed.

EL. What friends ? Who are they that should care to  
 hear ?

CHO. Thyself, and whoso hates Aegisthus' sway.

EL. My prayer extends, then, to myself and you ?

CHO. Let thine own heart consider, and declare.

EL. What other should I rank upon our side ?

CHO. Think of Orestes, though he be not here.

EL. Well said and wisely ! That most heartens me.

CHO. Then think of those who shed this blood, and  
pray—

EL. How? Teach me; I am ignorant. Speak on.

CHO. Some power, divine or human, may descend—

EL. To judge or execute? What wilt thou say?

CHO. Few words, but clear: To kill the murderer.

EL. But will the gods not frown upon such prayer?

CHO. Do they not favour vengeance on a foe?

EL. O mightiest herald both in Heaven and Hell,  
Assist me, Hermes of the shades, and tell me  
My prayer is heard by those beneath the ground,  
The Powers that keep watch o'er my father's home,  
And by great Earth, who teems with all, and feeds  
them,

And takes them back for seed to her own womb.

—I, pouring this lustration for the dead,

Speak thus appealingly: My father, pity

Thy child, and let Orestes be brought home.

For now we are lost, your dear ones: sold, disowned,  
By her that bare us; who has ta'en for husband  
Aegisthus, thy part-murderer, in thy room.

I am no better than a slave; Orestes

Is banished from his wealth; and o'er thy woe

They gloat in luxury and towering pride.

Then, father, hear my prayer, that to this land  
Orestes come with Fortune leading him.

And for myself, grant me a better mind

Than e'er my mother had, and hands more pure.

This prayer is for thy children: on thy foes

Let thine avenger rise with recompense,

To make the murderers pay thee death for death:

(This curse must mar my perfect prayer): O father,  
Send us from where thou liest some boon above,  
With Heaven and Earth and conquering Right for aid!

Such prayers doth this libation crown.—Now ye

Adorn with wailing dirge the solemn rite,

And hymn the dead with customary cry.

*[As the following lines are chanted, ELECTRA pours  
three several libations. In doing so, she ob-  
serves the lock of hair, and takes it up.]*

Cho. Wail ye ! let the tear down flow  
 For the lord that here lies low.  
 Sound his dirge before the hill,  
 That fends alike haps good and ill.  
 May the curse our hearts abhor,  
 May the portent we deplore,  
 Be averted by the power  
 Of the soft libation's shower !  
 Hear us, master, ever kind,  
 Hear us in thy darkened mind !

—Woe for us and woe for thee, [To ELECTRA.  
 Child of cureless misery !

Where is he that was to come  
 And redeem the royal home ?

—Mighty spearman, with strong hand  
 Closed on the descending brand !  
 From his bow of Scythian bend  
 Swift the War-god's shaft to send !  
 Holding firm, in act to kill,  
 Bow and brand and dauntless will !

El. Earth now has drained that offering to my  
 sire.

But here,—what think ye ? There is more to tell.

Cho. Speak on ! My heart is bounding with new  
 fear.

El. Look what I have found : this curl upon the  
 tomb !

Cho. Shorn by what man, or what long-kirtled maid ?

El. No mystery there ! Whoever sees may know.

Cho. Old as I am, youth must enlighten me.

El. One man alone could shear it from his brow !

Cho. They who in blood should mourn for him are  
 foes.

El. Well, here is a resemblance not obscure !

[Holding the lock to her own head.]

Cho. Tell us. What crisped locks wouldst thou  
 compare ?

El. His and my own. 'Tis a strong likeness, women !

Cho. Can this, then, be Orestes' secret gift ?

EL. Methinks I see this curl upon his head.

CHO. But how should he have ventured to come hither?

EL. Ay.

Perchance he hath sent this tribute to his sire.

CHO. I find no less occasion for my tears,  
If on this land he ne'er shall plant his foot.

EL. Yea: on *my* heart the bitter waves of grief  
Strike hard: I faint, as from a staggering blow;  
And from mine eyes a wintry flood comes down  
Of drops that slake not sorrow, since I saw  
This hair. Whom else in Argos can I think of  
With locks of equal sheen? nor was it shorn  
By her that slew the king; mother to me  
In word; but in her mind, towards her own offspring,  
Her Heaven-offending thoughts have no such name.  
I may not yield an absolute belief  
That this fair offering came from the head  
Of my most dear Orestes: but the hope  
Thrills through me. Ah! could it but speak, and tell  
me

Kind news, I were not shaken thus and cloven,  
Thinking two ways: but either with clear scorn  
I would renounce it, as an enemy's hair;  
Or being my brother's, it should mourn with me,  
And pay sweet honours at our father's tomb.

I call the gods to witness, for they know,  
Amidst what troubles we, like mariners,  
Are toiling; yet, if Fate intend our good,  
A little seed may bear a mighty stem.

See, see! a second proof! The footmarks here  
Are like and comparable to mine!—What else?  
Why, there are two of them, two printed forms,  
His own, no doubt! and some companion's tread.  
Measuring the heel and foot-palm's pressure, see!  
The print accords with what my steps have made.  
—Yet am I pained. My heart is sore distraught!

OR. (*coming forward*). First tell the gods thy former  
prayer is heard.

Then pray that all to come be likewise good.

EL. Why ? What hath Heaven performed for me but now ?

OR. Thou seest at last whom long thou hast prayed to see.

EL. Whom knowest thou that my prayers were summoning ?

OR. Orestes' name lives in thy mouth, I know.

EL. Thou saidst my prayer was heard. What couldst thou mean ?

OR. I am the man. Look not for one more dear.

EL. O stranger, art thou weaving me some guile ?

OR. If so, I weave a snare for my own feet.

EL. Nay, thou'l make mockery of my miseries.

OR. I mock mine own, if I mock thine at all.

EL. Shall I, in very truth, call thee Orestes ?

OR. You see myself, and find it hard to know me.

Yet when you spied yon severed mourning hair,  
And keenly tracked my footsteps, your fond heart  
Was lifted to believe you saw my shape.

Set close that curl to this my head, and, look !

The place receives it. 'Tis thy brother's hair.

And see this robe which thine own hand once made,  
The firm woof and the broidered figures here !

—Nay, be not lost in gladness ! Curb thy heart ;  
We know, our nearest friends are dangerous foes.

EL. Centre of fondness in thy father's hall,  
Tear-watered hope of blessings yet to be,  
Faith in thy might shall win thee back thy home !  
Oh how I joy beholding thee ! Thou hast  
Four parts in my desires, not one alone.  
I call thee Father : and my mother's claim  
Falls to thy side, since utter hate is hers.  
And my poor butchered sister's share is thine.  
And I adore thee as my own true brother.  
But oh ! may holy Right and Victory,  
And highest Zeus, the Saviour, speed thee too !

OR. Zeus ! Zeus ! be thou beholder of this act !  
Look down upon thine eagle's orphan brood  
Whose sire was strangled in the twisted coils  
Of the fell serpent.—They in orphanhood

Famish with hunger: for their youthful wing  
 Bears not to the eyrie the paternal prey.  
 Even so we twain this day, I and Electra,  
 Stand in thy sight bereaved and fatherless,  
 Both alike banished from the rights of home.  
 But if these nestlings of a pious sire,  
 Who made thy glory great with sacrifices,  
 Be left by thee to perish, whence again  
 Shalt thou be feasted with so full a hand ?  
 As, if thou let thine eagle's offspring die,  
 The tokens that revive men's faith, would fail;  
 So, if thou leave to wither this proud stem  
 Of topmost sovereignty, thine altar's crown  
 Shall miss much blood when bulls are slaughterèd.  
 Care for us, and a mighty house will rise  
 From this low state of ruined majesty.

CHO. Children, redeemers of your father's hearth,  
 Speak softly, dear ones, lest your words be known,  
 And some with idle tongue report all this  
 To those now ruling. Whom may I erelong  
 See dead amid dark wreaths of blackening fire !

OR. We shall not fail: Apollo's mighty word  
 Will be performed, that bade me stem this peril.  
 High rose that sovran voice, and clearly spake  
 Of stormy curses that should freeze my blood,  
 Should I not wreak my father's wrongful death.  
 He bade me pay them back the self-same deed  
 Maddened by loss of all: yea, mine own soul  
 Should know much bitterness, were this not done.  
 For, so he prophesied, this land should yield  
 Such produce as should gladden every foe ;  
 Whilst on us twain diseases should ascend,  
 Cankering our flesh with cruel sores all over,  
 Devouring what was comely, till grey hairs  
 Should find us, blasted with such misery.  
 And other onsets of the Erinys-power  
 He said should follow from my father's death  
 If unavenged by me.—For one so slain  
 Sees clearly, though his brows in darkness move !—  
 The darkling arrow of the dead, that flies

From kindred souls abominably slain,  
 And madness and vain terror of the mind  
 Should harass and unman me, till the State  
 Should drive me forth, with brands upon my body.  
 So vexed, so banished, I should have no share  
 Of wine or dear libation, but, unseen,  
 My father's wrath should drive me from all altars.  
 None should receive me: none should dwell with me;  
 And my long friendless life, bereft of honours,  
 Should shrivel down to darkness and decay.  
 And was not this a word to be obeyed?  
 Yea, were it not, the deed must yet be done.  
 Many desires are joined in one strong will,—  
 The heavenly oracle; my heart's deep grief  
 For my dead father; yea, the stings of want,  
 Press all one way, forbidding that a race  
 The most renowned on earth, whose dauntless spirit  
 Razèd the proud towers of Troy,—these Argive men—  
 Should be the vassals of a brace of women.  
 Is he not woman-souled? This day shall prove.

[ORESTES and ELECTRA draw nearer to the grave.

CHO. O mighty Fates, let Heaven's high sovereign send  
 The event that Justice chooseth for her end!  
 She cries aloud, requiring payment due,  
 'The bitter tongue through bitter speech shall rue,  
 Let bloody stroke for bloody stroke be law,  
 The doer must suffer.' 'Tis a world-old saw.

OR. Father, no word of mine, no deed, may bring I 1  
 Light to the darkness where thou liest below:—  
 Yet shall the dirge lament thy matchless woe,  
 And grace the tomb of Argos' noblest king.

CHO. Dear youth, the spirit of the dead survives  
 The ravening flame: his wrath long after lives.  
 His dying groan is answered from afar  
 By fierce avengers arming them for war.  
 When the sire falls, true grief is vastly stirred:  
 Shrinks from no toil; is from no task deterred.

EL. Hear me, too, father, mourning in my turn: I 2  
 Both thine afflicted ones toward thee yearn,

Both outcast, both sad suppliants at thy tomb.  
What dawn may pierce this overwhelming gloom ?

CHO. Ay, but even yet may Heaven to yonder hall  
Glad voices of far differing tone recall.  
So He but will, funereal notes shall end,  
And hymns of happy triumph shall attend  
The fresh home-coming of the royal friend.

OR. Would that some Lykian hand, II 1  
Father, had pierced thee in the Trojan land !

Then, leaving glory to thy home,  
Laying in store for years to come  
Bright example for thy seed,  
Full of deep strength for all their need,  
Thou hadst died before the wall ;  
And thy body there had found  
Rest beneath a lofty mound,  
Lightly recked of in thy hall !

CHO. Dear to great souls that there encountered  
Death,

Worshipped and glorious on thy darkling throne,  
Chief in the train of mighty powers beneath,  
Thou shouldst have held the place thou here hadst  
known.

For in thy time on earth thou wast a king,  
With sceptred arm all spirits vanquishing.

EL. Not by Scamander's ford, II 2  
Amidst the crowd that perished by the sword,

Shouldst thou be buried, O my sire !

Nay, rather doth my heart require  
Thy murderers had found that bier,  
A far-off tale for us to hear,

As of battles long ago,  
Listening to some tuneful tongue  
With a heart by grief unwrung,  
Free from all this weight of woe.

CHO. Daughter, thou tell'st, for thou hast power of  
speech,

Of fortune above gold, beyond the reach

Of men most blest, in elimes that poets know.  
 Meanwhile descends this twofold lash of woe.  
 With harsh reverberation : Help is there !

[*Pointing to the tomb.*

Buried beneath ; and yonder hateful pair

[*Pointing to the palace.*

Usurp it o'er your hall with hands impure.  
 The living have the hardest lot to endure !

Or. That, like a dart, III 1

Pierces with maddening smart !

Zeus, thou that sendest from below

The late-arriving woe,

Thy vengeance falls on every hardened heart,  
 Nor shall a parent's name prevent the blow.

Cho. May it be mine to shriek with shouts of joy  
 O'er her and him, when mighty strokes destroy  
 The lives of both.

Yea, wherefore should I hide  
 What in my fluttering breast must still abide,  
 The settled hate, that, like an adverse gale.  
 Makes rough my spirit's voyage with thoughts of  
 bale ?

El. When shall the arm III 2

Of Zeus, who shields from harm

The saplings round the prostrate oak,

Fall with skull-sundering stroke ?

Our rights against the unrighteous we demand.  
 Hear, buried powers ! Be faithful to your land.

Cho. 'Tis ever seen, the homicidal flood.  
 Poured on earth's breast, provokes new streams of  
 blood.

Destruction calls the Fury from her lair  
 With woe on woe, despair upon despair,  
 That breathes from men once slain, to plague the slayer.

Or. Where is your power to save, IV 1

Lords of the grave ?

O curse, of endless might,

From lips long lost to light,

We, last of Atreus' race,  
 Implore thy dreadful grace,  
 Reft of our halls, and outlawed from our right.  
 Zeus, whither should we turn ?

CHO. Again ye make my changeful heart to yearn  
 Listening your plaintive cry. One while I feel  
 My soul with dark misgiving shake and reel,  
 But by-and-by, the clouds are rolled away,  
 And courage heightens with new hopes of day.

EL. How shall we word it well ?

IV 2

What horrors tell ?  
 What but the grief and harm  
 Wrought by our mother's arm ?  
 What magic tongue so smooth  
 That rancorous wound may soothe ?

Ye may fondle the wolf from the fold,  
 Ere by our mother's voice this rage shall be controlled.

CHO. Like the Persian mourner I

V

Added the hand-stroke to my cry,  
 Up and down upon my breast  
 Clenching fingers without rest,  
 Scattering bruises round and round,  
 Till my poor head rang dizzy with the sound !

EL. O mother ! O enemy ! O hard soul !

Like a foe, unhonoured by funeral bowl,  
 Though a prince, unfollowed by mean or high,  
 Thou didst bury thy husband without one sigh !

OR. Ah ! ah ! Every word there hath stung.

But shall she not pay  
 For each shame she then flung  
 On my sire ?  
 Heaven and this arm to-day  
 Are mighty with one desire.

Let me sweep them off from the earth,—then I, too,  
 would pass away !

CHO. Yet more ; he was hacked, be thou 'ware !  
 And as she had slain  
 So she buried him there  
 In his blood,

Minded to store much pain  
To o'ertake thy life in a flood.

I tell thee the shames thou dost bear from thy sire. Do I speak them plain ?

EL. Thou hear'st our father's death. But I was driven

VI

To grieve apart beneath the dews of heaven ;  
Chased from the chambers like a thievish hound,  
To pour my grief in tears upon the ground.  
They came more readily than smiles. We stole  
Dark hours for sorrow. Write this in thy soul.

CHO. Let quiet movement of thy thought engrain  
These hated truths upon thy heart and brain :

Part thou hast heard : press on, to learn what lies concealed.

So with unbated force thou shalt assay the field.

OR. Father, assist thy children in their deed !

EL. Thy daughter's tears implore thee in deep need !

CHO. And we with both in steadfast harmony  
Bid thee come forth to light and hear their cry.  
Join this attempt against thine enemy !

OR. The cause is set. The battle doth begin !

EL. O Gods, be just ; and make the righteous win !

1. CHO. These prayers have thrilled me with their resolute sound.

Long since the doom lies waiting underground :  
Now shall it come, with desolating bound.

2. CHO. Harsh toil imposed by Atè on this race ?  
Unskilful stroke, vexing a tuneless place !  
Intolerable sense of boundless grief !

Groans without end ! Sorrows with no relief !

3. CHO. As lint within the sore, so for this wound  
The remedies within the house are found.  
Not others out of doors,—yourselves must end  
The strife, and with the murderous foe contend.

LEADER OF CHO. So far, our prayer to gods beneath the ground.

CHO. Oh listen, blessed ones below ! Give grace  
And glory to these children of your race !

OR. My father, king in all but in thy death,  
I pray for power to rule thine ancient hall.

EL. I too, my father, with a daughter's voice,  
Pray thee for power to work Aegisthus woe.

OR. So men shall honour thee with sacrifice  
And righteous banquets; else the savoury smoke  
That steams on earth for souls more fortunate,  
Shall leave thee comfortless.

EL. And I will bring  
Choice offerings from all my patrimony  
In day of marriage, and will honour first  
My father's tomb from the paternal hall.

OR. Earth, loose my father to o'erlook the strife!

EL. Crown all, Persephonè, with fair success!

OR. They took thee in the bath; father, forget  
not!

EL. Think how the net was first arranged for thee.

OR. When thou wast caught in fetters not of brass.

EL. Yea, in a covering shamefully contrived!

OR. Stirs not thy soul at these reproaches, sire?

EL. Doth thy dear head not rise erect in wrath?

OR. Either send Justice fighting on our side,  
If thou wouldst gain requital for thy fall,  
Or grant us to catch them as they caught thee.

EL. Hear this last cry, my father! Look with pity  
On these thy young ones sitting at thy grave,  
And feel for both, the maiden and the man.

OR. Wipe not away this seed of Pelops' stock.  
While this remains, thou livest, even though dead.

EL. For children save the dead man's name from  
darkness,

Like corks, that lead along the fishing-net,  
Else in the deep the flaxen lines were lost.

OR. and EL. { Hear us; this mourning we pour forth  
                    { for thee.  
                    { together. { Respect it, and thou honourest thine  
                    { own cause.

CHO. Unblamed, however long, has been your strain  
Chanted to honour this unwailed-for bier.

(To OR.) Now, since thy heart is tuned up to the height,  
Act, and make trial of your destiny.

OR. Yes. But one question points me to my port.  
What made her send those offerings? What late  
thought

Bade her shed grace o'er wrongs without recall?  
Cold honours, yielded to the senseless dead  
In wretched guise! I know not by what words  
To stamp them, but they cover not her sin!  
No draughts, how rich soe'er, can match one drop  
Of blood. In vain such labour! All is said.  
But if thou know'st the thing I ask, content me.

CHO. I know, dear youth, for we were there. A  
dream

And terror of the night, that vexed and shook her,  
Drove to this rite her sin-perturbèd mind.

OR. Say then, have ye clear knowledge of the vision?

CHO. She said she bare a serpent in her dream.

OR. Did all end so? Or whither turns the tale?

CHO. It woke up like a child in swaddling-bands.

OR. In hunger, the young dragon! for what food?

CHO. She held her breast to appease it in her dream.

OR. How 'scaped her teat the wounding of its tooth?

CHO. Nay, it drew blood thence with the woman's  
milk.

OR. This vision cannot vanish unfulfilled.

CHO. Startled from sleep, she woke the house with  
cries.

And many blazing torches, night had quenched.  
Renewed last evening's splendours for their queen.  
Then sped she forth this funeral drink-offering,  
Late hope, to heal a mortifying sore!

OR. Land of my sires, and thou, my father's tomb,  
May this fair vision be fulfilled in me!

Surely this reading fits, and shows no flaw?

If, slipt from the same place from whence I sprang,  
The serpent, swaddled on my mother's lap,  
Showed fight, and gaped upon the teat that fed me,  
Curdling the kindly milk with clots of gore,  
That she cried out in terror of such pain,

'Tis fated, since she nursed a monstrous thing,  
She die a bloody death, and I, grown up  
To dragon-hood, must slay her: so this dream  
Declares. Be ye the seers to test my judgement.

CHO. So be it! say we. Proceed; we share thy  
counsel.

OR. Few words suffice. Electra goes within:  
We (*pointing to PYLADES*) follow our intent. And you,  
I charge ye,

Do nothing: but preserve in secrecy  
These plans, by me so ordered, that by guile,  
Even as by guile they slew that princely man,  
They may die, tangled in the self-same snare.  
For so Apollo, to this hour unshamed  
By prophecies unverified, prescribed.  
I, like a stranger, in well-chosen garb,  
With Pylades my friend here, will appear  
Before the courtyard gate, as a known warrior  
Accepted by the house: and we will speak  
Framing our tongues like Phocian mountaineers.  
Well; in a house oppressed with heaven-sent sorrow,  
None will receive us at the door with smiles.  
So we shall stand there, till one pass and say,  
With dim conjecture of some accident,  
'Why keep ye suppliants tarrying at the gate,  
If that Aegisthus, though from home, have heard? '  
Then, cross I but the threshold of the court,  
Or should he come in afterward and stand  
Before my gaze, ere he have asked 'Whence come ye?'  
He falls, caught swiftly on my point of steel.

[*A pause, in which he seems to be pondering  
something deeply*

Atè, nought scanted of her rights, shall drain  
A third deep draught of harshly tempered death!  
Thou then, my sister, watch the house with care,  
That this emprise may have a flawless issue;  
And ye, I pray you, keep a cautious tongue,  
That knows the time for speech and prudent silence.  
The rest I leave to Hermes, who has brought me  
Thus far, and will direct my venturous sword [Exeunt]

## CHORUS.

All-bounteous earth I 1  
 Rears many a monstrous birth  
 Too terrible, too sad for human ear,  
 And 'mid the depths of land-embracing Sea  
 Lurk myriad forms of hostile fear;  
 Yea, and 'twixt heaven and earth meteors malign  
 appear:  
 And beast and bird, and wind and storm, can wild and  
 wasteful be.

But who may scan I 2  
 The all-daring spirit of man  
 And woman, when her heart is petrified?  
 Who shall express how passion linked to pride  
 Leads from dark lust to hateful crime,  
 And from the female's wrongful sway, madly prevails  
 in time  
 O'er married peace and household joys; and ravins  
 far and wide?

Be witness else, whoso is not unwise, II 1  
 What Clotho taught Althaea to devise,  
 Through fire to slay her son!  
 She burnt to its last ash the blackened brand,  
 That tallied with his life, so fate had planned,  
 From his first cry, long as his days should run.

Hate we next eruel Scylla, that, o'erswayed II 2  
 By Cretan Minos' gift, her sire betrayed!

She clipt from Nisus' head  
 The lock of deathless life (since he who brought  
 That gilded snare, bereft her soul of thought),  
 Wretch; while he slept!—He joined the shadowy dead.  
 What trooping horrors haunt my thoughtful mind?

