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DRAMATIC & EARLY POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

Matthew Arnold.

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DRAMATIC AND EARLY POEMS

MEROPE—A TRAGEDY

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

A plea for Greek form and spirit

I AM not about to defend myself for having taken the story of the following tragedy from classical antiquity. On this subject I have already said all which appears to me to be necessary. For those readers to whom my tragedy will give pleasure, no argument on such a matter is required: one critic, whose fine intelligence it would have been an honour to convince, lives, alas! no longer: there are others, upon whom no arguments which I could possibly use would produce any impression. The Athenians fined Phrynichus for representing to them their own sufferings: there are critics who would fine us for representing to them anything else.

But, as often as it has happened to me to be blamed or praised for my supposed addiction to the classical school in poetry, I have thought, with real humiliation, how little any works of mine were entitled to rank among the genuine works of that school; how little they were calculated to give, to readers unacquainted with the great creations of classical antiquity, any adequate impression

Advantage of a live language

of their form or of their spirit. And yet, whatever the critics may say, there exists, I am convinced, even in England, even in this stronghold of the romantic school, a wide though an ill-informed curiosity on the subject of the so-called classical school, meriting a more complete satisfaction than it has hitherto obtained. Greek art —the antique—classical beauty—a nameless hope and interest attaches, I can often see, to these words, even in the minds of those who have been brought up among the productions of the romantic school; of those who have been taught to consider classicalism as inseparable from coldness, and the antique as another phrase for the unreal. So immortal, so indestructible is the power of true beauty, of consummate form: it may be submerged, but the tradition of it survives: nations arise which know it not, which hardly believe in the report of it; but they, too, are haunted with an indefinable interest in its name, with an inexplicable curiosity as to its nature.

But however the case may be with regard to the curiosity of the public, I have long had the strongest desire to attempt, for my own satisfaction, to come to closer quarters with the form which produces such grand effects in the hands of the Greek masters; to try to obtain, through the medium of a living, familiar language, a fuller and more intense feeling of that beauty, which, even when apprehended through the medium of a dead language, so powerfully affected me. In his delightful *Life of Goethe*, Mr. Lewes has most truly observed that Goethe's *Iphigeneia* enjoys an

inestimable advantage in being written in a language which, being a modern language, is in some sort our own. Not only is it vain to expect that the vast majority of mankind will ever undertake the toil of mastering a dead language, above all, a dead language so difficult as the Greek; but it may be doubted whether even those, whose enthusiasm shrinks from no toil, can ever so thoroughly press into the intimate feeling of works composed in a dead language as their enthusiasm would desire.

Origination *versus* translation

I desired to try, therefore, how much of the effectiveness of the Greek poetical forms I could retain in an English poem constructed under the conditions of those forms; of those forms, too, in their severest and most definite expression, in their application to dramatic poetry.

I thought at first that I might accomplish my object by a translation of one of the great works of Æschylus or Sophocles. But a translation is a work not only inferior to the original by the whole difference of talent between the first composer and his translator: it is even inferior to the best which the translator could do under more inspiring circumstances. No man can do his best with a subject which does not penetrate him: no man can be penetrated by a subject which he does not conceive independently.

Should I take some subject on which we have an extant work by one of the great Greek poets, and treat it independently? Something was to be said for such a course: in antiquity, the same tragic stories were handled by all the tragic poets: Voltaire says truly that to see the same materials differently treated by different poets is most

Choice of a subject

interesting; accordingly we have an *Œdipus* of Corneille, an *Œdipus* of Voltaire: innumerable are the *Agamemnons*, the *Electras*, the *Antigones*, of the French and Italian poets from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century. But the same disadvantage which we have in translating clings to us in our attempt to treat these subjects independently: their treatment by the ancient masters is so overwhelmingly great and powerful that we can henceforth conceive them only as they are there treated: an independent conception of them has become impossible for us: in working upon them we are still, therefore, subject to conditions under which no man can do his best.