III 1  
 Home-troubles by the loveless wife designed  
 Against her warrior lord!  
 Ill-seasoned craft of woman-kind,  
 By loyal hearts abhorred!

Let not woman rule my hearth,  
 But the man of martial worth,  
 Awing subjects with his nod,  
 To his foes—an angry god !  
 Let not woman's passion rise,  
 Spreading bale-fire from her eyes !

What strain of grief out-peers the Lemnian tale,     III 2  
 Where pity strives o'er terror to prevail ?

Men since in every time  
 Telling the last assault of bale,  
 Point to the Lemnian crime.

Story thus on story grows  
 To the dark and shameful close ;  
 Heaven-condemned, the race of man  
 Withers 'neath the eternal ban.  
 Plants whereon a god hath frowned  
 Live not long to choke the ground.

The sword of Justice held before the breast     IV 1  
 Is ready to strike deep : nor gives she rest  
 To such as lightly trample o'er their crime  
 As though its trace must vanish in good time.

They scorn her, but her pillars firmly stand :     IV 2  
 Her blade is forged by Fate's unfailing hand.  
 And the slow Fury, fathomless of heart,  
 Brings to the house her child to do his part,  
 Winning late glory with fresh-bleeding brand.

*The scene changes to before the palace. Enter ORESTES.*

OR. Ho there ! Attend this knocking at your gate !  
 Sirrah ! (*knocks.*) Again ! Who is at home ? I say !  
 (*Knocks again.*) Once more I summon Prince Aegisthus  
 forth,

If these be not inhospitable halls.

PORTER (*within*). I hear ! Whence come ye ? Tell  
 What countrymen ?

OR. Announce to those who rule this palace-hall,  
 I bring them news significant and strange.  
 And be not slow in this ; for night's dark wain

Draws near apace, and travellers prepare  
 To anchor in some hospitable hold.  
 Let some one with authority come forth,  
 Woman if need be, though a man were better.  
 For bashful converse never can be clear.  
 But man speaks fearlessly to man, and shows  
 Credentials unmistakable and sure.

*Enter CLYTEMNESTRA.*

CLY. Sirs, is there aught ye would ? Speak then.  
 For we

Lack naught befitting such a house as this,  
 Warm bath, nor bed for wearied limbs, nor fair  
 Attendance unobtrusive and discreet.  
 But if your business be of graver charge,  
 That is men's duty. They shall hear of it.

OR. I come to Argos from the Phocian land ;  
 Daulis my native city. As I came,  
 This way directing my self-marshalled route,  
 Carrying no burden but my clothes, a man,  
 An utter stranger to me, crossed my path.  
 When each had told the other of his way  
 (And in this interchange his name came out,  
 Strophius of Phocis), he proceeded thus :  
 ' Since Argos is your destination, sir,  
 Bear this in mind, I pray you, without fail,  
 To tell his friends, Orestes is no more.  
 And we would know of them, whether they choose  
 To fetch him home, or in strange land to leave him,  
 Forever aliened and disfranchisèd.  
 Be thou the bearer of their message back.  
 For as it is, the warrior's calcined bones  
 Well-inourned, are covered in a brazen urn.'  
 I give the news I heard (*looking hard at CLYTEMNESTRA*):  
 but I feel doubtful  
 If I have told them to the proper ear.

The dead man's parents first of all should know.

CLY. Ah me ! what ruin clamours in this news !  
 O ill-averted curse upon this house,  
 How like a kite thou hast descried our lamb,

How like an archer pierced him from afar,  
 When seeming laid within a peaceful fold !  
 Orestes, whom we thought withdrawn from ill,  
 With free foot rescued from the slippery slime,  
 Dies, and bereaves me in my wretchedness !  
 One hope remained, to heal the revel-rout  
 Of furies in our hall. You bring it home  
 And, in the act, for ever cancel it.

OR. So kindly welcomed by such wealthy friends,  
 I could have wished to earn my entertainment  
 By some glad news ; for courtesy breeds kindness.  
 But still my heart declared 'twere impious,  
 With such affairs in hand, not to complete them  
 For him who asked and you who entertain me.

CLY. Your worth shall not be poorer in reward,  
 Nor shall you know less friendship in this house.  
 Some other might have carried the same news.  
 Come, 'tis the hour when friends who all day long  
 Have travelled from afar, should have kind shelter.  
 Lead him, and this his fellow-voyager,  
 To the best-furnished men's apartment there,  
 And let them have good tendance. Come, dispatch !  
 Do this, as you shall fear our sharp rebuke !  
 And we meanwhile shall make this matter known  
 Unto our lord, and with good friends to aid us.  
 Will study how to answer this grave need. [Exeunt

CHO. Handmaids of the royal dwelling,  
 Is't not time our notes were swelling  
 For Orestes' princely might  
 Entering now the dubious fight ?  
 Hear, O Earth ! O holy hill !  
 Where the body lieth still  
 Of his sire that ruled the fleet,  
 Hear, and send him helpers meet !  
 Cunning leads his crafty tread  
 (This the hour, the moment dread !)  
 Darkling Hermes' whispered word  
 Guards and guides the fateful sword.

*Enter NURSE.*

It seems the stranger's visit makes some sorrow.  
 For, look, Orestes' nurse comes this way weeping !  
 Kilissa, what hath drawn thee to the gate  
 With unfead mourning thus aeeompanied ?

NURSE. The queen desired me summon to the hall  
 Aegisthus with all speed, to hear the strangers  
 Speak with men's voice their tidings to a man.  
 Amongst us servants she would not let peer  
 The gladness that was gathering in her eye,  
 But gloomed with sullen brow, though well we knew  
 Her triumph at what ruins all the house,  
 These news the stranger-men have told too clearly.  
 Ay, sure the master's ears wil gladden him  
 As he drinks in this word ! O me unhappy !  
 How many a sorrow in this house of Atreus,  
 Heaped on old woes, hath racked my breast with sobs !  
 But never yet felt I a stroke like this.  
 The rest I drained, however wofully,  
 And found the bottom. But, ah me, Orestes,  
 That wore my heart out ! From the womb I took him,  
 At that great voiee that shook me out of bed,  
 And nursed him on and on. How many a time  
 Have I had trouble with him, sore, and bootless !  
 The unconscious infant, like a tender calf,  
 Must be looked after, mind you ! For it knows not,  
 While yet i' the swathing-clouts, to tell its trouble,  
 Whether thirst, or hunger, or more clamant need  
 O'ercome it. The young belly keeps not hours !  
 A prophet of all this (sometimes a false one  
 To mine and swaddling-bands' eonfusion !) I,  
 Washer and dresser both of babe and babe-clothes,  
 Was nurse, cook, washerwoman, all in one.  
 Plying these various trades, mistress in all,  
 I reared Orestes by his father's will.  
 And now they tell me he is dead ! Woe's me !  
 And I must go to him who has destroyed  
 Our peace ! Ay, gladly will he hear my tale !  
 Cho. With what attendanee doth she bid him come ?

NURSE. How? Let me understand you. Speak again.

CHO. I mean whether alone or with his guards.

NURSE. She bids him bring the spearmen of his train.

CHO. Take no such message to your hated lord,  
But, leaving majesty and fear behind,

In his own person bid him come and hear.

Go, bear this mandate with a lightsome mind.

Wise messengers make good the unspoken word.

NURSE. But are ye sure ye have reason for such  
mandate?

CHO. What if Zeus turn at length the tide of woe?

NURSE. How can that be? Orestes was our hope,  
And he is gone! [She weeps]

CHO. Art thou advised of that?

A sorry prophet may enlighten thee.

NURSE. What? Have ye heard some counterblast  
of tidings?

CHO. Speed thou thy message. Do what we enjoin  
thee,

And leave the gods to compass their great will.

[Exit NURSE]

### CHORUS.

Father of gods who hold Olympus' height, I  
Grant me this prayer, neither for wealth nor might,  
But for that lot which virtue longs to see!  
Such word is pure from all iniquity.  
Zeus, the performance waiteth still with thee!

But set thou up on high

Above his enemy,

Him who now moves beneath yon roof-tree's shade.

If thou wilt make him great,

And grant him lofty state,

Three and four fold thy gift shall be repaid.

The orphan of thy friend

Is harnessed to a car of grief and pain:

Oh that such course might end,

And his triumphant tramp resound upon the plain!

(*To the Household Gods.*)

Ye that around the hearth,  
Far from the touch of dearth,  
One heart of tranquil mirth,  
    Gaze from the wall,  
May that ill deed of yore  
Find his last meed of gore !  
Let aged strife no more  
    Breed in the hall !

II

(*To APOLLO.*)

And thou whose Pythian haunt  
Shines fair and lofty, grant  
Our hero's house may rise with freedom bright.  
Rend thou the darksome veil  
    That keeps his glory pale ;  
Make his dear eyes behold thy glorious light !

(*To HERMES.*)

And let fair Maia's boy,  
Helper of all our joy,  
Whom seeret wiles employ,  
    Speed this emprise,  
Bring what is hid to light,  
Hiding his act from sight,  
Shrouding by day and night  
    His wary eyes.

Then we will open to the hearts of all  
The riches that return to bless our hall ;  
Soft breeze, that heralds Spring's glad festival !  
The dead we shall lament with shrilling strain,  
But that which we lament to me is gain,  
And from my friends removes dark hours of bane.  
(*To ORESTES within.*) Thou, when thy time is near,  
    Shaking thee loose from fear,  
Shout o'er the filial deed thy father's name,  
    Drowning her cries of 'Son'—  
    Until a deed is done,  
Of heartache full, but unalloyed with blame.  
Taking the heart of Perseus in thy breast,  
For friends on earth, and those beneath at rest,

Work out the indulgence of sad wrath, and win  
 Thy mournful triumph, harbouring grief within,  
 But cutting off the murderers for their sin.

*Enter AEGISTHUS.*

AEG. I come, for I was called. Strange news, I hear,  
 Is brought us by some foreign friends, not such  
 As one would wish :—Orestes dead ! Again,  
 This house, long gangrened with a rankling wound,  
 Must be new-burdened with blood-dripping death.  
 How shall I trace the lines of truth in this ?  
 How know that women's panic have not painted  
 Some flying figure of a death that vanishes,  
 Dying in rumour only ? Tell me plainly.

CHO. We heard the rumour. But go in and question  
 Your foreign friends themselves. Report is weak,  
 Compared with face-to-face intelligence.

AEG. I fain would see and ask the man again,  
 Whether he himself was there, and saw him die,  
 Or speaks on hearsay from a dim report.  
 My mind has eyes, and will not soon be hoodwinked.

[*Exit*

CHO. Whence shall I begin the strain ?  
 How, great Zeus, thy favour gain ?  
 How declare my kindly soul  
 With a voice of due control ?  
 Now the blade distained before  
 With our murdered chieftain's gore,  
 Brought to trial, shall reveal  
 Whether fate the doom would seal  
 Of this house for evermore ;  
 Or the torch in freedom's name  
 For these children shall proclaim  
 Proud return to lordly power,  
 To their rich paternal dower.

Orestes in the deadly close,  
 Grapples alone with both his foes :  
 Relying on his single might.  
 May victory lead him to his right !

AEG. (*within*). Oh, oh ! I am slain !

CHO. Ha ! Which way goes the battle ? (*Another cry.*) Ha ! Again ?

Withdraw we till the deed is perfected,  
And let us seem unwitting of this blow.—

*Enter ATTENDANT.*

The strife is now determined. Who comes here ?

ATTENDANT. Woe, for our master ! All is over !  
Woe !

Woe, yet again ! Aegisthus is no more.

Unbar, unbar the women's gate with speed !

Let young men do it ! Weaklings will not serve !

Too late for succour any way. He is slain.

But do it ! ho ! I say ! Bestir, bestir !

What ? Is the house asleep ? Dumb walls receive

My bootless cry ! Where's Clytemnestra ? Where ?

What doth she, when the edge of righteous doom

Hovers at hand to crash upon her neck ?

*Enter CLYTEMNESTRA.*

CLY. What cry is here ? What dost thou by the  
gate ?

ATT. I say, the dead have slain the living there.

CLY. Ay me ! I read thy riddle ! Oh, undone !

By guile, even as we slew ! Give me an axe,

A strong one ; quickly too ! I'll dare the issue,

Be it for me or against me. I am come

To the utterance in this fight with Fate and Doom.

[*The dead body of AEGISTHUS is disclosed, ORESTES standing by*

OR. Thee now I seek. Aegisthus hath enough.

CLY. Oh, thou art dead ! Thy dear, great life is  
flown !

OR. Was he so dear to thee ? Then thou shalt lie  
In the same grave with blameless constancy.

CLY. O son, forbear ! O child, respect and pity  
This breast, whereat thou often, soothed to slumber,  
Drainèdst with baby mouth the bounteous milk !

OR. Counsel me, Pylades ! Shall mercy blunt  
My sword against my mother ?

PYL. Where are then  
Apollo's prophecies of what should be,  
His conjuration and clear oracle ?  
Hate all the world, but be the friend of Heaven.

OR. Thou hast prevailed. Thy wisdom guides me  
well.

Here ! I will slay thee by the man thou lovest !  
Thou didst account him better than my sire  
In life : then in his death thou shalt lie with him,  
Since here thou hast loved, hating where love was due.

CLY. I nursed thee : be my comforter in age !

OR. How should I live with her who killed my sire ?

CLY. The Destinies wrought there. My son, my  
son !

OR. Destiny works a different doom to-day.

CLY. Thy mother's curse ! Doth that not awe thee,  
boy ?

OR. My mother flung me forth a prey to fortune.

CLY. I flung thee forth ? To a friend's hearth I  
sent thee.

OR. You made base barter of my freeborn head.

CLY. Where are the gifts they gave me for you, say ?

OR. Where is the gift ? 'Twere shame to speak this  
plainly.

CLY. You say not how your father stept aside.

OR. Chide not the labourer, while you're housed at  
home.

CLY. Know'st thou the pain of a lorn woman, child ?

OR. I know she thrives by him who toils abroad.

CLY. Oh ! Wilt thou kill thy mother ? O my son !

OR. I kill thee not. Thy sin destroyeth thee.

CLY. Ha ! 'Ware thy mother's furies. Guard thee  
well !

OR. How 'scape I my sire's furies, if I spare thee ?

CLY. Like dirges at a grave, my voice is vain.

OR. Yea, from his grave my father breathes thy doom.

CLY. Ah !

I have borne and reared a serpent for my son.

OR. Then is fulfilled the terror of thy dream !

[CLYTEMNESTRA appears to swoon ; then rouses herself and looks defiance at ORESTES

OR. Thy deed was wrongful, so shall be thy death.

[They are withdrawn into the palace

CHO. Of this pair also must I mourn the fall.

But since the crested wave of boundless blood  
Buoys up Orestes on its crown, though sadly,  
I pray this eye o' the house be ne'er put out.

Even Priam's sons thou didst o'ertake at length. I 1  
O Nemesis ! thou broughtest down their strength.  
Now Agamemnon's house hath felt the hand  
Of one with lion heart and warlike brand,  
An unrelenting Ares, Heaven hath sent  
Through Phoebus' oracle with fierce intent.

Shout ! for our master's house escapeth free I 2  
From heartless vice and wasting luxury,  
Wild courses of that fell usurping pair.  
One came to avenge : dark craft he made his care,  
But in the battle she herself took part,  
Zeus' daughter, seated in the avenger's heart,

She guided his right arm aright : her name II 1  
We mortals have called Justice. Who shall blame ?  
She breathes upon her foes destroying wrath.  
Such issue the Parnassian Lord, that hath  
His caverned shrine upon the Pythian height,  
To banish guile brings guilefully to light.

Long the house hath been oppressed.  
Now he giveth longed-for rest.  
Even Almighty power and will  
Cannot minister to ill.  
Now to Heaven is worship due  
Since light came and darkness flew.

Arise, ye domes ! The cruel yoke is past. II 2  
Long have ye grovelled. Be yourselves at last.  
No more a slave of servants shall I groan,  
No more these walls shall seem vile heaps of stone ;

Put on thy glory, mansion ! since the power  
Of Purity shall cleanse thee from this hour.

Now whate'er of pain or sorrow  
Waited for a far to-morrow,  
Flies on leaden wings away.  
Night is past. Behold, the day !

*ORESTES is discovered, with the dead bodies of AEG.  
and CLY.*

OR. Behold ye these usurpers of the land !  
This pair that slew my sire and spoiled my home !  
Then loftily they sate enthroned, and now  
They still are friends, if one may judge of them  
By what appears. They have kept their oath and  
pledge.

Were they not sworn to slay my sire, and die  
Together ? See how well they keep their word !  
See also, ye whose ears attest this aet,  
This fell contrivance for my sire's defeat,  
How hands and heels were fettered and conjoined !  
Ho ! stretch it forth : unfold it and display  
This man-inveigler, that the Sire may see ;  
I mean not mine, but yonder Sun, whose eye  
Surveys the world ;—show him my mother's crime !  
That some day he may witness in my cause,  
And prove my right thus to have slain my mother.  
Aegisthus counts for nothing. He but pays  
The adulterer's forfeit, as the custom holds.  
But she, that could contrive this horrid end  
For him whose seed she had borne beneath her zone,  
Burden once dear, though hostile now 'tis proved  
And bitter,—how appears she to your thoughts ?  
Deem ye the touch of asp or basilisk  
More certain to destroy and putrify,  
Yea though she bit not, than her venomous will ?—  
How shall I name this with a blameless tongue ?  
Beast's pitfall ? or the footcloth for a corpse ?  
Or bather's awning ? Nay, a hunting net,  
No garment, but the limbs' entanglement.

A thief might throw such vesture o'er his prey,  
 To rob beguilèd travellers on their way:  
 With this, much gold by murder might he win,  
 Heating his heart with perilous fires of sin.  
 Ere such a consort harbour in my hall,  
 Heaven-blighted, lorn of issue, let me fall !

CHO. Out, alas, dark deed of crime !

Foul and hideous was thy death.

Woe for all the wrongs of Time !

Sorrow is theirs, who still have breath.

OR. Say, guilty or not guilty ? Here, behold !  
 This cloth bears witness how Aegisthus' sword  
 Plunged deep ! The stains, agreeing with the years,  
 Mar all the pattern with their pallid hue.  
 Gazing on this, I feel my father's worth,  
 I wail his death, as I were there to see.  
 And this vile web awakes my heart to mourn  
 For all things done and suffered by our race  
 From its first hour to this dire victory.

CHO. None that dwelleth upon earth

Standeth free from grief and fear.

Woe hath been and woe hath birth,

One is now and one is near.

OR. Hear me declare :—How this will end I know  
 not.

I feel the chariot of my spirit borne  
 Far wide. My soul, like an ill-managed courser,  
 Is carrying me away, while my poor heart  
 To her own music dances in wild fear.

Then, while I am still myself, hear me declare :—  
 Friends, it was right my mother should be slain ;  
 Else had my father's death defiled your land.

Her life was an offence to heaven ! And I  
 Was drawn to do it by one power alone.

—That I proclaim,—Phoebus, the Pythian Seer,  
 Saying, if I did it I should bear no blame,  
 But if I did it not, the punishment  
 Were more than I can speak of,—far beyond  
 A human archer's flight to o'ertake that woe !  
 And now, behold, I go to find his seat,

Armed with this olive-branch and tuft of wool,  
To earth's mid-navel, Phoebus' dwelling-place,  
And the bright flame, pronounced imperishable,  
For refuge from this heart-offending blood.

He charged me not to seek another shrine.

The hour will come when all this Argive folk  
Will be my witness—Menelaus too,—

This evil was predestined and unblamed.

I wander forth again an outlawed exile :

But this my declaration will remain

To clear Orestes, whether he live or die.

CHO. Nay, nay, thy deed was good : yoke not thy tongue

To evil auspice and foreboding drear.

All Argos' people hold their liberties

Of thee, who hast cloven the twofold dragon's neck.

OR. Ah ! ah !

What grisly troop come yonder in grey robes,

With Gorgon-faces and thick serpent-hair

Twisted in writhing coils ? I must be gone.

CHO. Best of all sons unto thy sire, what fancies  
Dizzy thy brain ? Be constant. Calm thy fear.

OR. This is no fancy, but a present woe.

I see my mother's Furies clearly there !

CHO. The blood is yet but recent on thy hand,  
Hence this confusion of thy heart and brain.

OR. O Lord Apollo ! There ! What multitudes !

Their eyes drop down with hate and loveless blood.

CHO. Yet there is peace for thee. Apollo's hand  
Shall free thy life from this assault of woe.

OR. Ye do not see them ; but I see them well.

They are on me ! They pursue me forth. I go. [Exit.

CHO. May peace attend thy path, and some kind  
power

O'erlook and guard thee in a prosperous way !

Three storms have spent their strength against these  
walls.

The third is over. First in yonder halls

Came death of children and a feast abhorred,

Then that foul murder of our kingly lord.  
—The leader of the Achaean host was held  
Within the bath: there, without mercy, felled.—  
Now thirdly comes, a saviour, shall I say,  
Or crowning sorrow? Whither will the sway  
Of fate lead forth the issue? Where shall cease  
Dread Atè's fury? When be lulled to peace?

# THE EUMENIDES

## PERSONS OF THE DRAMA

*The Pythoness.*

*CHORUS of Erinyes, or Furies.*

*ATHENA.*

*Ghost of CLYTEMNESTRA.*

*APOLLO.*

*ORESTES.*

*Council of the Areopagus.*

*Attendant Maidens.*

The SCENE is laid, at first, before the adytum (or inmost shrine) of Apollo at Delphi; afterwards on the hill of the Acropolis at Athens.

The TIME of the opening Scene is shortly after the death of Clytemnestra. Then an interval of months or years is supposed to elapse.

Orestes has arrived at his destination, the temple of Apollo at Delphi (Choeph. 1034 ff.), pursued by the Erinyes. He is clinging to the omphalos, and they have fallen asleep. This scene is disclosed after the prologue, in which the Pythian priestess describes the unexpected sight, and her terror on beholding it.

Apollo himself then appears, and assures Orestes of his protection, but bids him proceed to Athens for Athena's judgment. He departs and the Erinyes remain. But Clytemnestra's ghost arrives and rouses them. They sing their wild prelude, after which they are driven forth by Apollo.

The scene is changed to Athens, where Orestes makes his supplication to Athena. The Erinyes enter, and, after a brief altercation, sing over him their 'binding hymn.'

Athena now comes in person and finds Orestes clinging to her image, with the Erinyes round him. She challenges these strange intruders; they declare their office, and the goddess obtains from Orestes an account of himself. Weighing the gravity of the cause, Athena makes known her purpose of instituting her Council of the Areopagus. While the Elders are assembling, the Erinyes make known their mission to mankind.