It remained to select a subject from among those which had been considered to possess the true requisites of good tragic subjects; on which great works had been composed, but had not survived to chill emulation by their grandeur. Of such subjects there is, fortunately, no lack. In the writings of Hyginus, a Latin mythographer of uncertain date, we possess a large stock of them. The heroic stories in Hyginus, Maffei, the reformer of the Italian theatre, imagined rightly or wrongly to be the actual summaries of lost Greek dramas: they are, at any rate, subjects on which lost dramas were founded. Maffei counsels the poets of his nation to turn from the inferior subjects on which they were employing themselves, to this "*miniera di tragici argomenti*," this rich mine of subjects for tragedy. Lessing, the great German critic, echoes Maffei's counsel, but adds a warning. "Yes," he cries, "the great subjects are there, but they await an intelligent eye to regard them: they can be

handled, not by the great majority of poets, but only by the small minority."

The lost Cresphontes of Euripides

Among these subjects presented in the collection of Hyginus, there is one which has long attracted my interest, from the testimony of the ancients to its excellence, and from the results which that testimony has called forth from the emulation of the moderns. That subject is the story of Merope. To the effectiveness of the situations which this story offered, Aristotle and Plutarch have borne witness: a celebrated tragedy upon it, probably by Euripides, existed in antiquity. "The *Cresphontes* of Euripides is lost," exclaims the reviewer of Voltaire's *Merope*, a jesuit, and not unwilling to conciliate the terrible pupil of his order; "the *Cresphontes* of Euripides is lost: M. de Voltaire has restored it to us." "Aristotle," says Voltaire, "Aristotle, in his immortal work on Poetry, does not hesitate to affirm that the recognition between Merope and her son was the most interesting moment of the Greek stage." Aristotle affirms no such thing; but he *does* say that the story of Merope, like the stories of Iphigeneia and Antiope, supplies an example of a recognition of the most affecting kind. And Plutarch says; "Look at Merope in the tragedy, lifting up the axe against her own son as being the murderer of her own son, and crying—

> *ὁσιωτέραν δὴ τήνδ' ἔγω δίδωμί σοι*
> *πληγήν*——

A more just stroke than that thou gav'st my son,
Take——

What an agitation she makes in the theatre! how

The tradition of Merope—Hyginus

she fills the spectators with terror lest she should be too quick for the old man who is trying to stop her, and should strike the lad!"

It is singular that neither Aristotle nor Plutarch names the author of the tragedy: scholiasts and other late writers quote from it as from a work of Euripides; but the only writer of authority who names him as its author is Cicero. About fifty lines of it have come down to us: the most important of these remains are the passage just quoted, and a choral address to Peace; of these I have made use in my tragedy, translating the former, and of the latter adopting the general thought, that of rejoicing at the return of peace: the other fragments consist chiefly of detached moral sentences, of which I have not made any use.

It may be interesting to give some account of the more celebrated of those modern works which have been founded upon this subject. But before I proceed to do this, I will state what accounts we have of the story itself.

These proceed from three sources—Apollodorus, Pausanias, and Hyginus. Of their accounts that of Apollodorus is the most ancient, that of Pausanias the most historically valuable, and that of Hyginus the fullest. I will begin with the last-named writer.

Hyginus says:—

"Merope sent away and concealed her infant son. Polyphontes sought for him everywhere, and promised gold to whoever should slay him. He, when he grew up, laid a plan to avenge the murder of his father and brothers. In pursuance

of this plan he came to king Polyphontes and asked for the promised gold, saying that he had slain the son of Cresphontes and Merope. The king ordered him to be hospitably entertained, intending to inquire further of him. He, being very tired, went to sleep, and an old man, who was the channel through whom the mother and son used to communicate, arrives at this moment in tears, bringing word to Merope that her son had disappeared from his protector's house. Merope, believing that the sleeping stranger is the murderer of her son, comes into the guest-chamber with an axe, not knowing that he whom she would slay was her son: the old man recognised him, and withheld Merope from slaying him. After the recognition had taken place, Merope, to prepare the way for her vengeance, affected to be reconciled with Polyphontes. The king, overjoyed, celebrated a sacrifice: his guest, pretending to strike the sacrificial victim, slew the king, and so got back his father's kingdom."

Apollo-dorus and Pausanias

Apollodorus says:—

"Cresphontes had not reigned long in Messenia when he was murdered together with two of his sons. And Polyphontes reigned in his stead, he, too, being of the family of Hercules; and he had for his wife, against her will, Merope, the widow of the murdered king. But Merope had borne to Cresphontes a third son, called Æpytus: him she gave to her own father to bring up. He, when he came to man's estate, returned secretly to Messenia, and slew Polyphontes and the other murderers of his father."

Pausanias adds nothing to the facts told by

The Merope of the moderns

Apollodorus, except that he records the proceedings of Cresphontes which had provoked the resentment of his Dorian nobles, and led to his murder. His statements on this point will be found in the Historical Introduction which follows this Preface.

The account of the modern fortunes of the story of Merope is a curious chapter in literary history. In the early age of the French theatre this subject attracted the notice of a great man, if not a great poet, the cardinal Richelieu. At his theatre, in the Palais Royal, was brought out, in 1641, a tragedy under the title of *Téléphonte*, the name given by Hyginus to the surviving son of Merope. This piece is said by Voltaire to have contained about a hundred lines by the great cardinal, who had, as is well known, more bent than genius for dramatic composition. There his vein appears to have dried up, and the rest is by an undistinguished hand. This tragedy was followed by another on the same subject from the resident minister, at Paris, of the celebrated Christina of Sweden. Two pieces with the title of *Merope*, besides others on the same story, but with different names, were brought out at Paris before the *Merope* of Voltaire appeared. It seems that none of them created any memorable impression.

The first eminent success was in Italy. There too, as in France, more than one *Merope* was early produced: one of them in the sixteenth century, by a Count Torelli, composed with choruses: but the first success was achieved by Maffei. Scipio Maffei, called by Voltaire the Sophocles and Varro of Verona, was a noble and cultivated person. He

Scipio Maffei's Merope

became in middle life the historian of his native place, Verona; and may claim the honour of having partly anticipated Niebuhr in his famous discovery, in the Capitular library of that city, of the lost works of Gaius, the Roman lawyer. He visited France and England, and received an honorary degree at Oxford. But in earlier life he signalised himself as the reviver of the study of Greek literature in Italy; and with the aim to promote that study, and to rescue the Italian theatre from the debasement into which it had fallen, he brought out at Modena, in 1713, his tragedy of *Merope*.

The effect was immense. "Let the Greek and Roman writers give place: here is a greater production than the *Œdipus*!" wrote, in Latin verse, an enthusiastic admirer. In the winter following its appearance, the tragedy kept constant possession of the stage in Italy; and its reputation travelled into France and England. In England a play was produced in 1731, by a writer called Jeffreys, professedly taken from the *Merope* of Maffei. But at this period a love-intrigue was considered indispensable in a tragedy: Voltaire was even compelled by the actors to introduce one in his *Œdipus*: and although in Maffei's work there is no love-intrigue, the English adapter felt himself bound to supply the deficiency. Accordingly he makes, if we may trust Voltaire, the unknown son of Merope in love with one of her maids of honour: he is brought before his mother as his own supposed murderer: she gives him the choice of death by the dagger or by poison: he chooses the latter, drinks off the poison and falls insensible: but reappears at the

The travesty of Jeffreys

end of the tragedy safe and sound, a friend of the maid of honour having substituted a sleeping-draught for the poison. Such is Voltaire's account of this English *Merope*, of which I have not been able to obtain sight. Voltaire is apt to exaggerate: but the work was, without doubt, sufficiently absurd. A better English translation, by Ayre, appeared in 1740. I have taken from Maffei a line in my tragedy—

"Tyrants think, him they murder not, they spare."

Maffei has—

"Ecco il don dei tiranni: a lor rassembra,
Morte non dando altrui, di dar la vita."