Silence is proclaimed by order of Athena; and, as the first witness, Apollo comes in. He not only gives evidence, but pleads in favour of Orestes that the son is bound to his father but not to his mother.

Both sides having been heard, the Elders cast their votes into the two urns. Athena gives her vote openly, declaring that should the Court be equally divided, her voice will determine the case for acquittal. She has no mother, and her sympathies are on the father's side. A moment of suspense follows, while the votes are counted. They prove to be equal on both sides, and Orestes is accordingly acquitted. He proclaims an indefeasible alliance between Argos and Athens. The Erinyes give vent to their indignation at being overborne by 'younger gods.' But their chagrin is at last softened by the promises and the persuasive eloquence of Athena. They consent to remain in Athens, not to curse but to bless the people, so long as household purity and equitable dealings are duly observed. A dwelling is appointed for them in a cave beneath the Hill of Ares, and to this they are conducted by their appointed female guides in a solemn procession, with which the play (and the whole trilogy) concludes.

## THE EUMENIDES

*The Pythoress is discovered.*

PYTH. First in my prayer I sanctify the power  
Of Earth, first prophetess; and then of her,  
Themis, who next upon her mother's throne  
Of divination sate, as legends tell.  
Third came and by consent was stablished here  
Another Titan daughter of the ground,  
Phœbè, who gave, in honour of his birth,  
This place to Phœbus, near to her in name.  
He left the Delian reef and the broad sea,  
Landed on Pallas' ship-receiving shore,  
And sought these pastures, 'neath Parnassus' height,  
Led by Hephaestus' sons, his worshippers,  
Good pioneers who make rough countries smooth.  
This people, at his coming, and their king,  
Delphos, sage pilot of the land, enriched him  
With reverent offerings, while Zeus inspired  
His heart with wisdom, and established him  
Fourth holder of this high prophetic seat.  
Here Phœbus dwells, his Sire's interpreter.

These names I make the prelude of my prayer.  
Then, praising Pallas of the vestibule,  
And the fair nymphs, where the Corycian cave,  
Beloved of birds, owns presence more divine.  
Nor yet forgetting him, who haunts this land  
Since, leading forth his Bacchanals to war,  
He hunted Pentheus like a hare:—once more,  
Naming the springs of Pleistos and the strong  
Poseidon, and the absolute perfectness  
Of Zeus, I mount to my prophetic throne.  
May all these powers now crown mine entrance here  
With best acceptance! If the worshippers

Be Greeks, let them cast lots, and so come in,  
Keeping the ordinance. For I give forth  
My oracles, even as the god shall lead.

[*She enters the 'adytum'; and presently comes forth again.*

Dreadful to tell of, dreadful to behold,  
Is that which drives me back from Phoebus' shrine.  
It saps my vigour, and unnerves my knees.  
That hands for feet must prop my tottering gait.  
A frightened crone is nothing, a mere babe.

I came within the laurel-mantled cell :  
Where kneeling at Earth's navel I behold  
A man red-handed, with blood-dabbled blade,  
And branch of olive from the topmost bough,  
Wound modestly in suppliant-wise with wool  
(To tell it plainly) copious, white and pure.  
But seated there before him were a troop  
Of women, shall I say ? A wondrous band.  
Not women, nay but Gorgons. No, the type  
Is different. I beheld the Gorgons once  
Painted as robbing Phineus of his food.  
These have no wings, and they are dark of hue  
And altogether hideous, breathing out  
Their snorting breath in gusts not to be borne,  
Distilling from their eyelids drops of hate.  
Nor is their garb besetting to come near  
Man's dwelling, much less heavenly tabernacles.  
I have seen no race that harbours such a breed.  
Nor know I what strange land that gendered them  
Vaunts to have reared them without after-woe.  
Let mighty Phoebus for his own behoof  
Look to what follows. He is master here,  
Who with high vision and all-potent charms  
Purges all mansions. Let him purge his own.

*The adytum is opened. ORESTES and the FURIES are discovered. APOLLO appears.*

APOLLO (*to Or.*). I will ne'er forsake thee. I, thy  
constant guard,  
Near thee or far, seen or invisible,

Will still be keenly hostile to thy foes.  
Even now thou see'st these Furies overta'en,  
Their madness lost in sleep—maidens abhorred,  
Agèd, but ever crude, whom none that lives,  
Man, God, or beast, e'er met in fellowship.  
To evil they were born, evil the gloom  
Of Tartarus their haunt beneath the ground,  
And hated both of men and gods in Heaven  
The power they exercise. Yet fly thou still  
Unflaggingly, for they will drive thee far  
Over wide continents with wandering foot,  
And o'er the deep by many an island town.  
Weary not thou of tending this hard toil,  
Till thou be come to Pallas' city, and kneel,  
Clasping her ancient image with thine arm.  
There, pleading this thy cause with eloquent words  
To righteous judges, we will find a way  
To clear thee and release thee from thy load.  
'Twas I that counselled thee to kill thy mother.

ORESTES. Apollo, thou art righteous: yet take heed;  
Knowing the right, be unremitting, too.  
Thy strength for all good deeds is well-assured.

AP. Remember; let not terror quell thy heart.  
And thou, my brother of one blood with me,  
Hermes, protect him, to thy title true;—  
Shepherd of souls, lead this my suppliant,  
Where under thy blest guidance, outlawed wights  
Have warrant from the Highest of zealous care.

[APOLLO *is withdrawn. Exit ORESTES*

CLYTEMNESTRA'S Ghost appears.

CLY. Soho!  
Sleep on!—What gain I from your slumbering?  
Save that amongst my neighbours of the dead,  
Thus foiled by you, still taunted with my deed,  
I wander in disgrace. Be ware thereof!  
They hold me guilty. Yet for me, who suffered  
That cruel death at hand of mine own offspring,  
No vengeance-wreaking power stands up in wrath.  
Behold, I say, this matricidal wound!

See it with thy spirit; for the soul in slumber  
 Hath oftentimes clearer vision. By daylight  
 Our best foreseeings are but narrow and dim.  
 Much wealth of mine ye have glutted, drink-offerings,  
 Unmixed with wine, tempered to soothe your heart,  
 And rich burnt offerings at dead of night,  
 That hour of dread, avoided by all gods.  
 Now those my gifts are trampled under foot,  
 And he is gone, escaping like a fawn,  
 Springing with ease out of your midmost net,  
 With eyes of triumph o'er your impotence.  
 Hear this appeal: consider, O ye powers  
 Of nether gloom! Touching my soul I speak,  
 I, Clytemnestra, now a shadowy dream.

CHO. Ngr !

CLY. Snore ye? But he is gone, fled forward far.  
 My son hath his abettors—I have none.

CHO. Ngr !

CLY. Too deep thy slumber. Where is thy compassion?  
 His mother's murderer, Orestes, flies.

CHO. Oh !

CLY. 'Oh!' say'st thou? Still asleep! Arise with speed.  
 When hast thou managed aught save plots of bane?

CHO. Oh !

CLY. Sleep and fatigue, confirmed conspirators.  
 Have undermined the dreaded monster's might.

CHO. Ngrgr! (*waking*).

Take hold! take hold! take hold! take hold. Be ware!

CLY. In dreams you hunt your prey, and like a hound

That broods upon the chase uneasinessly,  
 Whimper. For shame! Rise, yield not to fatigue,  
 Nor let soft slumber dull the sense of wrong.  
 Smart inwardly beneath my just rebuke.  
 Reproof to honest hearts is like a goad.  
 Follow him forth, renewing your pursuit,  
 And let the fell wind of your gory breath.

Hot vapour from the furnace of your hate,  
 Strike full upon his wildly drifting bark,  
 To shrivel, blast, consume and wither him.

[*Ghost vanishes.*

CHORUS.

Awake ! Waken thou her, as I wake thee !  
 Wilt thou yet sleep ? Arise, and, spurning slumber,  
 Prove we our prelude, whether it be of power.

Ugh ! They have done us wrong. Friends, o'er and  
 o'er   I 1

We are wronged without redress. Most grievous woe,  
 Ugh ! is our lot, an ill not to be borne.

The net is void, the quarry vanished forth !  
 Vanquished by slumber I have lost my prey

Robber of rights art thou, son of the highest !   I 2  
 Thy youth has trampled down our ancient power,  
 All for thy suppliant's cause ; a man forbid,  
 Godless, abhorred, the ruthless matricide.  
 A god, thou hast stolen away the abominable,  
 The blood-accursed. Shalt thou be cleared for this ?

What dreams were mine ! Reproach, a charioteer,   II 1  
 With piercing goad held javelin-wise, hath smitten  
 Beneath my heart upon a vital spot.

Like the executioner's hated scourge it stings  
 With deep-inflicted inly shuddering wound.

Such deeds this younger brood of gods will do,   II 2  
 Swaying all things by main force beyond the right.  
 One sheet of gore, mantled from base to cope,  
 Earth's midmost shrine is visibly beheld  
 Self-cloaked with horror-breathing guilt of blood.

O prophet-god, thou hast stained thine own hearth-  
 stone,   III 1

From thine own mind, moved by no just appeal,  
 Breaking the law of gods to honour man,  
 Threatening to quell Fate's everlasting reign.

My heart thou hast vexed and shalt not free his soul ;

III 2

Yea, though he lurk in hell, he is forfeit still.

This refuge but redoubles the offence

That dogs him to dire ruin unredeemed.

*AP.* (*re-appearing*). Begone, I bid you, forth of mine abode !

Speed your departure from my mystic cell :  
 Lest, overta'en by the wing'd glistering snake,  
 Steel-fanged, that darts from this all-golden bow,  
 Ye emit dark flesh-froth in your agony,  
 Vomit of heart's blood ye have drained from men.  
 Profane not with your presencee this fair shrine ;  
 But go where headsmen execute the doom,  
 Where eyes are gouged, throats gashed, where robbed  
 of prime

Boys lose all hope of offspring, tender limbs  
 Are hacked or stoned ; where men, impaled alive,  
 Moan long and bitterly. Hear ye what feast  
 Hath charms for you, ye god-abominate ?  
 Your every lineament declares it. Go,  
 Inhabit, as beseems such forms, the den  
 Of some blood-lapping lion, nor infect  
 With touch accursed my oracular seat.  
 Go, herded by no goat-herd, ye fell flock,  
 Hated of all in Heaven. Away, depart !

*CHO.* Sovereign Apollo, hear but our reply :  
 Thou of this outrage not the accomplice art,  
 But author and sole agent, guilty of all.

*AP.* How is that certified ? Speak so far forth.

*CHO.* Your oracle prevailed with this your guest,  
 That he should kill his mother.

*AP.* I declared  
 (How should I not ?) that he should right his sire.

*CHO.* Thou didst receive him ere the blood was dry.

*AP.* I bade him crave atonement at this shrine.

*CHO.* And now he comes, blame you his escort here ?

*AP.* As unbefitting to approach my doors.

*CHO.* 'Tis our appointed office.

AP. How? Make known  
Your glorious privilege.

CHO. To dog the steps  
Of matricides and drive them far from home.

AP. And what of husband-slaying wives?

CHO. That blood  
Bears not the blame of kindred violence.

AP. Far then from honour and of small account  
Ye rate the pledge great Hera gave to Zeus,  
And rob of all regard the Queen of Love  
From whom fresh springs of sweetest concord flow.  
Since fate-appointed wedlock well observed  
Twixt man and wife is mightier than an oath.  
Now, if one slay the other and no wrath  
From thee arise, no watchful recompense,  
Unfairly dost thou chase Orestes forth.  
One crime thou weighest full heavily, and one  
The world may see thee taking quietly.  
Howbeit, this cause Athena shall review.

CHO. I'll ne'er relinquish him; believe it not.

AP. Pursue him then, and make thy labour more.

CHO. Disparage not my rights in thy discourses.

AP. I care not for thy rights.

CHO. Thou hast thine own,  
Nearest the throne supreme, so rumour saith.  
Meanwhile, drawn by the scent of mother's blood,  
I'll prosecute this quarry and hunt him down.

AP. And I'll protect my suppliant with my power.  
For should I willingly forsake his cause,  
His wrath in Heaven and earth were full of dread.

[*Exeunt.*

*The scene is changed to the Athenian Acropolis. A long time is supposed to have intervened.*

### ORESTES.

Sovereign Athena, sped by Phoebus' word  
I am come. Do thou with clemency receive  
The outcast,—not red-handed, nor unpurged,  
But mellowed by long time, and travel-worn

Among new households, alien ways, o'er land  
 And beyond sea, keeping the oracular charge  
 Of Phoebus, in obedience to whose will  
 I come, dread goddess, to thy sanetuary ;  
 Now, clinging to thy holy image here,  
 I bide the issue of the arbitrament.

CHORUS (*entering*).

So ! 'Tis his trail beyond a doubt. Pursue  
 The voiceless guide's direetion. Like a hound  
 Tracking the blood-marks of a wounded fawn,  
 I quest and follow where the gore-drops lie.

My breast heaves inwardly and pants with toil  
 Of mankind-quelling travail. The whole earth  
 I have ranged in shepherding my quarry, and flown  
 Wingless over the deep pursuing him.

No ship more swiftly. Now he is hereabout.  
 Not far, close-crouched, as on her form the hare.

My spirit smiles : blood smell I, human blood.  
 Spy all around again, lest he be gone,  
 Lest he be flown unwares, scathless of us,  
 Stained with a mother's death, stolen from our view.

Nay, but again he hath found protection here :  
 Hugging the image of the undying maid,  
 He sues her arbitration for his crime.

Avails him nought ; the mother's blood, ah woe !  
 Once poured upon the ground, is past recall.

Thou from thy living limbs shalt yield in turn  
 Red pulp of thy fair flesh to be devoured  
 By me. I will nourish me with the strange draught  
 Pressed from the vintage of thy youth. I will drain  
 And drag thee down where thou shalt pay with  
 pangs

Thy mother's death-throes. There shalt thou behold  
 Whoever else hath sinned of mortal men,  
 And dealt unrighteously with impious heart  
 Toward god or stranger or dear mother or sire,—

Each overwhelmed with his due meed of doom.  
For Hades holds his audit there beneath,  
And leaves nought blank in that dire register.

OR. Taught wisdom in the school of misery  
I am learned in all atonement, and have skill  
To hold my peace or speak in season due.  
But in this day's affair I am authorized  
Under high bidding to speak forth. The stains  
Of slaughter on my hands are dulled and pale.  
The guilt of matricide is washed away.  
For, while yet recent, at Apollo's hearth  
'Twas driven out and purged with death of swine.  
And tedious were the number to tell o'er  
Of men I have communed with and brought no harm :  
All-mellowing Time makes old defilement pure.  
Now with clean lips void of offence I call  
Athena, sovereign of this land, to come  
And be mine aid : in recompense whereof  
Myself, my country, and our Argive men  
Shall, without conquest, be for evermore  
Her faithful firm allies. Whether she move  
Within the region of the Libyan land  
By the Tritonian waters of her birth,  
Or sit enthroned there, aiding whom she loves,  
Or whether, a bold manlike marshaller.  
She sway the armies of Phlegraean fields,  
May she come hither—for a god can hear  
Though far away—and loose me from my load.

CHO. Think not Apollo nor Athena's might  
Shall rescue thee from wandering all forlorn  
On paths of ruin, never tasting joy.  
Sapless, the dwindling food of wrathful powers.  
Answerest thou not, but scornest all I speak,  
Thou, stalled and consecrate for my behoof ?  
I'll eat thee alive ere thou be sacrificed.  
Hark to the song that shall enthrall thy soul !

[*The CHORUS range themselves in the Orchestra.*

Come knit we our ranks in the dance, for my heart now  
is bent to declare

The spirit of horror that moves us, the rights over men,  
     and the care  
 That our company wieldeth. Our judgement we ever-  
     more hold to be just.  
 No wrath from us creeps toward the wight who shows  
     hands free from murder and lust;  
 He shall live all his days far from evil. No harm shall  
     the righteous betide.  
 But when one hath sinned like this man, and his gory  
     transgression would hide,  
 We appear for the dead, and our witness, that swerves  
     not in aught from the truth,  
 O'ertakes the blood-guilty with ruin, and shatters his  
     life without ruth.

Mother, who gave me birth.—O mother Night!— I 1  
 For chastisement of souls that dwell in light  
 And darkness, hear my grief! Latona's child  
 Robs me of honour.—he would wrest away  
     This cowering prey,  
 My victim, with a mother's death defiled;  
     To plague whose head  
 Discomfited,  
     We sing this strain,  
 The spirit's chain,  
 Dazing all reason dim,  
 The Furies' binding hymn,  
 Enlivened with no lyre,  
     Setting the heart on fire,  
 To mortal men a bane,  
     Ranking them with the dead.

Eternal Fate decreed for me this lot                          I 2  
 Unchangeably, deep in my life inwrought,  
 To follow close on him of mortal mould  
 Who hath slain his kin. I track him to his doom  
     Beyond the tomb,  
 Nor is he free from guilt though dead and cold:  
     To plague whose head  
 Discomfited,

We sing this strain,  
 The spirit's chain,  
 Dazing all reason dim,  
 The Furies' binding hymn,  
 Enlivened with no lyre,  
 Setting the heart on fire,  
 To mortal men a bane.  
 Ranking them with the dead.

This destined power attends me from my birth      II 1

O'er habitants of Earth,  
 But no immortal answereth at my call,

Nor shares my festival :  
 Their milk-white garb to wear  
 I neither hope nor care.  
 But when domestic strife  
 Hath ta'en a kindred life,  
 To plague that head  
 Discomforted,  
 We keenly race,  
 In eager chase :  
 And, mighty though he be,  
 We make him pine and dree  
 Blood strangely shed.

But from all else we would forfend this care,      II 2

Nor let immortals share  
 The burden of dread rites assigned to me.

Beyond appeal are we.  
 Since from his council-board  
 Zeus bans this brood abhorred,  
 And hates us, dripping o'er  
 With recompensing gore—  
 When on the head  
 Discomforted  
 We bring with might  
 And wild affright  
 Our bounding tread,  
 With tireless feet  
 Quelling the fleet,—

Whom none shall save;  
Daunting the brave  
With cureless dread.

Imaginations high  
And flaunting to the sky,  
Diminished, fade and shrink,  
And down to darkness sink  
At our soul-withering glance  
And our dark-vestured dance.

His mind with madness fraught  
He falls, but knoweth it not  
Such overshadowing ban  
Hovers to blind the man,  
While rumour all around  
Of darkness doth resound.

Lament it how ye may, the darkness broods IV 1  
And lingers. Not for us are changeful moods  
Or futile purposes. Our thoughts endure.  
Inexorable are we, severe and sure.  
Dread, though dishonoured and cut off from Day  
Aloof from all the gods we hold our way  
On paths of horror, rough with fell Despair:  
Men seeing and blind alike shall stumble there.

Who then can listen without trembling awe IV 2  
When we proclaim our fate-entrusted law,  
Which Gods allow and ratify? My power,  
Mine from of old, is mine unto this hour:  
In primal darkness once for all 'twas given,  
Before the natal hour of Earth and Heaven,  
Though under-ground be mine appointed home  
Where Helios' genial rays may never come.

*ATHENA appears.*

ATHENA. I heard your shout of summons from afar,  
Where by Scamander I was purposing  
To take possession of the soil which erst  
The Achaean leaders, foremost of their race,  
Gave as my portion of the spoils of war,

In freehold indefeasible and sure.  
 A glorious meed for Theseus' progeny.  
 Thence I have travelled without weariness  
 Yoking to this my car the all-perfect steeds,  
 Wingless, with aegis flapping on the wind.  
 Your presence, unfamiliar to my land,  
 Daunts me no whit, yet with strange looks I greet  
 you.

Who and what are ye ? To all here I speak,  
 Both to this stranger kneeling by my shrine,  
 And you, like unto none begotten or born,  
 Seen not of gods amongst the goddesses.  
 Nor comparable to mortal semblances.

More say I not. 'Twere far from equity  
 To speak harsh judgements without matter of blame.

CHO. Daughter of Zeus, thou shalt hear all in brief.  
 We are gloom-diffusing children of dark night ;  
 Called 'Weird ones' in our home beneath the ground.

ATH. That name and parentage I know full well.

CHO. My rights and attributes thou art now to learn.

ATH. I shall not fail, so they be clearly told.

CHO. I hunt the homicide from home.

ATH. And where  
 Ends for the man-slayer his flight ?

CHO. Where joy  
 Hath no abiding-place.

ATH. 'Gainst him now here  
 Doth thy harsh voice proclaim such banishment ?

CHO. Since he hath chosen to be his mother's slayer.

ATH. And was that choice without compulsive dread ?

CHO. Whose wrath so terrible that could enforce  
 A parent's slaughter ?

ATH. I have heard one side,  
 Two being in presence.

CHO. But the accused is one  
 Incompetent to swear, a perjured soul.

ATH. Ye love the name of righteous, I perceive,  
 More than true righteousness.

CHO. How ? Let me hear.  
 Thou art opulent in wisdom.

ATH. Care not thou  
For wrongful victory won through an oath.  
CHO. Question him, then, and judge the cause aright.  
ATH. Consent ye my decision shall be law ?  
CHO. Yea, bending to thy worth and parentage.  
ATH. Stranger, make answer in thy turn. Declare,  
First, thy descent, thy country, thy distress,  
Then thy defence against the charge preferred ;  
If in reliance on just right thou art here  
Grasping mine image, watching by my shrine,  
Ixion-like, in formal suppliant guise.  
To these demands speak plainly thy reply.

OR. Sovereign Athena, let me first remove  
From thy last words a weight of anxious care.  
Suppliant, but not red-handed, I kneel here  
Beside thine image, staining not thy shrine.  
Hereof I bring assurance unreproved.  
No shedder of blood may ope his lips, till one  
Endued with power to cleanse hath sprinkled him  
With sacrifice of sucklings. Long ago  
In other fanes that rite hath passed on me,  
And streams of living water furthermore.  
My cause being cleared from that presumptive blot,  
I'll tell thee my descent. An Argive I,  
Whose father well thou knowest, lord of the fleet,  
With whose firm aid thou madest Ilion,  
The city of Troy, no city. He is dead,  
Foiled in his home-return, cruelly slain  
By my black-hearted mother, whose deep guile  
Encased his body with a cunning snare  
That from the bath gave witness of his blood.  
I, being an exile in my youth, came home  
And slew my mother, I avouch it here,  
Wreaking on her my dearest father's death.  
Which guilt, if guilt there be, is amply shared  
By Phoebus, who denoueed upon my life  
Heart-piercing agonies in recompense,  
Should I not thus requite the wrong-doers.  
Howbeit, the judgement rests with thee alone.  
How'er it fall, I will accept thy doom.