Maffei makes some important changes in the story as told by its ancient relaters. In his tragedy the unknown prince, Merope's son, is called Egisto: Merope herself is not, as the ancients represented her, at the time of her son's return the wife of Polyphontes, but is repelling the importunate offer of his hand by her husband's murderer: Egisto does not, like Orestes, know his own parentage, and return secretly to his own home in order to wreak vengeance, in concert with his mother, upon his father's murderer: he imagines himself the son of Messenian parents, but of a rank not royal, intrusted to an old man, Polidoro, to be brought up; and is driven by curiosity to quit his protector and visit his native land. He enters Messenia, and is attacked by a robber, whom he kills. The blood upon his dress attracts the notice of some soldiers of Polyphontes whom he falls in with; he is seized and brought to the royal palace.

On hearing his story, a suspicion seizes Merope, who has heard from Polidoro that her son has quitted him, that the slain person must have been her own son. The suspicion is confirmed by the sight of a ring on the finger of Egisto, which had belonged to Cresphontes, and which Merope supposes the unknown stranger to have taken from her murdered son: she twice attempts his life: the arrival of Polidoro at last clears up the mystery for her; but at the very moment when she recognises Egisto, they are separated, and no interview of recognition takes place between the mother and son. Finally, the prince is made acquainted with his origin, and kills Polyphontes in the manner described by Hyginus. Voltaire's Merope

This is an outline of the story as arranged by Maffei. This arrangement has been followed, in the main, by all his successors. His treatment of the subject has, I think, some grave defects, which I shall presently notice: but his work has much nobleness and feeling; it seems to me to possess, on the whole, more merit of a strictly poetical kind than any of the subsequent works upon the same subject.

Voltaire's curiosity, which never slumbered, was attracted by the success of Maffei. It was not until 1736, however, when his interest in Maffei's tragedy had been increased by a personal acquaintance with its author, that his own *Merope* was composed. It was not brought out upon the stage until 1743. It was received, like its Italian predecessor, with an enthusiasm which, assuredly, the English *Merope* will not excite. From its exhibition dates the practice of calling for a successful

Voltaire dedicates to Maffei

author to appear at the close of his piece: the audience were so much enchanted with Voltaire's tragedy, that they insisted on seeing the man who had given them such delight. To Corneille had been paid the honour of reserving for him the same seat in the theatre at all representations; but neither he nor Racine were ever "called for."

Voltaire, in a long complimentary letter, dedicated his tragedy to Maffei. He had at first intended, he says, merely to translate the *Merope* of his predecessor, which he so greatly admired: he still admired it; above all, he admired it because it possessed *simplicity*; that simplicity which is, he says, his own idol. But he has to deal with a Parisian audience, with an audience who have been glutted with masterpieces until their delicacy has become excessive; until they can no longer support the simple and rustic air, the details of country life, which Maffei had imitated from the Greek theatre. The audience of Paris, of that city in which some thirty thousand spectators daily witnessed theatrical performances, and thus acquired, by constant practice, a severity of taste, to which the ten thousand Athenians who saw tragedies but four times a year could not pretend—of that terrible city, in which

"Et pueri nasum rhinocerotis habent:"

this audience loved simplicity, indeed, but not the same simplicity which was loved at Athens and imitated by Maffei. "I regret this," says Voltaire, "for how fond I am of simple nature! but, *il faut se plier au goût d'une nation*, one must accommodate oneself to the taste of one's countrymen."

He does himself less than justice. When he objects, indeed, to that in Maffei's work which is truly "naïf et rustique," to that which is truly in a Greek spirit, he is wrong. His objection, for instance, to the passage in which the old retainer of Cresphontes describes, in the language of a man of his class, the rejoicings which celebrated his master's accession, is, in my opinion, perfectly groundless. But the wonderful penetration and clear sense of Voltaire seizes, in general, upon really weak points in Maffei's work: upon points which, to an Athenian, would have seemed as weak as they seemed to Voltaire. A French audience, he says, would not have borne to witness Polyphontes making love to Merope, whose husband he had murdered: neither would an Athenian audience have borne it. To hear Polyphontes say to Merope "*Io t'amo*," even though he is but feigning, for state purposes, a love which he has not really, shocks the natural feeling of mankind. Our usages, says Voltaire, would not permit that Merope should twice rush upon her son to slay him, once with a javelin, the next time with an axe. The French dramatic usages, then, would on this point have perfectly agreed with the laws of reason and good taste: this repetition of the same incident is tasteless and unmeaning. It is a grave fault of art, says Voltaire, that, at the critical moment of recognition, not a word passes between Merope and her son. He is right; a noble opportunity is thus thrown away. He objects to Maffei's excessive introduction of conversations between subaltern personages: these conversations are, no doubt, tiresome. Other points there are, with respect to

Voltaire as critic

Voltaire—M. de La Lindelle

which we may say that Voltaire's objections would have been perfectly sound had Maffei really done what is imputed to him: but he has not. Voltaire has a talent for misrepresentation, and he often uses it unscrupulously.

He never used it more unscrupulously than on this occasion. The French public, it appears, took Voltaire's expressions of obligation to Maffei somewhat more literally than Voltaire liked: they imagined that the French *Merope* was rather a successful adaptation of the Italian *Merope* than an original work. It was necessary to undeceive them. A letter appeared, addressed by a M. de La Lindelle to Voltaire, in which Voltaire is reproached for his excessive praises of Maffei's tragedy, in which that work is rigorously analysed, its faults remorselessly displayed. No merit is allowed to it: it is a thoroughly bad piece on a thoroughly good subject. Lessing, who, in 1768, in his *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*, reviewed Voltaire's *Merope* at great length, evidently has divined, what is the truth, that M. de La Lindelle and Voltaire are one and the same person. It required indeed but little of the great Lessing's sagacity to divine that. An unknown M. de La Lindelle does not write one letter in that style of unmatched incisiveness and animation, that style compared to which the style of Lord Macaulay is tame, and the style of Isocrates is obscure, and then pass for ever from the human stage. M. de La Lindelle *is* Voltaire; but that does not hinder Voltaire from replying to him with perfect gravity. "You terrify me!" he exclaims to his correspondent—that is, to himself: "you terrify me!

you are as hypercritical as Scaliger. Why not fix your attention rather on the beauties of M. Maffei's work, than on its undoubted defects? It is my sincere opinion that, in some points, M. Maffei's *Merope* is superior to my own." The transaction is one of the most signal instances of literary sharp practice on record. To this day, in the ordinary editions of Voltaire, M. de La Lindelle's letter figures, in the correspondence prefixed to the tragedy of *Merope*, as the letter of an authentic person; although the true history of the proceeding has long been well known, and Voltaire's conduct in it was severely blamed by La Harpe. Voltaire's duplicity

Voltaire had said that his *Merope* was occasioned by that of Maffei. "*Occasioned*," says Lessing, "is too weak a word: M. de Voltaire's tragedy owes *everything* to that of M. Maffei." This is not just. We have seen the faults in Maffei's work pointed out by Voltaire. Some of these faults he avoids: at the same time he discerns, with masterly clearness, the true difficulties of the subject. "Comment se prendre," he says, "pour faire penser à Mérope que son fils est l'assassin de son fils même?" That is one problem; here is another: "Comment trouver des motifs nécessaires pour que Polyphonte veuille épouser Mérope?" Let us see which of Maffei's faults Voltaire avoids: let us see how far he solves the problems which he himself has enunciated.

The story, in its main outline, is the same with Voltaire as with Maffei; but in some particulars it is altered, so as to have more probability. Like Maffei's Egisto, Voltaire's Égisthe does not know his own origin: like him, youthful curiosity drives