ATH. Too hard for human judgement is this case,  
 Should mortal undertake it. Yea for me  
 To give decision in a wrathful suit  
 For homicide, were to exceed my right.  
 Moreover,—thou art come unto my town  
 Not unaneled,—a harmless suppliant,  
 And cleansed ;—yet, ere thou art called my citizen,  
 I would have thee clear from every shadow of blame.  
 Now these, where they have power, not easily  
 May be dismissed, but if they compass not  
 The victory they crave, their venomed will  
 Falls on the land for evil in time to come.  
 So stands the business, troublous every way ;  
 Alike disastrous and impossible  
 For me, to let them bide, to ban them forth.  
 Howbeit, since the affair hath lighted here,  
 The court I now appoint for trial of blood,  
 —Men reverencing the sanction of their oath,—  
 Shall live in ordinance for evermore.  
 Produce your witness, let your proofs be called  
 In oath-bound aid to fortify your right.  
 While I cull forth from holy Athens here  
 My citizens of noblest note, to give  
 On this great plea their true arbitrament  
 With righteous thoughts, not swerving from their oath.

[Exit ATHENA

### CHORUS.

Now the rash-brained spirit of change  
 Stirs confusion rude and strange,  
 If our suit to-day must fail

I 1

And the crime and the cause  
 Of this breaker of holiest laws  
 Shall be suffered henceforth to prevail.  
 Rendered reckless by this deed,  
 In transgression all agreed  
 Mortals shall unite for crime,

And the manifest blow  
 From a child, laying reverence low,  
 Shall abound in the on-coming time.

For the mother or the sire  
Shall in agonies expire,  
While our wrath doth silent lie.

I 2

Our watchings are o'er,  
And our madness shall vex them no more.  
Let them die one and all, let them die !  
From his fellow each shall hear,  
Telling of a neighbour's bier,  
'Pangs of conscience now have end ;'

The poor wight in despair  
Cries for help to the wandering air.  
Not a soul shall reply, none attend.

Let not stricken men make moan  
To Justice or the Furies' throne !

II 1

That appeal may often rise  
From some poor father as he dies  
Or the mother ere she's slain ;  
But they utter it in vain.  
None shall heed the voice that calls,  
For the tower of Justice falls.

Somewhere, Awe must have his seat  
And Wisdom find secure retreat.

II 2

Since 'tis good beneath the stress  
Of terror to learn humbleness.

Who that in his inmost thought  
Of heart-trembling harbours nought—  
Man or state—shall give to light  
Equal reverence for the right ?

Approve not thou the lawless life

III 1

Nor that which tyrants hold in fee,  
The mean in everything with strength is rife  
By Heaven's supreme decree.

Much else is diverse in His government :  
This stands harmonious still and strong ;  
Rebellious, impious hardiment,  
Gives ever birth to wrong.

But from the healthful modest heart  
That in no thought of crime hath part

Springs that men pray for earnestly,  
Ever-beloved Prosperity.

Take this monition once for all :

III 2

Regard with steadfast reverence  
The firmly-based, high-towering pedestal  
Where Right hath residence ;  
Nor spurn it godlessly, beholding gain ;  
Since punishment is hard at hand,  
And final vengeance shall remain  
With ever-during brand.

Then honour parents as ye ought  
With helpful deeds and reverent thought,  
And to the stranger duly pay  
Kind tribute on his devious way.

The man that willingly without constraint IV 1  
Keeps righteousness, shall not be all unblest,  
Nor come to final ruin though he faint.

But he that hath with froward heart transgressed,  
Confounding righteousness in wild unrest,  
Against his will shall one day shorten sail  
With stress of tempest suddenly oppressed,  
When yards are splintering as high winds prevail.

Then, whelmed and wrestling with the whirling IV 2  
tide,

He clamours forth the appeal that none shall hear,  
While Heavenly powers laugh at his humbled pride,  
His wild dejection, and his frenzied fear :  
Since one who never dreamed such grief were near,  
Embayed 'mongst miseries beyond recall,  
Wrecks all his life held heretofore most dear  
'Gainst rocks of right, where none laments his fall.

*ATHENA returns.*

ATH. Herald, proclaim strict silence through the host ;  
Or let the Tuscan trump, piercing the sky,  
Sound forth amain, surcharged with breath of man,  
Such hest to all my people. For to-day,

While this high council are assembling here,  
 Behoves mute audience, till my law be heard  
 And fixed in everlasting memory  
 By all this city and the councillors here,  
 That this great plea may be determined well.

*APOLLO appears.*

CHO. Sovereign Apollo, rule within thy right.  
 What claim hast thou upon this cause? Declare.

AP. I am here in evidence, to prove this man  
 A lawful suppliant who approached my shrine  
 And there by me was purged from guilt of blood:  
 Also to plead, myself, in part; for I  
 Am charged with Clytemnestra's death.—Athena,  
 Open the cause, in due form, thine own way.

ATH. Herewith I open it. The way is plain.  
 We hear the accuser first, whose careful plea  
 Instructs us in the groundwork of the case.

CHO. We are many, but our words are brief and few;  
 Let thine be short and simple in reply.  
 Answer this first. Thy mother didst thou slay?

OR. I slew her. That is not to be denied.

CHO. So. One of the three wrestling-bouts is o'er.

OR. Boast if ye will. Ye have not thrown me yet.

CHO. Still thou art bound to tell us how 'twas done.

OR. With sword-edge pressed against her throat.  
 'Tis said.

CHO. Whose will and counsel moved thee to the  
 deed?

OR. Apollo's mandate, as he witnesseth.

CHO. The prophet bade thee be a matricide?

OR. And to this hour I am well content withal.

CHO. Thou'l change that tune, when judgement  
 seizeth thee.

OR. My father from his tomb will take my part;  
 I fear not.

CHO. Ay, rely on dead men's aid,  
 When guilty of matricide!

OR. She that is slain  
 Was doubly tainted.

CHO. How? Inform the Court.

OR. She slew her wedded lord, and slew my sire.  
CHO. Death gave her quittance, then. But thou yet  
livest.

OR. And while she lived, why didst thou not pursue  
her?

CHO. No tie of blood bound her to whom she slew.

OR. But I was tied by blood-affinity  
To her who bare me?

CHO. Else, thou accursèd one,  
How nourished she thy life within her womb?  
Wouldst thou renounce the holiest bond of all?

OR. Now give thy witness and expound the truth,  
Apollo; was I just in slaying her?  
To have done it I deny not. 'Tis the fact.  
But whether to thy thought this matricide  
Be justified or no, declare thy mind  
For information of those present here.

AP. To all here present I will now proclaim  
With perfect truth, Athena's high decree.  
And being a seer, I shall not be belied.  
I never spake from my prophetic seat  
Concerning man or woman, people or state.  
Save what the father of all gods had bidden.  
The force hereof 'tis meet ye understand.  
Lighten your footsteps by my Father's will;  
For 'tis more binding than all oaths.

CHO. And Zeus,  
Thou say'st, inspired thee with this oracle,  
To tell Orestes yonder he should wreak  
His father's death and reck not of his mother?

AP. Of her what recks it, when a man of worth  
And worship, honoured with the Zeus-given wand,  
Is slaughtered by a woman, by his wife,  
Not as by Amazon's far-darting bow,  
But in such wise, Pallas, as thou shalt hear,  
And ye who sit to vote upon this case.  
With kindly welcome entertaining him  
As he returned with good success from war,  
After the bath, when close upon the goal,

She screened him round with a great web, then hacked  
Her husband in the inextricable coil.

The fall hath now been told you of the man  
Supreme in honour, levier of the fleet;  
Told in such terms as must enrage the court  
Appointed to determine this great cause.

CHO. Zeus, thou maintainest, takes the father's part.  
Did he not bind Cronos, his aged sire?  
Is not this contrary to that? Reply!  
And you, ye judges, lend a careful ear.

AP. Monsters abominable, of Heaven abhorred,  
Bonds may be loosed: there's remedy for that,—  
Full many a means of healing and release,—  
But when Earth's dust hath once drawn in the blood  
Of man in death, he riseth up no more.  
No charm for this hath my great Sire contrived,  
Though in all else his strong omnipotence  
Works endless transformation at his will.

CHO. Then look to thy defence of the outcast here.  
Shall he, that shed to the earth the dearest blood  
Of his true mother, hold his father's hall  
In Argos? How should he do sacrifice?  
How share the lustral waters of his race?

AP. That scruple likewise I can satisfy.  
She who is called the mother of the child  
Is not its parent, but the nurse of seed  
Implanted in begetting. He that sows  
Is author of the shoot, which she, if Heaven  
Prevent not, keeps as in a garden-ground.  
In proof whereof, to show that fatherhood  
May be without the mother, I appeal  
To Pallas, daughter of Olympian Zeus,  
In present witness here. Behold a plant,  
Not moulded in the darkness of the womb,  
Yet nobler than all scions of Heaven's stock.  
I, O Athena, both in other ways  
Will magnify this people of thy choice  
To my best power, and I have sent this man  
Orestes, to approach thy hearth, that he  
Might evermore be faithful to thy cause,

And thou mightst have him for a firm ally,  
And his descendants, and this league might hold  
Loyally kept by the posterity  
Of these thy citizens to endless time.

ATH. Enough is spoken ; now I charge the Court  
To vote in truth according to their thought.

CHO. Our quiver is exhausted : we abide  
To hear the verdict that decides our cause.

ATH. I would my vote might not displeasure you.

CHO. We have said our say. Strangers, with pious  
heart

In giving each his vote, observe your oath.

ATH. Athenians, ye who are trying this first cause  
Of human bloodshedding, hear my decree.  
The people of Aegeus shall for evermore  
Maintain this council incorruptible,  
This mount of Ares, tabernacle and seat  
Of the Amazons, who came in armèd might  
Opposing Theseus, and, to thwart his will,  
Built here and fortified this virgin rock  
And sacrificed to Ares, whence the name  
Of Areiopagus ; the dread whereof  
And awful reverence inbred in the race  
By day and night continuing shall restrain  
This folk from wrong-doing, whilst the citizens  
Avoid rash innovation. Crystal streams  
Tainted with clay yield no refreshing draught.  
I counsel this my people to revere,  
And guard from change, the form of state removed  
Alike from anarchy and tyranny,  
Not casting forth all terror from the realm,  
Since who of mortals, fearing nought, is just ?  
Standing in awe, then, of this worshipped seat,  
With hearts of righteousness, ye shall preserve  
A fortress of protection for your land  
Mightier than any held by human kind  
From Scythia to the isle of Pelops old.  
This Court-house inaccessible to wealth  
I here inaugurate, swift for redress,  
Yet capable of mercy, watching o'er

Poor souls that slumber, warden of the soil.  
 I have thus prolonged my charge for the behoof  
 Of mine own citizens in times to be.  
 Now stand you forth, lift each his voting-ball,  
 And in decision of this pending suit,  
 Respect your oaths. There is no more to say.

CHO. Meantime we counsel you, disparage not  
 Our dangerous presence cleaving to your land.

AP. But I forewarn you, fear mine oracles  
 And my great Sire's, nor make their issues vain.

CHO. Through wanton furtherance of a blood-stained  
 cause

Thine oracles are tainted from to-day.

AP. And have my Father's high designs been foiled,  
 Since in Ixion, the first homicide,  
 He gave protection to a suppliant's head ?

CHO. Thou talk'st, but we, if crossed to-day, will  
 cling

With dangerous presence to this land.

AP. Your rights  
 Are scouted by all gods both old and young.  
 My pleading shall prevail.

CHO. Such was thy course  
 In Pheres' mansion, when thou didst persuade  
 The Fates to spare a mortal man his doom.

AP. Should gods not favour their own worshippers,  
 Most when in trouble ?

CHO. Thou didst lead astray  
 Those primal goddesses with draughts of wine,  
 O'erturning ordinance.

AP. Thou, by and by,  
 Cast in thy suit, shalt vomit venom of gore  
 No longer hurtful to thine enemies.

CHO. Young, thou wouldest override our ancient  
 right.

We wait the issue of our cause, intent  
 With hovering mind, ready to ban this city.

*[During the above dialogue the Councillors have  
 been putting their votes into the urns]*

ATH. To me it falls to give my judgement last.

Here openly I give it for Orestes.  
No mother bore me. To the masculine side  
For all save marriage my whole heart is given,—  
In all and everything the father's child.  
So little care I for a woman's death,  
That slew her lord, the guardian of her home.  
Now, though the votes be even, Orestes wins.  
Come, ye to whom the court hath given this charge,  
Draw forth the ballots from the voting urns.

OR. Apollo! which way will the issue prove?

CHO. Night, dark-eyed mother, seest thou what they  
do?

OR. The hour for death or life to me draws on.

CHO. And ours for ruin or aggrandisement.

AP. Be scrupulous, friends, in numbering either vote,  
Parting the sets without dishonesty.

One pebble wanting makes disaster sure,  
That, present, would restore prosperity.

ATH. Orestes hath escaped the doom of blood.  
In numbering of the balls, both sides are even.

OR. O blest preserver, rescuer of my home,  
Pallas, I, long since reft of fatherland,  
Am now restored and stablished by thine aid.  
The world shall say, He is Argive once again,  
And dwells secure with his own patrimony,  
Through aid of Pallas and wise Loxias  
And Saviour Zeus, third-named in sacrifice,  
The All-disposer, who preserves my soul,  
Moved by compassion for my father's death,  
Albeit my mother's advocates stand forth.  
Now, then, ere travelling homeward, I proclaim  
To all thy people and their land this league  
Solemnized by mine oath for evermore;  
No prince or potentate of Argive land  
Shall marshal hitherward the serried war.  
Which bond if any break in the after-time,  
I, then within my grave, will vex him sore  
With strange disasters hard to overbear,  
Crossing such enterprise with omens dire  
To balk his passage, turning all his toils

To bitterness of soul. But while they keep  
 And honour this my league with Pallas' town  
 In firm alliance, they themselves shall feel  
 The favour of my spirit. Now, farewell,  
 Athena, fare ye well that hold her town.  
 Still be your battle fatal to all foes,  
 Bringing to Athens glory and safety too !      [Exit]

CHO. Ah ! Ah !

I 1

Young gods, ye have ridden down mine ancient right;

Ye have torn from out my hand  
 The meed of honour. Wherefore with fell spite  
 Biding to plague your land  
 (Woe for mine honour lost !) all-hapless I

From spirit's inmost core

Will send the empoisoned gore,

Venom of vengeance, dripping banefully.

Whence issuing forth amain

Over the sterile plain

A cankerous growth shall cover all the land ;

No blade shall spring, no child ;

But feuds unreconciled

Stamp the hard soil with life-destroying brand.

To Justice I complain.

Still, still shall I remain

With plagues unbearable to vex their town.

Ah ! Ah !

Hard truly is our doom.

Daughters of primal gloom,

Cruelly wronged and barred from bright renown.

ATH. Hearken to me. Be not so grievous wroth.  
 Ye are not vanquished, for the votes were even,  
 Honestly given, not meant to slight your worth.  
 But the clear evidence of Zeus was there,  
 Witnessed by him who spake the propheey,  
 Orestes should be scathless for this deed.  
 Then give not way to anger, nor inflict  
 On Athens the dire outcome of your hate,  
 In all her fields causing sterility  
 Through rank effusion of a baleful dew,

Showering sharp influence of malignant power,  
 Withering all germens with unkindly drops.  
 For I make promise absolute and sure,  
 Ye shall have glorious shrines and altar-places,  
 And shelter underground, in this just land,  
 High throned, and earning homage of this people.

CHO. Ah ! Ah ! I 2  
 Young gods, ye have ridden down mine ancient right ;  
     Ye have torn from out my hand  
 The meed of honour. Wherefore with fell spite  
     Biding to plague your land  
 (Woe for mine honour lost !) all-hapless I  
     From spirit's inmost core  
     Will send the empoisoned gore,  
 Venom of vengeance, dripping banefully.  
     Whence issuing forth amain  
     Over the sterile plain  
 A cankerous growth shall cover all the land ;  
     No blade shall spring, no child ;  
     But feuds unreconciled  
 Stamp the hard soil with life-destroying brand.  
     To Justice I complain.  
     Still, still shall I remain  
 With plagues unbearable to vex their town.  
     Ah ! Ah !  
     Hard truly is our doom,  
     Daughters of primal gloom,  
 Cruelly wronged and barred from bright renown.

ATH. Ye are not disgraced, then do not, being divine,  
 Make barren for poor mortals their deep soil.  
 On Zeus I fix reliance. Why say more ?  
 I only of the Olympian powers can use  
 The key that opes the close-sealed treasure-house  
 Wherein the lightning-bolts are stored away.  
 Yet shall they not be needful. Thou wilt yield  
 To kind persuasion, and not launch the curse  
 Of barrenness on all fruit-bearing things.  
 Lull the dark billows of thy bitter mood  
 To share mine honours and my dwelling-place ;

And thou shalt find, as thy first-fruits come in  
 From this wide region, both of marriage dues  
 And child-birth offerings, good cause to bless  
 Eternally this utterance of my tongue.

CHO. Woe ! for my grievous wrong ! II 1  
 This time-outworned heart to dwell in gloom,  
 Unhonoured and abhorred !  
 I pant with fury, breathing nought but hate.  
 O Earth, Earth, Earth ! woe ! woe !  
 What inward pang is shooting through my breast ?  
 O mother Night, hear thou our anger's voice !  
 Our ancient honour and prerogative  
 Gods with their crafty wiles have crushed to nought.

ATH. I will seek to soothe your rage ; ye are elder  
 far.

Yet though ye are older and more sage than I,  
 Me, too, hath Zeus made wise in my degree.  
 Then hear my warning. Passing hence abroad  
 Ye will feel passionate longing for this land.  
 For to these citizens in time to come  
 The tide of glory shall not ebb. And ye,  
 Seated in state beside Erechtheus' dome,  
 From crowds of men and women shall receive  
 More than ye could from all the world beside.  
 But lay not on the region of my choice  
 Bloody incitements, marring spirits of youth,  
 Maddening their minds with fumes, but not of  
 wine ;

Nor pricking them at heart like fighting-cooks  
 Goad them to fury of intestine broils,  
 Kin daring kin to the utterance in set fight.  
 War from without is ready (and welcome be it !)  
 To kindle man's dread passion for renown.  
 But let my birds be tame at home, say I.  
 Such noble gifts are thine to accept from me,  
 That, blessing, blest and worshipped, thou shouldst  
 dwell,  
 My partner in this Heaven-protected land.

CHO. Woe ! for my grievous wrong ! II 2  
 This time-outworned heart to dwell in gloom,  
 Unhonoured and abhorred !  
 I pant with fury, breathing nought but hate.  
 O Earth, Earth, Earth ! woe ! woe !  
 What inward pang is shooting through my breast ?  
 O mother Night, hear thou our anger's voice !  
 Our ancient honour and prerogative,  
 Gods with their crafty wiles have crushed to nought.

ATH. I will not weary telling you of good ;  
 Lest ye should say that I, younger in birth,  
 Had chased with scorn your elder deities ;  
 And this my people, a firm-established race,  
 From their fair city had rejected you.  
 If aught you reverencee sweet Persuasion's power,  
 Or my tongue's mildness soften you at all,  
 You will bide here : but if you will not stay,  
 You will not justly send upon this town  
 Vengeance or spite, nor plague her populace.  
 Since with full rights and honours unimpaired,  
 'Tis yours to dwell and have your portion here.

CHO. Athena, tell, what portion shall we have ?

ATH. One freed from all annoy. Reject it not.

CHO. Say I receive it. Then, what dues are mine ?

ATH. No home without thee shall be fortunate.

CHO. Wilt thou secure me such authority ?

ATH. Prospering all fortunes for thy worshippers.

CHO. Wilt thou assure this for all time to come ?

ATH. Why should I promise, if I would not pay ?

CHO. I feel thou art moving me. My rage subsides.

ATH. You will stay and win affection in this land ?

CHO. Then wouldest thou have me chant mine  
 auspices ?

ATH. Chant, if you sing the triumph of all good.  
 Chant of sweet airs that from the earth and sea  
 And breathed from Heaven beneath a wholesome sun  
 Visit this land. Chant of rich harvest days,  
 Of cattle never failing to bring forth,  
 Of foison with the seasons multiplied,

Of human generations sound and whole !  
 I, like a prudent gardener, desire  
 No blight to oppress my righteous nurslings here.  
 Such are your dues. And in the heat of war  
 Where honours thicken, I will evermore  
 Crown with new triumph this world-conquering State.

## CHORUS.

I give consent to dwell with Pallas here.      I 1  
     Nor scorn the sacred race.  
 Whose town high Zeus and he who guides the spear  
     Have chosen, their holy place.  
 Stronghold of heavenly powers, to Grecian gods most  
     dear.  
 Guard of all altars, on whose life I pray,  
     With gentlest augury,  
 Kind Helios still may shed his brightest ray,  
     Trebling prosperity.  
 Still gendering from the ground new comfort each new  
     day.

ATH. In my zeal for the men of this town, with these  
     Powers ever hard to entreat  
 I make league and establish them here, in a gloomy  
     and awful retreat.  
 For o'er all that is human they wield a majestic and  
     fatal control.  
 And the man that hath felt not their anger a burdenous  
     weight on his soul,  
 Knoweth nought of the springs of disaster : his sins  
     of the past have in charge  
 To hale him before these for judgement ; yea even  
     while he seemeth at large,  
 And is high-voiced in vaunting, the engine of wrathful  
     destruction, at hand,  
 Waits in silence to grind him to powder, and sweep  
     him away from the land.

CHO. No blighting blast shall breathe upon the  
     trees,      1 2  
     Such boon my bounty yields,

No mildew come to check the grain's increase  
     Invading their tilled fields ;  
 No dire abortive influence waste them with disease !  
 But life-supporting Earth in season due  
     Still without fail shall bear  
 The grazing flocks, each early-teeming ewe  
     Graced with her eanling pair,  
 While gold from Earth's own womb shall God-sent  
     wealth declare.

ATH. Have ye heard, O ye guardians of Athens, what  
     destiny lives in that sound ?  
 For the voice of Erinyshath power both in Heaven and  
     with gods underground.  
 And to some she makes life ever joyous and loud with  
     the thanksgiving hymn,  
 While for others the light is o'erclouded, with heart-  
     broken weeping made dim.

CHE. Untimely violent deaths be far from hence, II 1  
     Cull not this people's flower ;  
 And grant, ye gods appointed to dispense  
     Riches from Hymen's dower,  
 Men to fair maids, well suited each to other,  
 Grant it, dread Fates, own sisters of our mother,  
 Ye that o'er every home wield righteous power—  
     With ever worshipped sway  
 Pressing on mortal life from hour to hour  
     From burdened day to day,—  
 Honoured above all gods in your unswerving sway.