Maffei and Voltaire analysed

him to quit his aged protector, and to re-enter Messenia. Like him he has an encounter with a stranger, whom he slays, and whose blood, staining his clothes, leads to his apprehension. But this stranger is an emissary of Polyphontes, sent to effect the young prince's murder. This is an improvement upon the robber of Maffei, who has no connexion whatever with the action of the piece. Suspicion falls upon Égisthe on the same grounds as those on which it fell upon Egisto. The suspicion is confirmed in Égisthe's case by the appearance of a coat of armour, as, in Egisto's case, it was confirmed by the appearance of a ring. In neither case does Merope seem to have sufficient cause to believe the unknown youth to be her son's murderer. In Voltaire's tragedy, Merope is ignorant until the end of the third act that Polyphontes is her husband's murderer; nay, she believes that Cresphontes, murdered by the brigands of Pylos, has been avenged by Polyphontes, who claims her gratitude on that ground. He desires to marry her in order to strengthen his position. "Of interests in the state," he says,

> "Il ne reste aujourd'hui que le vôtre et le mien :
> Nous devons l'un à l'autre un mutuel soutien."

Voltaire thus departs widely from the tradition; but he can represent Merope as entertaining and discussing the tyrant's offer of marriage without shocking our feelings. The style, however, in which Voltaire makes Polyphontes urge his addresses, would sometimes, I think, have wounded a Greek's taste as much as Maffei's *Io t'amo*—

" Je sais que vos appas, encore dans le printemps,
Pourraient s'effaroucher de l'hiver de mes ans." Their faults

What an address from a stern, care-haunted ruler to a widowed queen, the mother of a grown-up son! The tragedy proceeds; and Merope is about to slay her son, when his aged guardian arrives and makes known to her who the youth is. This is as in Maffei's piece; but Voltaire avoids the absurdity of the double attempt by Merope on her son's life. Yet he, too, permits Égisthe to leave the stage without exchanging a word with his mother: the very fault which he justly censures in Maffei. Égisthe, indeed, does not even learn, on this occasion, that Merope is his mother: the recognition is thus cut in half. The second half of it comes afterwards, in the presence of Polyphontes; and his presence imposes, of course, a restraint upon the mother and son. Merope is driven, by fear for her son's safety, to consent to marry Polyphontes, although his full guilt is now revealed to her; but she is saved by her son, who slays the tyrant in the manner told in the tradition and followed by Maffei.

What is the real merit of Voltaire's tragedy? We must forget the rhymed Alexandrines; that metre, faulty not so much because it is disagreeable in itself, as because it has in it something which is essentially unsuited to perfect tragedy; that metre which is so indefensible, and which Voltaire has so ingeniously laboured to defend. He takes a noble passage from Racine's *Phédre*, alters words so as to remove the rhyme, and asks if the passage now produces as good an effect as before. But a

Voltaire's merits

fine passage which we are used to we like in the form in which we are used to it, with all its faults. Prose is, undoubtedly, a less noble vehicle for tragedy than verse; yet we should not like the fine passages in Goethe's prose tragedy of *Egmont* the better for having them turned into verse. Besides, it is not clear that the unrhymed Alexandrine is a better tragic metre than the rhymed. Voltaire says that usage has now established the metre in France, and that the dramatic poet has no escape from it. For him and his contemporaries this is a valid plea; but how much one regrets that the poetical feeling of the French nation did not, at a period when such an alteration was still possible, change for a better this unsuitable tragic metre, as the Greeks, in the early period of their tragic art, changed for the more fitting iambus their trochaic tetrameter.

To return to Voltaire's *Merope*. It is admirably constructed, and must have been most effective on the stage. One feels, as one reads it, that a poet gains something by living amongst a population who have the nose of the rhinoceros: his ingenuity becomes sharpened. This work has, besides, that stamp of a prodigious talent which none of Voltaire's works are without; it has vigour, clearness, rapid movement; it has lines which are models of terse observation—

> "Le premier qui fut roi fut un soldat heureux:
> Qui sert bien son pays n'a pas besoin d'aieux."

It has lines which are models of powerful, animated, rhetoric—

MÉROPE.

"Courons à Polyphonte—implorons son appui." Aaron Hill's adaptation

NARBAS.

"N'implorez que les dieux, et ne craignez que lui."

What it wants is a charm of poetical feeling, which Racine's tragedies possess, and which has given to them the decisive superiority over those of Voltaire. He has managed his story with great adroitness; but he has departed from the original tradition yet further than Maffei. He has avoided several of Maffei's faults: why has he not avoided his fault of omitting to introduce, at the moment of recognition, a scene between the mother and son? Lessing thinks that he wanted the double recognition in order to enable him to fill his prescribed space, that terrible "carrière de cinq actes" of which he so grievously complains. I believe, rather, that he cut the recognition in two, in order to produce for his audience two distinct shocks of surprise: for to inspire *surprise*, Voltaire considered the dramatic poet's true aim; an opinion which, as we shall hereafter see, sometimes led him astray.

Voltaire's *Merope* was adapted for the English stage by Aaron Hill, a singular man; by turns, poet, soldier, theatrical manager, and Lord Peterborough's private secretary; but always, and above all, an indefatigable projector. He originated a beech-oil company, a Scotch timber company, and a plan to colonise Florida. He published Essays on Reducing the Price of Coals, on Repairing Dagenham Breach, and on English Grape Wines; an epic poem on Gideon, a tragedy called *The*

Alfieri's Merope

Fatal Vision, or Fall of Siam, and a translation of Voltaire's *Zaïre*. His *Merope* was his last work. It appeared in 1749 with a dedication to Lord Bolingbroke; it was brought on the stage with great success, Garrick acting in it; and Hill, who was at this time in poverty, and who died soon after, received a considerable sum from his benefit nights. I have not seen this work, which is not included in the Inchbald collection of acted plays. Warton calls Aaron Hill an affected and fustian writer, and this seems to have been his reputation among his contemporaries. His *Zara*, which I have seen, has the fault of so much of English literature of the second class—an incurable defect of *style*.

One other *Merope* remains to be noticed—the *Merope* of Alfieri. In this tragedy, which appeared in 1783, Alfieri has entirely followed Maffei and Voltaire. He seems to have followed Maffei in the first half of it; Voltaire in the second. His Polyphontes, however, does not make love to Merope: desiring to obtain her hand, in order by this marriage to make the Messenians forget their attachment to Cresphontes, he appeals to her self-interest. "You are miserable," he says; "but a throne is a great consolation. A throne is—

la sola
Non vile ammenda, che al fallir mio resti."

Egisto, in Alfieri's piece, falls under suspicion from the blood left on his clothes in a struggle with a stranger, whom he kills and throws into the river Pamisus. The suspicion is confirmed by the appearance of a girdle recognised by Merope as

having belonged to her son; as it was confirmed in Maffei's piece by the appearance of a ring; in Voltaire's, by that of a coat of armour. The rest is, in the main, as with Voltaire, except that Alfieri makes Polyphontes perish upon the stage, under circumstances of considerable improbability.

The moderns quit tradition

This work of Alfieri has the characteristic merit, and the characteristic fault, of Alfieri's tragedies: it has the merit of elevation, and the fault of narrowness. *Narrow elevation*; that seems to me exactly to express the quality of Alfieri's poetry: he is a noble-minded, deeply interesting man, but a monotonous poet.

A mistake, a grave mistake it seems to me, in the treatment of their subject, is common to Maffei, Voltaire, and Alfieri. They have abandoned the tradition where they had better have followed it; they have followed it, where they had better have abandoned it.

The tradition is a great matter to a poet; it is an unspeakable support; it gives him the feeling that he is treading on solid ground. Aristotle tells the tragic poet that he must not destroy the received stories. A noble and accomplished living poet, M. Manzoni, has, in an admirable dissertation, developed this thesis of the importance to the poet of a basis of tradition. Its importance I feel so strongly, that, where driven to invent in the false story told by Merope's son, as by Orestes in the *Electra*, of his own death, I could not satisfy myself until I discovered in Pausanias a tradition, which I took for my basis, of an Arcadian hunter drowned in the lake Stymphalus, down one of those singular Katabothra, or chasms in the lime-

Tradition's rights and wrongs

stone rock, so well known in Greece, in a manner similar to that in which Æpytus is represented to have perished.