ATH. I am gladdened to think that your land hath  
     these destinies fixed by their zeal,  
 And I give to the power of Persuasion heart-affluent  
     thanks, for I feel  
 She has ruled my discourse and my converse towards  
     these who were stubbornly bent  
 To repel all advance. But high Zeus hath his town-  
     shielding augury lent,  
 Reinforcing the cause that was righteous. Thus ever  
     for good we conspire

And ever prevail in that strife,—the Olympian daughter  
and sire.

CHO. Far, too, from hence be heard the ravenous  
roar

II 2

Of wild-beast Faction's voice :

Let not the darkening dust, drinking red gore  
Of citizens, rejoice

In wreaking death for death, new vengeance sowing !  
But ever may the genial interflowing  
Of mirth for mirth, kindness for kindness, fill

All souls within the state,

With unanimity of mild good will,

And firm harmonious hate.

Full many a public ill that medicine shall abate.

ATH. Perceive ye the path of their counsel, the  
wisdom that flows from their tongue ?

Great gain from these terrible Forms will be yours when,  
your temples among,

Their countenance looks on your city. While ye shall  
with loyalty cling

To their worship, and load them with honour, the  
blessings their bounty shall bring

Will exalt you. Your city and nation will shine to  
the world through all time,

As the lovers and doers of justice, the foes and avoiders  
of crime.

CHO. Hail, all hail ! May all your store III 1

Fit your need for evermore,

People of the favoured town

Nestled 'neath the sheltering down

Of Pallas' wings ! Her mighty Sire

Regards your shield and checks his ire.

Timely have ye ta'en your part

With the daughter of his heart.

ATH. All hail to you likewise ! Behoves that I lead  
you and point you the road

To your chamber of lasting repose, lighted on to that  
solemn abode

By this train of your holy conductors. Then while  
     we do sacrifice here  
 Go, and passing beneath, be ye watchful henceforth in  
     each onset of fear  
 To keep under all harm for the land, and send forth  
     for the good of my town  
 All advantage that tends to true honour, and ends in  
     triumphant renown.  
 Then, ye children of Cranaüs, dwellers in Athens, con-  
     duct the new band  
 That receives now and renders protection, abiding  
     henceforth in your land.  
 Last, I pray that for ever henceforward the strain of  
     my citizens' thought  
 May be holy, and steeped in all virtue, and issue in  
     good as it ought.

Clo. Hail, all hail,—we say it again,—

III 2

Holy powers and mortal men,  
 All that hold the blessed town  
 Which Athena's glories crown !

For while our presence ye revere  
 In our new home established here,  
     All your hap that is to be  
     Shall be pure prosperity.

[*The ceremonial follows, with prayer and incense*

Ath. My heart approves the tenor of those  
     prayers,

And now by flaming torchlight I will lead you  
 To your appointed place below the ground,  
 With these attendants, whose religious care  
 Preserves mine image. To the central spot  
 Of all the land of Theseus, a fair troop,  
 Boys, maids, and agèd matrons, shall arrive  
 Robed in rich vestments all of purple grain.  
 Advance the torch-flame and illume the way,  
 That this new company henceforth may dwell  
 Propitious here, and make this country great.

[*The procession is formed*

ATTENDANTS. Come home, this way come, I 1  
Great children of darkness, aye childless, descend to  
congenial gloom !

The tribute of worship ye long for is firmly secured  
here above,

And we lead you with love.

HERALD. Hush !

Keep silence, ye folk, one and all !

ATTEND. Come away, come away ! I 2  
In primaeval recesses of Earth ye shall hide from im-  
portunate Day—

Where hallowed with worship and homage, and savour  
of sacrifice slain,

Ye for aye shall remain.

HER. All ye people, be hushed at my call !

ATTEND. Then come, ye dread powers, kind and faith-  
ful to Athens, nor waken to wrath ; II 1  
Come hither, be cheered by the flame, pine-consuming,  
that lightens your path.

HER. Shout, ye folk, a new age hath begun !

ATTEND. Torch-illumined libations henceforward the  
people of Pallas shall bring II 2  
To your dwelling—so Fate hath made compact with  
Zeus the Olympian King.

HER. Shout, ye people, the chanting is done !

# PROMETHEUS BOUND

## PERSONS OF THE DRAMA

(*All superhuman*).

POWER and VIOLENCE. *The latter does not speak.*

HEPHAESTUS.

PROMETHEUS.

CHORUS of *Ocean Nymphs*.

OCEANUS.

Io.

HERMES.

The SCENE is in a rocky wilderness to the north of  
Scythia.

TIME—Primaeval.

In the Oresteian trilogy the wild justice of the early world has given place to Equity under the jurisdiction of Athena and her Areopagites. Through her civilizing influence the very nature of those ancient goddesses, the Erinyes, has been modified, and they are now the Eumenides, a beneficent, not a destructive power. This may prepare us for a further reach of imagination, viz. the bold suggestion that Zeus himself had not always been the beneficent equitable ruler in whom the Athenians believed, but had learned wisdom through experience. Aeschylus figures to himself a time of spiritual chaos, in which not only the elemental passions of humanity, but the very elements of deity, were not yet harmonized, but conflicting. He is thus enabled more impressively to make it felt that it is in the union of power and wisdom, of energy and beneficence, that true Godhead, the impersonation of Righteousness, consists.

In attempting to give expression to this thought, he was assisted by some mythologies, which told that in the supreme region there had formerly been change and succession. Nay, it was whispered, as in the myth of Prometheus, that Zeus had once been a malignant ruler. That dim tradition was the outcome of an age when men's conception of the Highest had been a creature of their fear. We know from the story of Mycerinus, and from the words of Solon in Herodotus, i. 32 ('God is envious and loves to make confusion'), that such notions had been powerful in earlier times, and had been revived and accentuated by Ionian pessimism. The legend of Prometheus (whatever may have been its origin) conveyed the superstitious dread with which a rude conservatism regarded the inventor, as one who by sheer force of mind transcends the appointed limits of the human lot, and makes the divine powers of nature subservient to the wants of mortals. But the legend, so conceived, implied a stage of culture which the Athenian imagination, immature as it still was in some respects, had far outgrown. And Aeschylus tells his spectators in effect, 'This happened, indeed, but under an earlier dispensation. And it involved a contrariety which could not last. For Power rejecting Wisdom must come to nought,

and Wisdom rebelling against Power is fettered and manacled. Omnipotence, to be eternal, must be at one with wisdom and beneficence; in a word, must be just. And because power, alone and unaccompanied, is brittle and transient, wisdom and beneficence are co-eternal with almighty Power.'

The old fable is therefore now recast as follows:—'There was a time when the authority of Zeus was not yet finally secured. In accordance with the presage of Themis, Goddess of Right, Zeus the son of Cronos had subdued the Anarchs of the Past, not by brute violence, but by the help of Forethought, which the Titans had despised. But having won the heavenly throne, he was liable to the disease of self-will that is naturally incident to every irresponsible ruler, and began to exercise his power without regard to the wisdom which had gained it for him; while towards mortals he exhibited an excessive harshness. But to these courses the irrepressible spirit of Wisdom was opposed, and, in spite of Zeus, succeeded in obtaining gifts for men.'

'So long as the struggle lasted, the sovereignty of Zeus was imperilled. And thus the Fates were heard to whisper. On the other hand, had the opposition remained, Wisdom must have been held in lasting bonds.'

'But Wisdom knew the secret word, which solitary Power had failed to apprehend, and Necessity at last made Power submit to learn the truth from Wisdom. Thus Zeus was saved from fatal error, and his reign thenceforward became identical with that growth of Justice in the world which must ultimately subdue all moral discord.'

In dramatic contrast to the principal figure, and helping to draw out the gentleness which accompanies his strength, are the daughters of Oceanus (sisters of his wife Hesione), who come to visit him; and Io, the ancestress of Heracles his future deliverer, and the female victim of the oppression and caprice of Zeus. As the daughter of Inachus, the river-god, she is also near of kin to the Oceanides. These persons, and also that of Oceanus himself on his 'four-footed bird,' give occasion for various excursions into the region of mythological geography, in which the Athenians of the age preceding Pericles manifestly took great delight. And although these episodes delay the action, the grand manner in which Aeschylus unfolds them has an undying charm. The same motive was repeated in the *Prometheus*

*Unbound*, where Prometheus foretold the wanderings of Heracles. But we miss the concentrated passion of the *Choephoroe*, and feel, in reading this drama, as if we were thrown back upon an earlier phase of art. It would be rash, however, to conclude from this that the Promethean trilogy was composed before the *Oresteia*. It is precisely in dealing with the superhuman that high poetry, from Homer to Milton, has been apt to flag and falter, and if the *Prometheus Bound* does savour here and there rather of the Morality or Mystery than of Tragedy proper, it was hardly to be expected that the great advance made in grappling with the horrors of the House of Atreus should be evenly maintained when the poet entered on a wholly different sphere.

Nor is it to be supposed that the taste of the Athenian audience could be maintained at the height of tragic sympathy to which Cassandra, Clytemnestra, and Electra had for the moment raised it. The plot of the *Eumenides* shows that there was still an element of puerility, if not of childishness, in the popular fancy to which the soaring mind of Aeschylus had to appeal. In all probability the grounds of the reconciliation between Zeus and Prometheus were not less archaic, and, if the *Prometheus Unbound* of Aeschylus had been preserved, would have proved equally disappointing to the modern reader.

## PROMETHEUS BOUND

POWER, (VIOLENCE), HEPHAESTUS.

Pow. We are come to Earth's far limit—to a land Untrodden, save by wandering Seythians, A lifeless wilderness. Fire-god ! 'tis thine To execute the mandate of our sire And yoke this felon to yon beetling cliff, Pinned fast in adamantine bonds. Thy pride, Fire,—sovran secret of all arts,—he stole And lavished on frail mortals. Such the sin Wherefor he must receive Heaven's recompense, That he may learn to accept the almighty sway Of Zeus, and cease befriending humankind.

HEPH. O Power and Violence, your charge from Zeus Is all accomplished, and your path is clear : But I am full of heaviness. My heart Shrinks from this task,—to bind a kindred god With violent hand to yon storm-cloven ravine ! Yet must I steel my spirit to this deed : Slackness is dangerous where Zeus commands. Deep-thoughted son of Themis wise in heart, Against my will and thine, with fetters forged Indissolubly, shall I nail thee here To a man-forsaken crag. No human voice Nor form shall greet thee : but the Sun's pure beam Shall bake and blacken thine all-radiant bloom, That when the star-enrobèd Night shall hide Heaven's holy light, glad shalt thou be : and glad When Helios dries the rimy dews of dawn :— Still wearied with the stress of present woe, For none hath being who shall comfort thee. Such fruit thou reapest from befriending man Daring the wrath of thine own race divine.

To men thou gavest rights beyond their due.  
 Wherefore thou still shalt guard this joyless glen,  
 A dreary sentinel, ne'er bending knee,  
 Erect and sleepless. Many a piteous moan  
 And many a deep-drawn sigh shall sound from thee  
 Bootless : for Zeus is deaf to intercession,  
 And young in power is ever harsh in will.

Pow. Well, then, why be compassionate and dwell  
 On vain procrastination ? Why not hate  
 The god most hateful to all gods, who gave  
 By treason your bright glory to frail men ?

HEPH. Kindred and comradeship have fearful power.

Pow. I grant ye. But more fearful 'tis to spurn  
 Our father's bidding. Tremble and obey !

HEPH. Thou art ever ruthless and o'er-confident.

Pow. Lamenting him availeth not to save.

Trouble not thyself, where trouble is all in vain.

HEPH. Mysterious handiercraft, O how I hate thee !

Pow. Why hate your mystery ? To phrase it clear,  
 Your craft is blameless for your toil to-day.

HEPH. Howbeit, I would it never had been mine.

Pow. All lots are hard, but to be King of Heaven :  
 The rest are bondslaves—Zeus alone is free.

HEPH. This errand proves it. I am dumb.

Pow.

Go to !

Enring him with his fetters, lest our lord  
 Spy thee neglecting his command.

HEPH.

Behold !

His armlets here are ready.

Pow.

Take them, and

With mighty sledge-hammer smite them around  
 His elbows ; rivet him fast to the rock.

HEPH. That work proceeds, nor is it idly done.

Pow. Beat harder, pinch him tight, leave nothing  
 loose :

He'd find his way out at an auger-hole.

HEPH. This arm is fast beyond all conjuring forth.

Pow. Now clasp the other no less firm ; that he  
 May know his wisdom feebler than our Sire's.

HEPH. None but Prometheus can find fault with me.

Pow. Now then, with all thy might drive through  
his chest

The fierce tusk of the adamantine wedge.

HEPH. Alas ! I groan, Prometheus, for thy pain.

Pow. Again thou shrinkest, and for Heaven's foe  
Dost groan. Thou'l pity thine own case one day.  
Beware !

HEPH. And can thine eye behold this sight ?

Pow. I see a rebel reaping his deserts.  
Come, put the girths about his ribs.

HEPH. I must !

What needs thy vehemence ?

Pow. I'll use it though,  
And hound thee, too, with cries. Go down and ring  
His ankles, laying force upon his legs.

HEPH. 'Tis done. That called for no protracted  
toil.

Pow. Now clinch with mighty strokes the rivet-bolts,  
A rigid overseer o'erlooks thy work.

HEPH. Grim as thy form is the utterance of thy  
tongue.

Pow. Melt thou, an' if thou must ; but chide not me  
For my harsh mood and unrelenting mind.

HEPH. His limbs have all their casings. Let us go.

Pow. (*to PROM.*) There vent thine insolence, and  
reaving gods

Of rights, bestow them on brief-dated man !

Which of thy woes can mortal men relieve ?

'Fore-thinker' art thou falsely named in Heaven,  
Since here thou hast need of one to think for thee,  
How to unwind the coil by art made sure.

[*Exeunt all but PROMETHEUS*

PROM. Ether of Heaven and Winds untired of wing,  
Rivers, whose fountains fail not, and thou Sea,  
Laughing in waves innumerable ! O Earth,  
All-Mother !—Yea, and on the Sun I call,  
Whose orb scans all things ;—look on me and see  
How I, a god, am wronged by gods. Behold

How torn with outrage here I must remain  
Through countless ages wrestling against pain.

Such means iniquitous to hold me bound  
Hath this new ruler of the immortals found.

Ay me !

Woes that are here, and woes that are to come  
Afflict my spirit. Vast, unending gloom !

What light shall bring a limit to my doom ?

What am I saying ? All is known to me,  
All, all that is to be ;—nor with fresh smart  
Shall one pang smite me. Then let me endure  
My destiny as I may, knowing that none  
May e'er bid battle to Necessity.

Yet how be silent o'er my lot ? How speak

What is befallen ? Because I gave to men

Gifts claimed of gods, I am bound in durance here.  
Charging therewith the hollow of a reed.

I caught, by stealth, of fire a secret spring,  
That proved a boon full of resource for men,

Best tutor in all arts. For such offence  
This punishment ineffable I bear,  
Fast riveted in bonds beneath the sky.

Ah ! Ah ! What is here ?

What sound this way wafted, what odour unseen,

Hath reached me, from god, man, or nature between ?

Who to this craggy bourne of the world can have  
come

Bent to view my distress, or how moved here to  
roam ?

Ye see me imprisoned here, a god ill-starred,  
Of Zeus the enemy, hated of all  
That tread the courts of his omnipotence,  
Because of mine exceeding love for men.

Ay me ! Again

What rustling of pinions, what wide-hovering bird,  
One or more, is at hand, that great Ether is  
stirred

With soft whirring of plumes ? I am shaken with  
fear

At each moving thing that comes near.

CHORUS (*entering above*).

Nay, fear us not ! With love we near thy scaur, I 1  
 In eager-wingèd ear,  
 Vying in fleetness with the following wind  
 That with kind convoy sped me fast and far.  
 Since deep within our cave the echoed clang  
 Of smitten steel amazed us as it rang,  
 Scaring demure-eyed shame, that forth we flew,  
 Hardly prevailing on our father's mind,  
 Unsandalled.

PROM. Ah ! ye children ever true  
 Of plenteous-teeming Tethys, and of him  
 Who enrings the land with ever-rolling rim,  
 Unaltered from of old,  
 Ocean, unwearied Father :—look ! behold  
 How, clasped to towering cliffs with fetters hard,  
 O'er this ravine I mount unenvied guard.

CHO. I see, Prometheus, and a mist of tears, I 2  
 Exhaled from tender fears,  
 Hath filled mine eyes, when I behold thy form  
 Thus withering in the sun-glare and the storm,  
 To that bare cliff with bonds of insult tied :  
 Since new be they that guide  
 The heavenly helm ; Zeus with uncouth decrees  
 Old ordinance hath altered at his ease,  
 And hoary might he hath cruelly defied.

PROM. Would he had hurled me far below the ground  
 Beyond dark Pluto's realm, where ghosts abound,  
 To utmost Tartarus' unfathomed gloom,  
 How savagely soe'er, with changeless doom !  
 There, out of sight and mind, I were exempt

From Heaven and Earth's contempt.  
 Now, swung aloft, an elemental toy,  
 Each pang I suffer gives mine enemy joy.

CHO. Lives in all Heaven one so hard of heart II 1  
 To joy at what we see ?  
 What spirit doth not feelingly take part  
 With thy deep misery ?

Save Zeus, who pitilessly still  
 Fixing on wrath his furious will  
 Subdues the race of Heaven ; nor will he cease,  
 Till sated with destruction he find ease,  
 Or some one, by a strange unlooked-for blow,  
 His sovran power impregnable o'erthrow.

PROM. Ay, though he be Heaven's potentate, and I  
 Limb-fettered in stern bonds remorselessly,  
 Yet shall he need mine aid to bring to light  
 The plot that reaves from him his boasted right.  
 But neither honey-tongued persuasive charm,  
 Nor all the scathing terrors of his arm  
 Shall bring me to reveal it, till he choose  
 From these heart-galling bonds my limbs to loose,  
 And recompense my soul-dishonouring harm.

CHO. Thou yieldest nought to pain and bitter  
 wrong,

II 2

And of thy speech art free,—  
 Too free of speech, contending with the strong !  
 But dread hath seized on me,  
 Piercing my heart with anxious fears,  
 Where in the waste of countless years  
 Thou shalt see land and bring thy bark to shore.  
 For who may nerve his spirit to implore  
 The heart of Zeus ; what voyager may find  
 The undiscovered pathway to his mind ?

PROM. I know him ruthless, measuring right and  
 good

Ever by what he wills ; yet shall his mood  
 Be softened, when this blow shall break him down.

Then shall the settled frown  
 Be smoothed upon his brow to gentle peace ;  
 Then shall his anger cease,  
 And both our hearts, that after vengeance yearned,  
 To love and loyal friendship shall be turned.

CHO. Unveil and voice to us the whole dark truth ;  
 Upon what charge hath Zeus arrested thee,  
 And wreaked on thee these dire indignities ?  
 Inform us, if thou mayest without more harm.

PROM. Even to tell of it is pain, and yet  
Silence is pain:—misery every way!  
When first the wrath of gods began to rise,  
And Faction reared her crest in Heaven, one part  
Minded to oust old Cronos, that forsooth  
Zeus might be lord; others, with equal heat,  
Contending, Zeus should never rule in Heaven;—  
I, at that point, instructing for the best  
The Titan offspring of great Earth and Sky,  
Could not persuade them, but their giant thought,  
Proudly disdaining my ingenious wiles,  
Vaunted of victory by simple force,  
Without more toil. But I, not once alone,  
Had hearkened to my mother's prophecies  
(Themis or Earth, one nature, howe'er named),  
That not by strength or violent assault,  
But through contrivance should the victory come  
And the issue be determined. With such words  
I warned them, but they looked another way.  
Best then it seemed of courses in my view,  
Supported by my mother to stand forth,  
Willing and welcome aids of Zeus's throne.  
Therefore, because my counsel pleased him then,  
The deep and darksome hold of Tartarus  
Hides ancient Cronos and his host of friends.  
Such benefit that tyrant of the gods  
Rewards with this unequal recompense.  
Suspicion is a vice ingrained in kings.  
Now, for your question, moved by what offence  
He thus torments me, I will make that clear.  
Once planted in his father's seat of power,  
He ranged his realm in provinces, and gave  
To divers gods their several dignities.  
But of the poor distressful race of men  
He took no thought;—nay, 'twas his fixed intent  
To blot them from the world, and bring to birth  
Another brood of creatures in their room.  
This plan none hindered, none opposed, but I.  
I dared to cross him, and redeem mankind  
From ruin and the abyss of nothingness.

Therefore I thus am bowed with chastisement,  
Painful to bear and piteous to be seen.  
Compassionating mortals in my heart,  
Myself refused compassion, to the shame  
Of Him in heaven, I stand corrected here.

CHO. Of stony mould and steel-made heart were he,  
Prometheus, whom thy suffering melted not.  
I had shrunk erewhile from the mere thought of that  
The sight whereof wrings me with inmost woe.

PROM. To friendly eyes I am a sight of pain.

CHO. Say, was there more ? Hast thou told all  
thy sin ?

PROM. I took from man the expeetancy of Death.

CHO. What cure hadst thou invented for that ill ?

PROM. Blind hopes, which I established in his  
heart.

CHO. A mighty boon thou gavest mortals there.

PROM. Yet further, I provided them with fire.

CHO. Fire to frail man ? Have mortals radiant fire ?

PROM. Yea, and therefrom shall compass various  
skill.

CHO. And on this charge does Zeus torment thee  
now

With ignominious bondage and strong pain ?

And is no limit set for thy release ?

PROM. No limit but the day of his desire.

CHO. When should that dawn ? What hope ? Ah,  
seest thou not

How wrong thou wert ? How deeply wrong, 'twere  
pain

For us to speak and thee to hear. Let be !

But try some course for gaining thy reprieve.

PROM. How easy, when the foot is free from harm,  
To counsel and admonish the unhappy !

I knew it all beforehand. Mine offence

Was wilful. I avouch it willingly.

Rescuing mankind, I plunged myself in woe.

Yet could I not imagine he would wreak

His anger in such pains as here I suffer,

Withering against this air-poised crag, inheriting

This savage rock in desert solitude !  
 Howbeit, lament not for my present ills,  
 But setting foot on ground, hear me relate  
 The evil coming on, that ye may learn  
 My fortunes to their end. Grant my request,  
 Show kindness to him now in misery,  
 Knowing that sorrow, ever wandering round,  
 Visits in turn all bosoms at her will.

CHO. With desire we obey thy command,  
 And with light foot thus leaving our fast-flying chair,  
 And the highway of eagles, the smooth stainless air,  
 We alight on the rock-roughened land.  
 The full course of thy woes and their end we would fain  
 understand. [*They descend to the orchestra*

*Enter OCEANUS, mounted on a griffon.*

OCEAN. I am come, having travelled a tedious road,  
 To find, Prometheus, thy drear abode,  
 Directing the flight of my fleet-winged steed  
 By my thought, for of bridle he ne'er hath need.  
 That I rue thy torment I bid thee know ;  
 Both law of kindred compels me so,  
 And, akin or stranger, none lives whose part  
 Is more than thine in my steadfast heart.  
 For more assurance, try me and see,  
 Idly to flatter is not in me.  
 Only declare what deed of mine  
 May stead thee, or further thy main design,  
 And thou ne'er shalt tell that, the whole world through,  
 Thou hast found than Ocean a friend more true.

PROM. Ha ! Who comes here ? Art thou, too, bent  
 to explore

This agony ? How couldst thou leave the stream  
 Called after thee, and the rock-vaulted eaves,  
 Thy workmanship, to come so near broad Earth,  
 Mother of iron ? Is it to gaze thy fill,  
 And harrow up thy spirit with my woes ?  
 Behold a pageant of ingratitude,  
 The friend of Zeus, that helped him to his throne,  
 Bowed with such pangs as thou beholdest here !

OCEAN. Yea, and it moves me, O Prometheus mine,  
To counsel thee, deep thinker though thou art.  
Learn thine own weakness, and conform thy ways  
To his new government who rules in Heaven.  
For if thou flingest abroad such bitter speech,  
So harsh and vehement, though Zeus sit high  
Yet might he hear thee, and the wrath to be  
Make child's-play of thy present agonies.  
Unhappy one, bid angry passion cease,  
And seek remission from thy misery.  
Find'st thou an old-world cadence in my words ?  
Most like ! but yet in truth the recompense  
Of too bold speech is even what I say.  
And thou art still unhumbled, unsubdued,  
And goest the way to make misfortune more.  
But not, if I might be thy counsellor,  
Shouldst thou strike back against the goad. Severe  
Is he who rules, responsible to none.  
I, howsoe'er, will go and do my best  
To win enlargement and relief for thee ;  
If only thou wilt hold thee still and cease  
From stormy virulence. Knowest thou not well,  
Being excellent in wisdom, that restraint  
Still presses sorely on the unbridled tongue ?

PROM. I envy thee thy freedom from this blame,  
Though in mine enterprise thou too hadst part..  
But let it be, set thy good heart at rest.  
Thou canst not move him : he is inexorable.  
See rather lest thine errand bring thee pain.

OCEAN. Thou art wiser to admonish other minds  
Than prudent for thyself : I see that well.  
But pull not back me who am bent to go.  
Zeus, I am confident, will grant me this  
Indulgence, to release thee from thy bond.

PROM. I still must praise thy purpose. Thy staunch  
soul  
Laeks nought of zealous love. But spare thy toil :  
Idle thy labour, nought availing me.  
Hold thyself quiet, out of sorrow's way.  
What though I suffer ? Should I then desire

Unhappiness to ravage far and wide ?  
Not so. My Brother Atlas' woes afflief me,  
Who, stationed by the region of the west,  
Urbears the pillar of the Universe,  
'Twixt Earth and Heaven, upon his shoulders broad,  
No holiday load. Another have I seen  
And mourned for, erst the Earth-born denizen  
Of vast Cilician caves, that monster-foe,  
Now forcibly subdued by power supreme,  
Dread hundred-throated Typhon unappalled,  
That stood erect against the heavenly host,  
Hissing red slaughter from his horrid jaws,  
While lurid lightnings flashed from forth his eyes,  
As he would storm of Zeus the sovran throne.  
But the ne'er-slumbering firebolt, neezing flame,  
Zeus' javelin, descending on him there,  
Down smote him from his pinnacle of pride,  
And scathed his strength to ashes. Who to-day,  
Stricken to the core, lies by the narrow sea  
A paralysed and ineffectual bulk,  
Pressed beneath Aetna's rock-root; whereabove,  
Under the summit, at his forge unseen,  
Hephaestus sits, hammering the massive ore.  
Thence one day shall break forth rivers of fire,  
Devouring with all devastating jaws  
Fair-fruited Sicily's smooth acreage;  
Such turbulent wrath shall boil from Typhon's breast,  
Though burnt to cinders by Heaven's thunder-stone !  
But thou, let wisdom save thee,—thou know'st how—  
Thy deep experience needs no counsellor;  
Let me wear out my bondage, till the heart  
Of Zeus be lightened of its angry load.

OCEAN. Yet know'st thou not, Prometheus, that wise  
words

Are healers of the heart's distemperature ?

PROM. Yea, words in season soothingly addressed,  
Not checking with crude force the heaving mind.

OCEAN. But from wise ears and daring well-be-  
thought

What damage canst thou apprehend ? I would know.

PROM. I see in this nought but enormous folly  
And labour to no purpose.

OCEAN. Let me suffer  
Beneath that blame ; for to be wise, and seem  
Futile and foolish, oftentimes serves one well.

PROM. I shall be credited with this offence.

OCEAN. That argument is plain, and warns me home.

PROM. Your plaint for me would win you hatred  
there.

OCEAN. Mean'st thou with him whose newly-stab-  
lished throne  
Is now almighty ?

PROM. Yea, with him. Beware,  
If once his wrath be kindled.

OCEAN. Thy sad plight,  
Prometheus, is my beacon.

PROM. Then begone.  
Let this thy wiser purpose hold.

OCEAN. I go  
Even while thy voice thrills in my listening ear ;  
My wingèd quadruped begins to beat  
Thin Aether with broad pinion, and would fain  
Repose him in the stable whence he flew.

[Exit OCEANUS]

### CHORUS.

I mourn, Prometheus, for thy ruinous woe, 11  
And moisten all my cheek with warm soft rain  
From sad eyes' overflow.  
Past sufferance is the oppression and the pain ;  
Since Zeus, by self-made laws ruling amain  
'Gainst gods that once were great a conqueror's pride  
doth show.

All lands send forth one universal groan, 12  
Weeping thy goodness and thy brethren's glory  
With loud resounding moan,  
For your high pageants and your grandeur hoary :  
Those mortals from the west begin the story  
Whom Asia shelters near her sacred throne.

They too lament thy mournful plight,  
That hold the well-fenced Colchian height,  
A warrior host of maidens unsubdued.  
And Scythian hordes, that range around  
Maeotis' pool, Earth's utmost bound,

II 1

And wild Arabia's martial flower,  
Who man the cliff-o'ertopping tower  
Mid stern Caucasian solitude,  
A serried front of spearmen good.  
With war-whoop hard to be withstood.

II 2

One Titan only heretofore I saw  
With outrage infinite of gods opprest,  
Atlas, on whose sustaining sinews rest  
The heavens, that roll by Fate's resistless law.

III 1

But now thy doom the clashing waves resound, III 2  
The deep bewails it to the echoing shore,  
Dark Hades mutters from Earth's pit profound,  
And springs of sacred streams thy piteous pains deplore.

PROM. Misconstrue not my silence. 'Tis not pride,  
Nor daintiness, but thought that tears my heart,  
When I behold the scorn that spurns me here.  
Yet who but I to these new deities  
Gave and determined each prerogative ?  
Of that I speak not; for ye know it. But learn  
How grievous were the woes of humankind,  
Wherfrom I raised them, furnishing with thought  
Their fancies infantile and reasonings crude.  
I speak not this to offend them, but to prove  
The richness of those blessings I bestowed.  
They had eyes and saw not, ears and could not hear,  
But mingled all things dreamwise hitherto,  
Knowing nought of brick-framed homes, courting the  
sun,  
Nor woodcraft. But they dwelt, like the insect horde,  
In burrows underground. No certain sign  
Had they of winter, or the flowery spring,  
Or fruitful summer. All their works were wrought  
Without perception, till I made them know

The risings of the Stars, and, harder yet,  
Their settings. Furthermore, for their behoof,  
My wit brought forth inventions choice and rare :—  
Number, prime sovereign of all sciences,  
Writing and spelling, and sage Memory,  
That wonder-worker, mother of the Muse.  
'Twas I that first to yoke and collar tamed  
The servant steer, and to relieve mankind  
From labours manifold, the docile steed  
I drew beneath the well-appointed car,  
Proud instrument of wealthy mortals' pride.  
And none save I found for the mariner  
His wave-o'er-wandering chariot, canvas-winged.  
I, that devised thus gloriously for men,  
Myself have no device to rid my soul  
Of her sore burden !

CHO.                   Thou art fallen indeed,  
Far from thy height of wisdom and renown,  
And like a skill-less leech, art in despair  
To find the physic for thine own disease.

PROM. Hear further, and thy wonder will be more  
At my wise means and shrewd contrivances.  
This case was hardest. If a man fell sick,  
There was no remedy, in shape of food,  
Or draught, or unguent, but they pined away  
For lack of medicines ; till, from my thought,  
They learned to mingle kindly healing drugs,  
That guard them from all illness. Then I drew  
Clear lines for divination, and discerned  
(Before all others) what from dreams is sure  
To come to pass in waking : I disclosed  
The mysterics of omen-bringing words,  
And path-way tokens, and made plain the flight  
Of taloned birds, both of good augury  
And adverse, and the manner of their life,  
With all the meaning of their enmities,  
And mutual loves, and kind companionships.  
What the smooth surface and the divers hues  
Of the entrails signify, which pleases most  
The Powers, I taught them ; and the liver's lobe

And gall, by what strange shapes they tell of good ;  
 Then, passing through the fire the beast's long chine  
 And thigh-bones wrapped in fat of sacrifice,  
 I cleared the way for mortals to an art  
 Hard of discernment, and made bright and clear  
 Fire-auguries, heretofore obscure and blind.  
 Enough of them ! Lastly, beneath the ground  
 What hidden benefits remained for men,  
 Copper and iron ore, silver and gold,  
 Who else revealed than I ? None but a fool  
 And babbler e'er would boast it. In one word,  
 Know this ;—Prometheus gave all arts to men.

CHO. Blessing mankind beyond their destined bound,  
 Neglect not, hapless one, thine own distress.  
 I still have hope that, freed from this thy bond,  
 Thou shalt have strength to cope with the Most  
 High.

PROM. Not so. Not yet. All consummating Fate  
 Ordains this otherwise. When countless woes  
 And agonies have bowed me,—not before,—  
 These bonds shall leave me. Art is feebler far  
 Than Destiny.

CHO. But who of Destiny  
 Controls the helm ?

PROM. The Fates of triple form,  
 And unforgetting Furies.

CHO. Then is Zeus  
 Feebler than these ?

PROM. He will ne'er avoid his doom.

CHO. What doom hath Zeus but evermore to reign ?

PROM. Ye trench on mysteries : inquire no more.

CHO. Some deep dread secret must thy silence veil.

PROM. Dwell on some other theme. The hour for  
 this

Is not yet come, that I should utter it.  
 Nay, I must wrap it closely with all heed  
 For herein lies my vantage for release  
 From ignominious bonds and agonies.

## CHORUS.

May All-Disposing Zeus ne'er set  
His might to crush my heart's desire !  
Ne'er may I loiter nor forget,  
When bulls are slain at the altar-fire,  
Daily before the gods to go,  
That feast beside the quenchless flow  
Of my great Sire ; nor onee offend  
In word ! May this true tinet hold to my being's end !

'Tis sweet the life thus to prolong  
In peace without alloy of fear,  
Feeding a spirit fresh and strong  
With tranquil hope and lightsome cheer.  
But, ah ! I shudder at the sight  
Of thee, and thine afflicted plight,  
Prometheus, who, in care for man,  
Defying Heaven's high Lord, art fallen beneath his ban.

O wasted kindness ! What resource  
Lay with frail mortals ? Didst not see  
Their dreamlike strength, their nerveless force  
Fettered with blind infirmity ?  
Dear friend, declare it ! Shall the power  
Of creatures creeping for an hour  
By wisdom overpass the bound  
The mind of Zeus hath fixed their little lives around ?

Never ! I read it in thy fall.  
My life shrills forth a different lay  
From that which in mid-festival  
I chanted on thy marriage day,  
Leading our sister's nuptial quire,  
Child of the self-same Ocean-sire,  
Hesione, whom thou didst guide  
Home with rieh gifts to be thy blissful bride.

*Enter Io.*

Io. What land, what people is here ? Ah me !  
Rock-fast in fetters, whom do I see ?

What sin called forth the avenging storm  
 That wrecked and ruined that godlike form ?  
 Yet in pity for one travel-wearied, say  
 Where I am come in my wandering way.

Ah ! ah ! Again  
 That fly is stinging ! Woe is me ! That phantom !  
 Hide him, O Earth ! 'Tis Argus, born of thee,  
 To herd this heifer with his myriad eyes.  
 The sight appals me. There ! with crafty looks  
 He glides, though dead, yet seen above the ground.  
 Forth of the shades, a shadow, he pursues me,  
 And like a huntsman tracks my wandering feet.  
 As, hunger-smitten, I roam the brine-washed sand.

Meanwhile the wax-framed reed, still as we move, I 1  
 Drones gently forth a drowsy-making strain ;  
 Ah me ! for pity, whither must I rove ?  
 What windings of my travelled course remain ?  
 What sins of mine, O Cronos' son,  
 Must I with these fell woes atone ?  
 Why doth thy wrath afflict me here,  
 Sting-driven and maddened with dire fear ?  
 Burn me with fire, hide me in Earth away,  
 Or to Sea-monsters yield me for a prey :

O to these prayers relent !

Enough of chastisement,

Enough of weary wandering far and wide !  
 Yet from encircling woes no path may be descried.—  
 Hear'st thou the heifer-hornèd maid's complaint ?

PROM. The child of Inachus, the sting-vexed virgin,  
 For whom the heart of Zeus is hot with love.  
 But Hera hates her, and now drives her far,  
 Travelling perforce in unexampled ways.

Io. Whence should my father's name be voiced of  
 thee ? I 2

Tell me, the travel-wearied, who thou art.  
 That in thy woes thus truly hailest me,  
 The woeful ; yea, and hast described the smart

And heaven-sent plague, that onward still,  
Pursued by Hera's ruthless will,  
Speeds me with gadfly's maddening goad,  
An-hungered, on a storm-driven road.  
Bounding I came, withered at heart. What soul  
Hath sorrow like to those that o'er me roll ?

Then to me clearly show

What more remains of woe,

Or, if thou canst, declare what remedy,  
What ending of my plague may be devised for me.—  
O let the weary maiden-wanderer know !

PROM. All thou wouldest learn I will declare to thee,  
Not weaving riddles, but in simple phrase,  
And frankly, as beseems the friendly tongue.  
Thou seest Prometheus, giver of fire to men.

Io. O bold Prometheus, universal boon  
To mortals, what offence atonest thou here ?

PROM. I have newly ended telling o'er my woes.

Io. Then wilt thou not vouchsafe me one request ?

PROM. Declare it. Nothing would I hide from thee.

Io. Name him who fastened thee to that ravine.

PROM. The counsel of high Zeus, Hephaestus' hand.

Io. In forfeit for what error ?

PROM. Hold, no more !

I have told enough.

Io. Nay ; yet reveal to me  
The time and limit of mine own sad way !

PROM. 'Tis best unknown.

Io. Withhold not, but reveal  
My future destiny.

PROM. Nay, I grudge thee not.

Io. Why then delay'st thou to declare the whole ?

PROM. This lothness comes not of an envious mind ;  
But I would spare the torment of thy heart.

Io. Tender me not more dearly than I would.

PROM. Art thou so eager ? Hear, then ; I will tell.

CHO. Stay. Let us too partake of pleasure here.  
First let us understand her piteous lot,  
From her own mouth, relating her distress ;  
Then let her learn from thee her toils to come.

PROM. Io, this kindness would come well from thee  
Unto these maids, true sisters of thy sire.  
'Tis ever worth expense of tedious time  
There to tell over and bemoan one's grief  
Where the auditor rewards one with a tear.

Io. Your joint command how should I disobey ?  
All ye inquire for shall be clearly told.  
Yet shame comes o'er me, even while I speak  
Of that which brought the ruin of my form,  
That heaven-sent hurricane, that still I rue.  
Night-visions ever hovering by my bower,  
Flattered with smooth seductive words, 'Blest maid,  
Why stayest thou yet a virgin, when the Highest  
Offers thee bridal ?' Zeus hath felt the heat  
Of longing for thy charms, and would enjoy  
The rite of love with thee. Then spurn not thou,  
Daughter, the couch Divine, but hie thee forth  
To Lerna's meadow, rich with herb and flower,  
Near to the flocks and herdstalls of thy sire,  
And still this passion of the sovran eye.'  
Afflicted with such dreams, night after night,  
I pined at heart, till in despair I told  
My father of these visions of my sleep.  
He many a sacred mission then dispatched  
To Delphi and Dodona, to inquire  
How best to satisfy the Power supreme.  
But all returned with riddling vague reports  
Of oracles uncertain and obscure,  
Till at the last to Inachus there came  
An utterance unmistakable and clear,  
Commanding him to thrust his daughter forth,  
Io, from home and fatherland, to range  
A thing devoted, through Earth's utmost bounds.  
If he refused, the fire-eyed lightning-bolt  
From Zeus should come, and blast his race to nought.  
Moved by such prophecy from Phoebus' mouth,  
Against his will and mine he drove me forth,  
And barred his doors to me. Nought but the curb  
That swayed him from the Highest, could have com-  
pelled

That father's heart to this. Then, instantly,  
My shape was altered and my mind distraught,  
And horned, as ye behold me, with sharp stings  
From the ox-fly, bounding in my frenzied mood,  
I darted toward Cenchrea's cooling streams  
And Lerna's fountains. And along my path  
A giant form kept pace, Argus, earth-born,  
The heifer's herdman, of untempered rage,  
His thick-set eyes peering where'er I trode.  
Him sudden fate, unlooked for, robbed of life;  
But I, still goaded by the maddening fly,  
From land to land am driven by heavenly power.  
My past is told thee. Now, if thou canst tell  
What sorrow yet awaits me, make it known,  
Nor out of pity soothe me with false tales.  
No pest more baneful than dissembling breath.

CHO. Hold! enough! let me breathe! I had never  
divined

Word so monstrous should pierce through mine ears to  
my mind,

Or my spirit within me be utterly chilled  
With keen-edged afflictions that dazzle the view,  
Heart-harrowing horrors that freeze through and  
through

The soul such recital hath thrilled.

I am shuddering (ah Destiny! ah cruel Fate!)  
Since I witnessed of Io the god-ruined state.

PROM. You groan too soon, and overflow with fears.  
Stay till you learn her sorrows yet to be.

CHO. Speak; tell them forth. 'Tis sweet for those  
in pain

To explore the future of their misery.

PROM. Your former boon hath lightly been fulfilled:  
From Io's self ye have heard her previous woe.  
Now learn what follows, what a load of grief  
Hera hath yet to inflict on this young maid.  
Thou, child of Inachus, give inmost heed  
To my discourse, that throughly thou mayst know  
Thy journeyings and their end.—First turn thy steps  
From hence toward the sunrising, and tread

O'er untill'd acres, till you near the tribe  
Of nomad Scythians, whose cane-wattled homes  
Are mounted high on well-appointed wheels ;  
Avoid their company, skirting the surf  
Of roaring brine, and pass from yonder land,  
To where upon your left a people dwell,  
The fierce Chalýbeans, forgers of the steel,  
Whom strangers durst not tempt. Of them beware.  
The river of Tumult, faithful to his name,  
Ford not, for he is not to be essayed,  
Till even to very Caucasus thou come,  
Loftiest of mountains, from bencath whose crown  
The river spouts his strength. Over that peak,  
Star-neighboured, on a track facing the noon.  
Thou shalt advance, and find to welcome thee,  
And guide thee gladly onward, the strong host  
Of Amazons, man-hating, man-abhorred.  
Who, long years hence, shall make their dwelling-  
place

At Themiscyra, by Thermodon's stream,  
Where juts into the deep the cruel jaw  
Of Salmydessus, cursed of mariners,  
Ill-famed for harbourage, stepmother to ships.  
Next, where the sea's great plain is narrowed in  
To a gate of exit, comes the point of land  
Named of the Cimbrians. With a dauntless breast  
Fare forth, and swim the deep Maeotian frith.  
This feat shall earn thee mighty fame from men,  
And where the heifer passed, the mystic name  
Of Bosporos shall linger evermore.  
So shalt thou leave broad Europe and arrive  
On Asia's boundless continent.—Say ye.  
Seems not this lord of gods to all alike  
Impartial in his ruthless violence ?  
In lust supernal for this mortal girl  
He hath thus oppressed her with sore journeyings.  
Thy wooing, damsel, hath prepared for thee  
No light affliction. Think of what is said  
Barely as prelude to thy tale of woe.  
Io. O me ! Alas ! woe, woe !

PROM. Again thou clamourest with lowings loud.  
What wilt thou do, when thou know'st all thine ill ?

CHO. Hast thou then more of sorrow for her ear ?

PROM. A storm-vexed sea of fateful agony.

Io. O wherefore should I live ? Why not even now  
Fling myself headlong from this craggy scaur ?  
So, dashed upon the ground, I should dispel  
All troubles. Better once for all to die,  
Than all one's days to pine in misery.

PROM. Full hardly couldst thou bear my sufferings,  
For whom this fate is fixed—'Never to die.'  
That were indeed a riddance from all ill.  
But now no limit is appointed me  
Of torment, till Zeus fall from his high throne.

Io. Zeus fall ! Comes there a time when that may be ?

PROM. 'Twould gladden thee, I trow, to see that day.

Io. Most surely, since from him are all my woes.

PROM. Then be assured the very truth is so.

Io. What hand shall wrest from him the staff of  
power ?

PROM. His own vain counsel, lorn of wisdom's light.

Io. In what wise ? tell me, so it bring no harm.

PROM. Winning a bride, whose wedding he shall rue.

Io. Of Heaven or Earth ? If not forbidden, tell.

PROM. Inquire no more. 'Tis not to be revealed.

Io. Shall his new consort oust him from his throne ?

PROM. Their son shall be more puissant than his sire.

Io. And can he not avoid that overthrow ?

PROM. Only when I, delivered from my bonds—

Io. Who may deliver thee without his will ?

PROM. Offspring of thine is destined to that deed.

Io. How ? Shall my son release thee from thy pain ?

PROM. Thy progeny, but thirteen times removed.

Io. Doubtful and dark is that last oracle.

PROM. Yea. Seek not to know further thine own ill.

Io. Of kindness offered, disappoint me not.

PROM. Of two recitals I will grant thee one.

Io. What are they ? Signify, and let me choose.

PROM. Choose, then, if I shall tell thy future toil,

Or my deliverer.

CHO.                  One of these to her,  
 To us the other boon vouchsafe, nor scorn  
 Our craving for discourse. To her disclose  
 Her coming pilgrimage; to us reveal  
 Who shall release thee. That we long to hear.

PROM. Your zeal I will not frustrate, but declare  
 All that ye beg for. Io, first to thee  
 Thy fear-encountered rovings I will tell.  
 Inscribe them on thy chart of memory.  
 When thou hast crossed that current, which divides  
 Mainland from mainland, on a long straight road  
 Move toward the ruddy Orient, where the Sun  
 Leaves rich memorials of his morning tread,  
 [Till first thou come unto the gusty realm  
 Of Boreas' daughters. There take heed lest he,  
 The Storm-blast, snatching thee aloft from Earth,  
 On wintry whirlwind-wings bear thee away.]

Then, passing those rude waves, thou shalt arrive  
 At far Cisthenè's Gorgoneian plain,  
 Where dwell three maidens of mysterious age,—  
 Daughters of Phorcus, each one-toothed, and all  
 Sharing one eye. On them never the Sun  
 Looks with his radiance, nor the Moon by night.  
 Their form is swan-like. Next, their sisters three,  
 The Gorgons dwell, hated of mortal men,  
 Draped with long wings and fells of serpent hair—  
 Whom none of mortals may behold and live.  
 That garrison I bid thee mark full well.  
 Now hear another sight to chill thy blood.  
 I warn thee of the Griffons, hounds of Zeus,  
 Voiceless, but keen of fang: and the Arimasps,  
 One-eyed, of equine tramp, that live around  
 The stream of Pluto, flowing down with gold.  
 Come not thou near them. Last thou shalt arrive  
 At a far land and dark-complexioned brood  
 That live beside the fountains of the Sun.  
 There is the river Aethiops. Descend  
 Along his banks, till in your journeying  
 You reach the precipice, where cataract Nile

Sublimely from the Bybline mountains pours  
 His worshipped, kindly waters to the world.  
 He shall conduct thee to the three-nooked land  
 Of Egypt's Delta, where 'tis destined thee,  
 Io, to settle for thyself and thine,  
 Your long-continuing Argive colony.—  
 If aught I have said seem inarticulate  
 Or dark, go back and question me thy fill.  
 More leisure than I care to have, is mine.

CHO. If thou hast aught unsaid, or slighted o'er,  
 To tell her of her woeful pilgrimage,  
 Speak further. But if all is done, give us  
 The boon we crave, as thou rememberest.

PROM. She hath heard all the limits of her way.  
 But for assurance to her doubting heart  
 I will relate her troubles to this hour,  
 In token that my testimony is true.  
 'Twere tedious to recount the whole at full.  
 I come to thy last fit of wandering.  
 Arrived at the Molossian plain, beneath  
 Dodona's lofty ridge, where stands the seat  
 And oracle of great Thesprotian Zeus,  
 Thou drewest near that wonder of the world,  
 The language-gifted oak, which hailed thee there,  
 Clearly and with no riddling voicee, 'Famed wife  
 Of Zeus that wert to be.' Thrill'st thou at that ?  
 Thence, rapt anew with frenzy, thou wast borne  
 To Rhea's deep bosom by the shoreward way,  
 Then backward with a wild rebound wast driven.  
 Wherefore that gulf and corner of the main  
 Shall bear the name Ionian to all time  
 In lasting record of thy devious road.  
 Be this a sign to thee, my reach of thought  
 Discerns more things than sense hath registered.

(To the CHORUS.) Now to content you with my  
 promised tale,  
 And finish, too, my talk with Io here,  
 Beginning where I ended. A town lies,  
 Canopus, at the limit of that land,  
 Close to the mouth and sand-bar of the Nile.

Therein shall Zeus restore thee to thy mind,  
With dreadless hand touching thee, nothing more.  
And thou shalt bear a son, dark Epaphus,  
Named from the manner of his birth from Zeus.  
The fruits of all the land that Nilus' flood  
Makes rich with wide o'erflowings, shall be his.  
A family, fifth in descent from him,  
Of fifty children, most unwillingly  
To Argos shall return, a female brood  
Fleeing from wedlock with their nearest of kin,  
First cousins of their blood, who with wild heat,  
Like swooping falcons close behind the doves,  
Will come in quest of marriage-bond forbidden.  
But to those captors shall an Eye divine  
Deny the persons of the maids—whom then  
Pelasgia shall receive, when, in the night,  
Men shall be quelled by female homicides  
Sleepless and bold—for every woman there  
Shall rob of life the man obtaining her,  
Dyeing the two-edged dirk in his heart's blood.  
Such love-rite may God send upon my foes !  
Howbeit, one sister of the fifty there,  
Charmed by desire and blunted in resolve,  
Shall rather choose reproach of cowardice  
Than guilt of murder, and shall spare her mate.  
Her children in wide Argos shall be kings.  
'Twere long to trace the sequel point by point.  
But of that seed shall rise the hero bold,  
The famous Bowman, who from these my bonds  
Shall set me free. Themis, the Titaness,  
Mine ancient mother, told me this should be.  
But how or by what means her prophecy  
Shall find accomplishment, 'twere long to explain :  
Nor if thou knewst, would it avail thee aught.

Io. O horror untold ! Yet again, yet again,  
I am smitten within by the nerve-rending pain  
That maddens my spirit ; again I am stung  
With the dart at whose forging no anvil hath  
rung :

My heart throbs and knocks at my fear-laden breast,  
And mine eyeballs whirl round in a rage of unrest.  
Under gales of wild frenzy I drift far astray,  
While my tongue, uncontrolled, utters words of dismay,

And cries of distraction, that turbidly beat all in vain  
Against billows, that gloomily threaten and thunder  
from Destiny's main.

[Exit Io]

## CHORUS.

Wisdom and truth were on his lips who first      I 1  
Proclaimed it best to find an equal mate,

Nor, being of poor estate,  
Long for a match with one in wealth immersed  
And pampered, or of lineage proud and great.

O never may I couch with Zeus most high,      I 2  
Nor wed with one descended from the sky !

The man-lorn maidenhood  
Of Io wakes my terror, who must rove  
This rueful maze, victim of Hera's mood.

From modest marriage with my peer      III  
I shrink not with unworthy fear.

But let no eye above  
Pierce me with fateful love !  
Vain then to struggle, fond to fret,  
Self-tangled in the baffling net :  
How might I hope to fly  
The intent of Zeus most high ?

PROM. Yet shall the Highest, though stubborn be his  
will,

Prove lowlier-minded, through the marriage-bond  
He purposeth. For it shall hurl him down  
From power supreme to nothing. Then shall come  
To full accomplishment the father's curse  
Cronos cried forth in falling from his throne  
Of primal sovereignty. To avert this doom  
No god but I can point him the sure way.  
I know each turn thereof. Then let him reign  
Securely, trusting to his thunder's noise

And wielding there aloft his lightning brand !  
Nought shall they warrant him from that sure fall,  
Intolerable, unhonoured, unreprimed.  
So dire a wrestler he himself provides  
Against himself, a portent huge in might,  
The weapons of whose forging shall o'er-blaze  
His lightning and outblare his thunder-blast.  
And the new sea-god's spear, the trident dread,  
Poseidon's arm that plagues the stricken lands  
With earthquake, shall be shattered by his power.  
Zeus, foundering on that rock, shall fathom then  
What space divides the sovereign from the slave.

CHO. You word your wishes against Heaven's high king.

PROM. My wishes, and the truth of what shall be.

CHO. Must we then look for one the lord of Zeus ?

PROM. Harder than homage shall his service prove.

CHO. How canst thou talk so rashly, and not fear ?

PROM. Why should I fear, since death is not for me ?

CHO. May he not doom thee to some pain more dire ?

PROM. Let him ! Nought can surprise me, who fore-knew.

CHO. Wisdom bids bow before the inevitable.

PROM. Ay, bend and worship, fawn upon the strong !

Less than the least care I for Zeus's will.

Let him exploit his strength even as he may,

For this brief hour. His reign will soon be o'er.—

But soft, behold yon errand-boy of Zeus,

Courier of him new-established on Heaven's throne !

Strange must the message be that brings him here.

*Enter HERMES.*

HERM. Thou, whom rash wisdom and rebellious hate  
Uphold in sinning 'gainst the sons of Heaven,  
Dispensing their prerogatives to men  
Who are born and die, frail creatures of an hour,  
Thou thief of fire,—the Father bids thee tell  
What marriage 'tis thou vauntest, or what hand  
Forsooth must hurl him from his place of power.  
This, in no riddling language, but with terms

Exact and plain, make known. Compel me not,  
Prometheus, twice to trace a tedious road.  
Thou seest, Zeus is not thus propitiated.

PROM. Proud, as beseems the minister of gods,  
And nobly-sounding is that high command.  
Young gods, young pride of unproved majesty !  
Ye think, your eminent seats shall ne'er know pain.  
Have I not from those very towers beheld  
Two monarchs headlong hurled ? Ay, and ere long  
The third, who now wields lordship unalloyed,  
Will follow. I shall see it with mine eyes.—  
Deem'st thou these youngling deities o'erawe  
And daunt me ? That religion fails me quite.  
So, scurry back again the road thou camest !  
None of thy queries shall be solved by me.

HERM. This haughty spirit and reckless speech of  
thine

Have landed thee where now thou art in woe.

PROM. I would not change it for thy servitude.  
Better to grieve than be a lackeying slave.

HERM. Better, forsooth, be bound to yonder rock,  
Than serve the Highest with faithful ministry !

PROM. Insult for insult, ye but reap your due.

HERM. You wanton in your present plight, methinks.

PROM. Such wantonness may all mine enemies  
Luxuriate in : and thou among the rest !

HERM. What blame bear I for thy calamities ?

PROM. One word for all. I hate the race of Heaven,  
That meet my benefits with acts of wrong.

HERM. What madness past belief thy words dis-  
close !

PROM. If hatred of a cruel foe be madness,  
Let me be mad.

HERM. Unbearable wert thou,  
If fortune favoured thee.

PROM. ‘ Fortune ? ’ Ah me !

HERM. That cry Zeus never syllabled.

PROM. Not yet ;  
Wait till the hour be ripe. Time perfects all.

HERM. Time hath not taught thee prudence.

PROM. Else I had ne'er  
Held converse with a servile minister.

HERM. Our Father's hest will not be satisfied  
By word from thee, I doubt me.

PROM. Deep the debt  
Compliance from my lips would render him !

HERM. You have bantered me as if I were a child.

PROM. And art thou not more childish than a child,  
Looking from me to reap intelligence ?

No torment, no device of the Most High  
Shall move these lips to utterance, till he loose  
These tyrant bonds of harsh indignity.

Then let his darted lightning singe the world ;  
With rumbling earthquake and white fluttering snow  
Let him confound and choke all things that are  
Nought in his power shall bend me to reveal  
Whom Fate prepares to work his overthrow.

HERM. Look to thy spech ! Think'st thou to mend  
thy lot ?

PROM. Long since I have looked at more than thou  
hast seen.

HERM. Vainglorious being ! Bring thyself at last  
To take true measure of thy misery.

PROM. Thou lessonest me as idly as thou mightest  
With suasive words control the mounting wave.  
Never imagine it, that I, in fear  
Of His resolve, will play the woman's part,  
With meek uplifting of my suppliant hands  
To entreat His favour whom my soul abhors  
For liberty from bondage. Far from me  
Such base humility !

HERM. My words are vain.  
And would be, were they multiplied. No prayer  
Can melt or soften thee, who, like a colt  
New-harnessed, art reluctant to the rein,  
And plungest with untempered vehemence.  
Weak is thy wisdom there ; for will alone,  
Without true thought, is worse than impotent.  
Yet see to it, what a hurricane of woe  
With wave on wave, shouldst thou reject my word,

Assails thee unavoidable. The Sire  
 With thunder and the flash of lightning-flame  
 Shall cleave this craggy glen, and hide thy form  
 Closed in Earth's rocky arms. So shalt thou dure  
 An age-long time, then back return to light :  
 When the fell eagle, wingèd hound of Zeus,  
 Shall pounce on thee and tear thy shattered frame,  
 Repasting on that mighty wreck, a guest  
 Of all day long, unbidden, and shall gorge  
 Upon thy liver, blackened with his beak.  
 Expect no end of that sore agony,  
 Till some one of immortal race be found  
 Willing to suffer in thy stead, going down  
 To Hades' rayless gloom and the dark depths  
 Round Tartarus. This being so, choose thy course.  
 No bluster of feigned menace fills thine ear,  
 But words of dreadful sooth. The lip of Zeus  
 Knows not to lie; but to each syllable  
 Shall give, in the issue, dire accomplishment  
 Scan then the path before thee, nor account  
 Self-will more comely than wise thoughtfulness.

CHO. Despise not Hermes' counsel when he pleads  
 Thou shouldst give o'er thy wilfulness and try  
 The path of prudence and true thought. Thou art  
 wise—

'Twould ill become thy fame to err herein.

PROM. All he loudly proclaims I foreknew. To bear  
 wrong from a foe brings no shame.

Then be darted upon me in fury the pine-piercing  
 flame !

Let the calm Empyréan be fretted with thunder, fierce  
 agony shoot

Far through Ether with racking of tempest, and Earth  
 from her nethermost root

Rock with wind till she quake to her centre ;—wave  
 heaped upon wave with harsh roar

Disorder the stars in their courses, confounding the  
 sea with the shore ;—

At one cast let him fling me afar to black Tartarus,  
 cruelly whirled

As Necessity wills to Hell's uttermost depth, at the base  
of the world :—

Yet he never can doom me to death. I shall live  
evermore.

HERM. 'Tis the boast of a spirit diseased : but O  
ye whose compassion would share  
In the weight of his misery's burden, move quickly  
from hence and beware,

Lest the crash of the bellowing thunder, no creature  
for maidens to bind,

Crush the flower of your thought and for ever  
enfeeble your mind.

CHO. Let thy voice utter counsel to move me,—not  
this, I can never abide !

Nor pervert wisdom's way with light breath. Come  
what comes, I will stand at his side,

There to drink of the cup of his sorrow. Foul treason  
be far from my breast !

Beyond other evils that evil I scorn and de-  
test.

HERM. Yet remember the words of my warning, nor  
caught in the meshes of ill

Cry on Fortune, or Zeus who decoyed you, since, led  
by your own foolish will,

Spite of timely foreknowledge of sorrows, premonished  
and not unaware

Nor blind, but with open-eyed madness, your souls will  
be caught in the snare

Of the measureless net of destruction, and endless  
despair.

PROM. 'Tis no longer a fable. The earth heaves and  
rolls like a storm-troubled sea,

And the roar of her waves is deep thunder that momently  
bursts at my side,

And the lightning's fierce spirals gleam vividly forth,  
while in horrible glee

Many whirlwinds are wildly careering with columns of  
dust far and wide.

All the winds leap to loveless contention, each blast by  
his brother defied.

The sky and broad main in one chaos of turbid com-  
motion are blent ;  
And on me this assault from high Zeus, making awe  
where it moves, hath been sent !  
O Themis, my mother, all-worshipped ! O Ether, that  
rollest along  
The light all inherit ! O Earth, thou beholdest my  
wrong !

## NOTES

The figures refer to Sidgwick's numbering of the lines, as given approximately at the top of each page of the translation.

For the Translator's views on special points see the Text of Aeschylus in Macmillan's Parnassus Series (1898): also the 'American Journal of Philology,' i. 4.

### THE SUPPLIANTS.

P. 4, l. 46. *Named of Fate.* "Ἐπαφος from ἐφάπτεσθαι, 'to touch with the hand.'

P. 5, l. 79. *Our flower:* \*ἡβαν . . . τέλεον (Schütz).

P. 6, ll. 162, 163. *Ah, Zeus, heal Io's ban and bane.* I read—

ἀ Ζῆν, Ἰοῦς \*ἰῶ μῆνιν  
\*μάστιν τ' ἐκ θεῶν, κ. τ. λ.

P. 8, l. 189. *That sit in conclave here.*

τῶνδ' ἀγώνιων θεῶν.

Cp. infra, 355.

Here and elsewhere ἀγώνιος seems to be a traditional epithet of the Greater Gods, who are worshipped together in the public place. The origin of the expression is uncertain.

P. 9, l. 207. *Firmly hold the wands ye bear.*

μηχανῆς δ' ἔστω κράτος.

I take μηχανή here to be the symbol of supplication, which was to be their means of safety. Cp. supra, 22, ἵκετῶν ἐγχειρίδιοις.

P. 10, l. 248. *Warden of some Jane.* Reading τηρὸν \*ἱεροῦ βάβδον. (\*MS. ἡερού.)

P. 11, l. 296. *And would prevent.* The text here is corrupt, and Mr. Tucker gives good reasons for not adopting Hermann's emendation.

P. 12, l. 320. *Of thrilling moment.* I take this to be implied in πάνσοφον—'wise,' because of serious import.

P. 12, l. 337. *An honourable bond to friends were good.* Reading ὅνοιτο. Lit. ‘Who would complain of having friends for masters?’

P. 12, l. 344. *I had nought to do, &c.* Lit. (It would be a question of Justice) ‘if I had had a part in the matter from the beginning.’ Others interpret (taking ἦν as 3rd person sing.): ‘(Justice is on the side of those who fight for her:) Assuming that a cause is just to begin with.’ Cp. below, ll. 372 ff.

P. 19, l. 555. *The land of Aphrodite, rich in grain.* Phoenicia (according to the Scholiast, who is probably right).

P. 19, l. 560. *Snow-storms.* In the original there is an allusion to Typhon that is hard to preserve.

P. 20, l. 595. *Hastening work.* θοάγων: the only meaning of this verb in tragedy.

P. 21, l. 618. *Home and foreign mischief.* ‘Home’ because the Danaïdes are of Argive race, ‘foreign’ because Danaus was an Egyptian citizen. So the Scholiast.

P. 24, l. 708. *Third.* The three commandments probably are—

1. Honour the Gods.
2. “ “ Heroes.
3. “ “ your Parents.

See Plato’s *Laws*, iv. 717. According to others the three objects of homage are Gods, Parents, the Laws; and τρίτον only means ‘one of three.’

P. 28, ll. 836 ff. *Hark to my warning, hark!* Either the Herald and the Danaïdes here are made to speak a barbarous tongue, or the text of what follows is extremely corrupt. Some amount of guesswork in the translation is unavoidable.

P. 28, l. 853. *This Heaven-observing town  
Smiles as we seize our own.*

Reading (in default of anything better)—

ἀπίτα τάμ' ἄγω πόλιν εὐσεβῶν.

‘I lead away mine own without incurring vengeance, as I offend not against their city.’

P. 28, l. 859. I propose to read—

\*Κη. Ἀγειος ἐγὼ βαθυχαῖς

βαθεῖαις βαθεῖαις

\*γέμων· σὺ δέ, κ.τ.λ.

P. 31, l. 950. *In those few words, &c.* Reading \*ἔστιν ταῦ  
ἡδη, κ.τ.λ.

P. 32, l. 1002. *Bidding Love wait not, &c.* Reading—  
κάλωρα καλύνοντα \*προσμένειν \*\*Ἐρων (i. e. Ἐρωτα).

### THE PERSIANS.

P. 42, Nos. IV and V are transposed, as conjectured by K. O. Müller.

P. 48, l. 276. *From rock to jagged rock.* I have not attempted to render πλαγκτοῖς ἐν διπλάκεσσιν, which, according to Hermann, means, ‘while their mantles float around them.’

P. 59, ll. 675 ff. Reading (perhaps)—

τί τάδε δυνατά, δυνατά,  
περὶ τὰ σὰ διδύμα \*διαγοῦν ἀμάρτια  
πάσα γὰ τάδε;

\*Cp. διοδύρομαι.

P. 64, l. 815. *Unexplored.* Reading \*ἐκπιδύεται (Schütz). The laying of the pavement (*κρηπίς*) would be part of the work of reducing the natural well-spring to order, for human uses, and so curbing its wild exuberance. Cp. Plato, *Laws*, 7. 808 D πηγὴν τοῦ φρονεῖν μήπω κατηρτυμένην.

### SEVEN AGAINST THEBES.

P. 84, ll. 363 ff. *Find for their earliest grief.*  
καινοπήμονες.

In this and other expressions, which have been strangely misunderstood, Aeschylus refers to the crushing effect of the first great sorrow. Cp. *Agam.* 210—

παρακοπὰ πρωτοπήμων.

In the lines which follow this, I read—

\*λέκτρον \*ἡλθον αἰχμάλωτον  
ἀνδρὸς εὐτυχοῦντος ὡς  
δυσμενοῦς ὑπερτέρου,

\*ἡλπισάν \*τε νύκτερον τέλος μολεῖν, κ.τ.λ.,

supposing τλήμονες to be a corruption of ἡλθον [έσ], and εὐνάν a gloss on λέκτρον, the words having been accidentally transposed.

P. 86, l. 437. *This blazon too.* Reading καὶ τῷδε \*κόσμῳ (or \*κόμπῳ).

P. 90, l. 578. *Polynices, fraught with strife;* i.e. Πολυνείκης = ὁ πολυνείκης.

P. 94, l. 697. *More desired than death's delay.*

πρότερον ὑστέρου μόρου.

Cp. *Agam.* 1254, ὁ δ' ἵστατός γε τοῦ χρόνου πρεσβεύεται.

P. 97, l. 786. *For their unflinl ways.* The Scholiast on *Oed. Col.* 1375, is perhaps right in thinking that τροφᾶς means 'for negligence about his food.' But Hermann (with Schütz) interprets, 'in anger that the children of such a union should have been reared!' What then of Antigone? I read τέκνοις δ' \*άγριας | ἐφῆκεν, \*ἐπίκοτος τροφᾶς, with Heath and Prof. E. L. Lushington.

P. 98, l. 830. *Keen in strife and true in fame.* Reading—  
\*ἐτεοκλεεῖς καὶ πολυνείκεις.

#### AGAMEMNON.

P. 112, l. 49. *Driven wide : ἐκπάτιοις.*

P. 113, l. 70. *The powers that burn, but need no fire;* i.e. the Erinyes. This interpretation of ἀπύρων ἴερῶν is supported by *Eumen.* 138 ἀτμῷ κατισχναίνοντα, νηδύος πυρὶ . . . μάραιντε, ib. 305 καὶ ζῶν με δαίσεις οὐδὲ πρὸς βωμῷ σφαγεῖς. The genitive may be construed with παραθέλξει: Lit. 'He shall not cajole from fireless rites immittigable wrath.' The suggestion of the Scholiast cannot be taken literally; for the Erinyes appear to have been worshipped with burnt sacrifice (*Eumen.* 108). The ritual of Colonus is not to be thought of here. Others refer the words to the sullenness of a sacrifice that refuses to burn, as in *Ant.* 1006 ff. Yet another view which has some plausibility may be met by rendering:

‘Shall serve to cancel a ruthless doom;  
Or soften the anger in fierce hearts born  
By the fire unlit and the altar torn.’

(The neglect of sacrifice being a symbol for sin in general.) An allusion to the sacrifice of Iphigenia would be hardly in place.

P. 113, ll. 76-82. Taking ἀράσσων (sic) as participle of the imperfect tense = ὁς ἀναίσσεται. According to others these lines have a general meaning, merely expanding the force of *iσχὶν ισόπαιδα* supra. This gives a clear construction to the sentence, but has rather a tame effect.

P. 114, l. 121. *But let the happier note prevail.* τὸ δὲ εὖ νικάτω. Mr. James Riddell, the well-known author of the *Digest of Platonic Idioms*, used to insist, in lecturing on the *Agamemnon*, that the imperative must be so explained.

P. 114, l. 129. πρόσθε τὰ δημιοπληθῆ: i. e. τὰ πρόσθεν δυντα δημιοπληθῆ. The rhythm favours this construction.

P. 115, l. 144. *Doth yet accord her mind.* Reading ἀ καλά and αἰνεῖ.

P. 117, l. 223. *For the first shock of grief before unfelt.* For the meaning here assigned to πρωτοπήμαν, see note on the *Seven against Thebes*, ll. 363 ff. (supra, p. 269).

P. 118, l. 256. ἄγχιστον: 'nearest to the throne.' The Council would naturally be selected from those allied in some way to the royal house. Cp. *Pers.* 4 κατὰ πρεσβείαν (the Persian elders were the old comrades of Darius, ib. 681).

P. 119, l. 288. *The blazing pine.* I retain πεύκη, and read *iσχὺν*... \*προήνυσεν for *iσχὺς*... πρὸς ἡδονὴν in the previous line, an emendation which I find to have been anticipated by Symmons.

P. 120, l. 314. *But here one runner, &c.*

*νικᾶ δὲ ὁ πρῶτος καὶ τελευταῖος δραμών.*

The runner is Hephaestus (see l. 281), and as elsewhere in far-fetched comparisons the point of difference, as well as of resemblance, is marked. In the ordinary λαμπαδηφορία there were many runners, and the man who succeeded in bringing in the torch was in some way distinguished above the rest. In the present case, the runner from first to last is the same Fire-god, whose 'reward is with him' all the way in the victorious tidings which he bears. Herodotus makes a similar application of the idea of the torch-race in describing the ἄγγαροι, or post-runners, of the King of Persia, viii. 98. The historian (Herod. ix. 3) also attributes to Mardonius the intention of signalling from Athens to Sardis by beacons on the islands (*πυρσοῖσι διὰ νῆσων*). For the actual use of fire signals in Greece, see especially Herod. vii. 182.

P. 121, l. 374. Reading ἐκτίνοντα τόλμα τῶν Ἀρη with Hartung: but query? I formerly rendered the MS. reading, ‘To late descendants of proud warrior Kings.’

P. 122, l. 384. *Minded to hurl it into nought.* Others join ἔπαλξις . . . εἰς ἀφάνειαν = ‘A bulwark to hide or shelter him.’

P. 122, l. 409. δόμων προφῆται: ‘spokesmen of the house’ (Headlam).

P. 122, l. 412. *Soul-stricken before that unremoved blot.* I read—

πάρεστι \*σῖγ', ἄτιμος \*ἄλλ' ἀλοίδορος,  
\*ἄλαστα \*πημονᾶν \*ἰδών,

with ἀπ' αἰας Ἑλλάδος in the antistrophe.

P. 126, l. 527. Βωμοὶ . . . ἰδρύματα: perhaps a marginal quotation from *Pers.* 811. But though the boast would be improper for Agamemnon, it may be permitted in the Herald.

P. 126, l. 547. στύγος τστρατῷ. The reading is doubtful. Perhaps στύγος; φράσον.

P. 128, l. 612. *Than of the blacksmith's art.* χαλκοῦ βαφάς = ‘The dipping (i. e. tempering) of metal,’ a mystery beneath the dignity of a princess to understand.

P. 128, l. 616. *Thine ear, a sound interpreter.* I believe τοροῖσιν ἐρμηνεῖσοι to be an Aeschylean periphrasis for τοῖς ὠσίν, implying that Clytemnestra’s language at all events was clear (whatever her meaning might be).

P. 129, l. 637. *Heaven’s honour should be clear.*  
χωρὶς ἡ τιμὴ θεῶν.

The honour due to Gods is to be kept apart (from that of the Erinyes). For the opposition between Gods and Furies, see the *Eumenides*, and for the absence of the article, cp. *Ant.* 745 τιμᾶς γε τὰς θεῶν πατῶν.

P. 130, l. 687. *War-won, war-wed, war-wakening Helene.*  
ἔλενας, ἔλανδρος, ἔλέπτολις.

The punning epithets expanded in this and the following lines are derived from ἔλειν, a word which is often used with the meaning ‘to quell’; literally, ‘Queller of ships, of men, of cities.’

P. 135, l. 864. *Another, he had brought  
Dishonour, worse even than his death.*

τὸν δ' ἐπεισφέρειν κακοῦ  
κακιον ἄλλο πῆμα.

This is said with a side-glance at Cassandra.

P. 135, l. 871.

*I pass*

*The abyss of ground beneath him.*

τὴν κάτω γῆν οὐ λέγω.

Compare the *Seven against Thebes*, l. 946—

ὑπὸ δὲ σώματι γᾶς  
πλοῦτος ἀβυσσος ἔσται.

P. 137, l. 934. *Prompt is that reply.* I read—

εἴπερ τις εἰδὼς γ' εὖ τόδ' ἐξεῖπον \*τάχος.

Agamemnon, who has been in many hairbreadth escapes, is well aware, and therefore admits without hesitation, that in an hour of peril he might have vowed this or any other lavish expenditure by way of thank-offering. Dr. Headlam, whose interpretation of the previous line agrees with mine, prefers εἴπερ τις εἰδὼς γ' εὖ τόδ' \*ἐξεῖπεν τέλος : ‘If the performance of such ritual had been prescribed by well-advised authority.’ But in a sudden emergency the King would not have consulted Calchas before making his vow.

P. 138, l. 983.

χρόνος δ' ἐπεὶ  
πρυμνησίων ξυνεμβολαῖς  
ψαμμίας ὀκτᾶς παρή-  
βησεν, εὐθ' ὑπ' "Ιλιον  
ἄρτο, ναυβάτας στρατός :

reading εὔχομαι δ' αὐτ' ἐξ ἐμᾶς in l. 998 of the antistrophe. I make στρατός the subject of παρήβησεν. ‘Time (has passed), since by joint-grappling to the sandy shore, the naval expedition lost its bloom when it had set out for Troy.’ The reference is to the delay at Aulis: cp. supra, 192-7. For παρήβησεν cp. Thuc. vii. 14: βραχεῖα ἀκμὴ πληρώματος.

P. 139, l. 1024. I prefer Ζεὺς ἀν ἔπαισεν. ‘(If it had been otherwise), Zeus would not.’

P. 140, l. 1050. *The immigrant bird*; i. e. the swallow: χελιδόνος.

P. 142, l. 1116. *Nay, 'tis the snare of the chamber, the accessory  
O' the murder.*

ἄλλ' ἄρκυς ή ξύνευνος, ή ξυναιτία  
φόνου.

She sees in vision the contrivance with the help of which Agamemnon was to be laid low. Vid. infra, 1492 ff.

κεῖσαι δ' ἀράχνης ἐν ὑφάσματι τῷδ'  
ἀσεβεῖ θανάτῳ βίον ἐκπνέων,  
οἵμοι μοι, κοίταν τάνδ' ἀνελεύθερον.

P. 142, l. 1118. *Stone her!* If λευστήρ can mean ‘one worthy to be stoned’ I do not see why λεύσιμος may not have a passive meaning. The exultation of the κῆρες is equivalent to a curse. Hence κατολολυξάτω.

P. 142, l. 1127. *With that blaek weapon of hers.* As usual in ‘second sight,’ the objects seen are vaguely described. The sword of Aegisthus, pointed at Agamemnon by Clytemnestra, is imagined as the horn of the cow with which she gores the bull; but, being of iron or bronze, it is ‘black.’ Cp. *Choeph.* 576 ποδώκει . . . χαλκεύματι, Plato, *Rep.* ix. 586 Β κυρίττοντες ἀλλήλους σιδηροῦς κέρασι.

P. 144, l. 1172. *Shall fall in blood.* ἐν πέδῳ βαλῶ, i.e. πέδῳ ἐμβαλῶ—a simple tmesis. For ἐμβάλλειν with dat. = ‘to fall violently against,’ cp. Her. ii. 28 ἐμβάλλοντος τοῦ ὕδατος τοῖσι οὔρεσι: and, for a similar tmesis, Eur. *Cycl.* 574 εἰς ὕπνον βαλεῖς.

P. 145, l. 1229. λέξασα κάκτείνασα φαιδρόνοις. Dr. Headlam rightly adheres to this reading. I cannot imagine how φαιδρὸν οὐς can ever have been adopted.

P. 146, l. 1266. *I tear ye.* The pronoun in the Greek is singular = ‘thee.’ She begins by taking off one specially sacred symbol.

P. 146, l. 1267. Reading, with Hermann, ἔγὼ δ' ἂμ' ἔφομαι.

P. 147, l. 1278. *That ends the sacrifice.* πρόσφαγμα here and elsewhere seems to be written for πρύσσφαγμα, i.e. the sacrifice of a victim over a grave—death added on to death.

P. 147, l. 1285. *His father's fall.* ὑπτίασμα is a difficult word. It may recall perhaps the uplifted hands of the dying man, as it were appealing to Heaven. Cf. *Prom.* 1005 ὑπτίασμασιν χερῶν, and *Choeph.* 327—

ὑτοτύζεται δ' ὁ θυήσκων,  
ἀναφαίνεται δ' ὁ βλάπτων.

P. 147, l. 1300. *Every moment's respite hath some worth.* Lit. ‘The latest of the time is first in honour.’

P. 148, l. 1330. *This is more piteous than the ruin of pride.* The fate of Cassandra touches the heart more nearly than the fall of Troy, or than the death of Agamemnon which she prophesies.

P. 149, l. 1343. *Here, in the palace*: ἔσω. The passage was similarly understood by H. A. J. Munro.

P. 152, ll. 1455 ff. These lines are gravely corrupted. I only profess to render the general drift of them. I take it that Helen is not directly accused, but that her case is compared to Clytemnestra's.

P. 152, l. 1467. *Unendurable*. ἀξύστατος seems nearly = ἄπλατος, from ξνίστασθαι, 'to meet in conflict' (L. and S. s.v. συνίστημι, ii. 2).

P. 152, l. 1469. *On either branch of Pelops' ancient line.*  
διφύοισι Τανταλίδαισιν.

The exact genealogical reference of these words is obscure, unless they may be referred to the two pairs of rival kings; Atreus and Thyestes in one generation, Agamemnon and Menelaus in the next (or possibly Agamemnon and Aegisthus).

P. 155, l. 1569. δαίμονι τῷ Πλεισθενιδῶν—the place of Pleisthenes in the genealogy is uncertain.

P. 156, l. 1595. *He kept concealed*. Reading \*έκρυπτ' ἄνωθεν, and punctuating καθήμενος.—'Ασημα δ' αὐτῶν (sc. τῶν δακτύλων, implied in the preceding words).

P. 157, l. 1625. *Woman*. Clytemnestra may have been preparing to leave the stage at l. 1577, but it is not likely that she has quitted it. Her exit was prevented by the arrival of Aegisthus with his guards. She meets this reproach with silence.

P. 158, l. 1657. *Run in your appointed round*. I read—  
πρὸς \*νομοὺς (others πρὸς \*δρόμους) πεπρωμένους.

Cp. Her. v. 92, 102.

#### CHOEPHOROE.

P. 167, l. 65. ἄκραντος may possibly mean 'without decision' = ἄνευ τοῦ κραίνεσθαι (τὸ ἄχος). Others read ἄκρατος:

'None escape from her power,  
Though they linger unscathed on the confines of light,  
Or in blackness of Night.'

P. 170, l. 154. For ἔρυμα of the tomb, cp. Soph. *Ant.* 849. I formerly took the genitives as masculine, *Where safely sleep souls good and ill*, comparing Job iii. 17-19.

The mingled good and evil of the dead Pelopidae might be a natural theme for the Trojan women to dwell upon.

In what follows, I take *ἴξ ἀμαρτᾶς φρεύδος* to refer to the feebleness of the dead (until he has tasted of the libation), not to the sadness of the living. Others, with Conington, understand it of the Chorus, ‘Singing with a saddened mind.’

P. 173, l. 288. *όρῶντα λαμπρόν.* The meaning and connexion of these words is doubtful. The line is justly suspected.

P. 174, l. 322. *προσθοδόμοις Ἀτρείδαις*: probably plural for singular, referring to Agamemnon, whose tomb is before the palace.

P. 176, ll. 375 ff. *Meanwhile descends . . . to endure.* I take this to be the drift of an obscure passage which is variously interpreted.

P. 176, l. 394. I understand *ἀμφιθαλής* of the power that protects a family in which the male and female offspring survive.

P. 178, l. 444. *Thou hearest, &c.*: reading *\*ἔχεις* (for *λέγεις*) with Hermann.

P. 178, l. 467. *Unskilful stroke, vexing a tuneless place.* The blows of calamity are compared to harsh strokes with the ‘plectrum’ on a badly-strung lyre, calling forth sounds other than musical.

P. 179, l. 482. *Power to work Aegisthus’ woe.* I am inclined to read *\*τυχεῖν* for *φυγεῖν* here.

P. 181, ll. 573 ff. *Or should he come in afterward and stand Before my face.*

I read—

ἢ \*κάνυ μολὼν ἐπειτά μοι κατὰ στόμα  
\*ἄπαξ ἐπιστῆ καὶ κατ’ ὄφθαλμοὺς \*φανῆ,

Wecklein, who retains the MS. reading, is compelled to assume a violent trajectio[n] of *σάφ’ ἵσθι*, and to imagine Aegisthus lifting and letting fall his eyes,—no man can tell why,—on seeing the Phocian stranger.

P. 181, l. 575. *Caught on my point of steel.* The idea is that of a dagger hidden under the cloak and suddenly brought round from behind the victim.

P. 181, l. 578. *A third deep draught.* The first is the blood of Agamemnon, the second of Aegisthus, the third of Clytemnestra, whom he does not name. (According to others, first the banquet of Thyestes, second the death of Agamemnon, and third the deaths of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra. See the concluding lines of this play.)

P. 182, l. 592. Reading κάνεμόεντ' ἀν . . . φράσαις.

P. 182, ll. 624 ff. ἀκαίρως δὲ . . . I understand these words to be a resumption—rather awkwardly introduced, it must be confessed—of 598 ff. συζύγους δ' ὁμαλίας . . . βροτῶν.

P. 185, l. 699. *For ever cancel it.* I read \*έκγράφεις.

P. 186, l. 751. *At that great voice.* Clytemnestra's in her travail. Others suppose the words to refer to the shrill wailings of the infant Orestes.

P. 187, ll. 783 ff. As the following ode and the next (ll. 935 ff.) cannot be regularly arranged without somewhat violent conjecture, I have not thought it necessary to preserve strictly the antistrophic effect in them.

P. 195, ll. 1007 ff. The Chorus apostrophize Agamemnon, whose presence is vividly suggested by the sight of the deadly robe.

P. 195, l. 1041. (*Menelaus too*). Menelaus is still absent, and his return still looked for, as in the *Agamemnon*. Part of two lines is lost here, e.g.—

καὶ μαρτυρεῖν μοι Μενέλε<sup>τ</sup>ων χρόνῳ ποτὲ  
δύμους κατελθόνθ<sup>τ</sup>] ὡς ἐπορσύνθη κακά.

### EUMENIDES.

P. 199, l. 13. *Hephaestus' sons*; i. e. according to the Scholiast, the Athenians descended from Erichthonius, son of Hephaestus and Gaia. It is said that sacred embassies from Athens to Delphi were accompanied by a band of pioneers.

P. 204, l. 204. αἴματος δέκτωρ νέου. νέου here probably means 'fresh,' i.e. not yet atoned for—'unaneled.' Below, l. 359, it is rather 'strange,' 'unprecedented.'

P. 210, l. 388. *Men seeing and blind.* δέρκομένοισι καὶ δυσομάτοις. The Scholiast understands 'living and dead,'—cp. supra, l. 322; but will δυσομάτοις bear this meaning?

P. 212, l. 435. *And parentage.* Reading \*κάπ' ἀξίων, which seems to be indicated by the Scholion ἀξίων οὐσαν γονέων.

P. 213, l. 475. *I would have thee clear.* Retaining αἰροῦμαι.

P. 214, l. 506. *Cries for help to the wandering air.* Literally 'suggests uncertain remedies' in his own case. This is the meaning indicated by the Scholiast. Wecklein, perhaps rightly, understands τλήμων of the man who is asked for advice.

P. 220, l. 715. *Wanton.* οὐ λαχῶν. Bloodguiltiness is the department of the Erinyes, not of Apollo, the god of light. They accuse him of encroaching on their prerogative.

P. 227, l. 962. *Own sisters of our mother.* ματροκασιγνῆται. Others understand, 'Our sisters by one mother,' a less natural meaning for the word. It is unnecessary to harmonize Aeschylus with Hesiod on a point of mythology. Regarding Fate (as he does in the *Prometheus*) as independent of Zeus, he may have held that the μοῖραι were coeval with Night. The Furies call them ἀρχαῖς, supra, l. 728.

P. 228, l. 988. *Perceive ye.* Retaining φρονοῦσιν and εὑρίσκει.

#### PROMETHEUS BOUND.

P. 243, l. 303. *Thy workmanship.* This seems a possible meaning of αὐτόκτιτα = & αὐτὸς ἔκτισας. Others understand it to mean 'self-made,' i.e. of natural formation.

P. 244, l. 333. *Though in mine enterprise thou too hadst part.*

Πάντων μετασχῶν καὶ τετολμηκῶς ἐμοί.

Prometheus had been alone, to begin with, in openly gainsaying the plan of Zeus to destroy mankind (l. 234). But he could not have prevailed single-handed, and in his after proceedings it now appears that Oceanus was implicated. The sleepless one (l. 139) must have known of the theft of fire, and at least connived at it.

P. 248, l. 461. . . . and sage Memory,  
That wonder-worker, mother of the Muse.

Reading μνήμην \*θ', ἀπάντων μουσομήτορ' ἐργάτιν. According to others (reading μνήμης ἀπάντων) the meaning is that the invention of letters was the means of recording everything, and so gave birth to the Muses.

P. 257, ll. 791 ff. [Till first thou come, &c.] The lines here bracketed represent a fragment, which some critics refer to this place. At all events there is a lacuna before line 792, 'Then, passing those rude waves,' &c.

P. 264, l. 1024. *Of all day long,* not 'of every day.' See the fragment of *Prometheus Unbound* translated by Cicero in *Tusc.* 2, 10, 23-25 (Nauck, *Fr. Aesch.* 193):

‘Iam tertio me quoque funesto die  
tristi advolatu aduncis lacerans unguibus  
Iovis satelles pastu dilaniat fero.’

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I. WRITINGS.

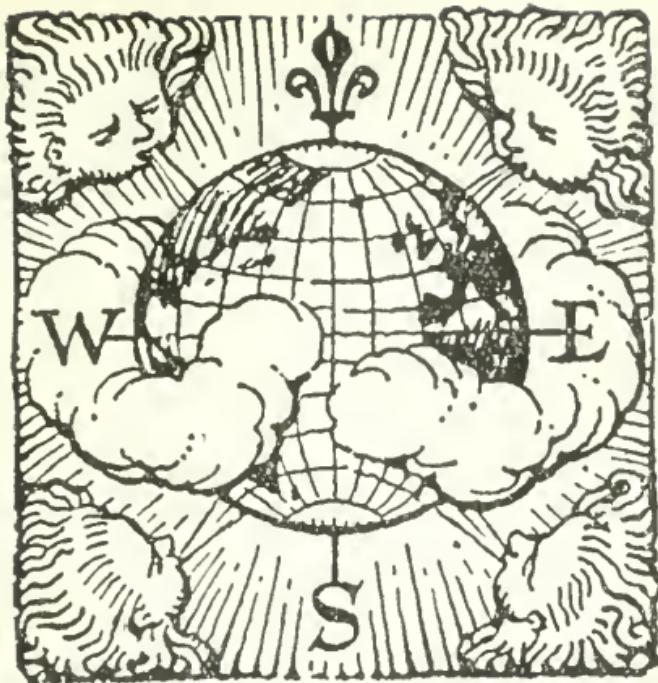
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2. A Guide to Greek Tragedy. Rivingtons. 1891.
3. Religion in Greek Literature. Longmans. 1898.
4. Plato's Republic, in Murray's Home and School Library. 1902.
5. Life of James Clerk Maxwell (with W. Garnett). Macmillan (second edition). 1884.
6. Life of Benjamin Jowett (with E. Abbott). Murray. 1897.
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## II. EDITIONS.

1. Plato's *Theaetetus*. Clarendon Press (second edition). 1883.
2. Plato's *Sophistes* and *Politicus*. Clarendon Press. 1867.
3. Plato's *Republic* (with B. Jowett). Clarendon Press. 1894.
4. Sophocles, Plays and Fragments. Clarendon Press. 1879-81.
5. Sophocles, seven Plays in smaller edition (with E. Abbott). Clarendon Press. 1886.
6. Aeschylus, in Macmillan's Parnassus Series. 1897.
7. Jowett's *Epistles of St. Paul*. Third edition, abridged. Murray. 1895.
8. Jowett's *Theological Essays (Selected)*, with Introduction. Clarendon Press. 1906.
9. T. Campbell's Poems (Selection), with Introduction, Golden Treasury Series. Macmillan. 1904.
10. Letters of B. Jowett (with E. Abbott). Murray. 1898.

## III. TRANSLATIONS.

1. Aeschylus, in English Verse. Kegan Paul. 1900.
2. Sophocles, in English Verse. Murray. 1883.



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