Maffei did right, I think, in altering the ancient tradition where it represents Merope as actually the wife of Polyphontes. It revolts our feeling to consider her as married to her husband's murderer; and it is no great departure from the tradition to represent her as sought in marriage by him, but not yet obtained. But why did Maffei (for he, it will be remembered, gave the story its modern arrangement, which Voltaire and Alfieri have, in all its leading points, followed), why did Maffei abandon that part of the tradition which represents Æpytus, the Messenian prince, as acquainted with his own origin? Why did he and his followers prefer to attribute to curiosity a return which the tradition attributed to a far more tragic motive? Why did they compel themselves to invent a machinery of robbers, assassins, guards, rings, girdles, and I know not what, to effect that which the tradition effects in a far simpler manner—to place Æpytus before his mother as his own murderer? Lessing imagines that Maffei, who wished to depict, above all, the maternal anxiety of Merope, conceived that this anxiety would be more naturally and powerfully awakened by the thought of her child reared in hardship and obscurity as a poor man's son, then by the thought of him reared in splendour as a prince in the palace of her own father. But what a conception of the sorrow of a queen, whose husband has been murdered, and whose son is an exile from his inheritance, to suppose that such a sorrow is enhanced by the thought

that her child is rudely housed and plainly fed; to assume that it would take a less tragic complexion if she knew that he lived in luxury! No; the true tragic motive of Merope's sorrow is elsewhere: the tradition amply supplied it.

Tragic scope of Polyphontes

Here, then, the moderns have invented amiss, because they have invented needlessly; because, on this point, the tradition, as it stood, afforded perfect materials to the tragic poet: and, by Maffei's change, not a higher tragic complication, but merely a greater puzzle and intricacy is produced. I come now to a point on which the tradition might with advantage, as I think, have been set aside; and that is, the character of Polyphontes.

Yet, on this point, to speak of *setting aside the tradition* is to speak too strongly; for the tradition is here not complete. Neither Pausanias nor Apollodorus mention circumstances which definitely fix the character of Polyphontes; Hyginus, no doubt, represents him as a villain, and, if Hyginus follows Euripides, Euripides also thus represented him. Euripides may possibly have done so: yet a purer tragic feeling, it seems to me, is produced, if Polyphontes is represented as not wholly black and inexcusable, than if he is represented as a mere monster of cruelty and hypocrisy. Aristotle's profound remark is well known, that the tragic personage whose ruin is represented, should be a personage neither eminently good, nor yet one brought to ruin by sheer iniquity: nay, that his character should incline rather to good than to bad, but that he should have some fault which impels him to his fall. For, as he explains, the two grand tragic feelings, pity and terror, which it

The main dramatic difficulty

is the business of tragedy to excite, will not be excited by the spectacle of the ruin of a mere villain; since pity is for those who suffer undeservedly: and such a man suffers deservedly: terror is excited by the fall of one of like nature with ourselves, and we feel that the mere villain is not as ourselves. Aristotle, no doubt, is here speaking, above all, of the Protagonist, or principal personage of the drama; but the noblest tragic poets of Greece rightly extended their application of the truth on which his remark is based to all the personages of the drama: neither the Creon of Sophocles, nor the Clytemnestra of Æschylus, are wholly inexcusable; in none of the extant dramas of Æschylus or Sophocles is there a character which is entirely bad. For such a character we must go to Euripides: we must go to an art—wonderful indeed, for I entirely dissent from the unreserved disparagers of this great poet—but an art of less moral significance than the art of Sophocles and Æschylus; we must go to tragedies like the *Hecuba*, for villains like Polymestor.

What is the main dramatic difficulty of the story of Merope, as usually treated? It is, as Alfieri rightly saw, that the interest naturally declines from the moment of Merope's recognition of her son; that the destruction of the tyrant is not, after this, matter of interest enough to affect us deeply. This is true, if Polyphontes is a mere villain. It is not true, if he is one for the ruin of whom we may, in spite of his crime, feel a profound compassion. Then our interest in the story lasts to the end: for to the very end we are inspired

with the powerful tragic emotions of commiseration and awe. Pausanias states circumstances which suggest the possibility of representing Polyphontes, not as a mere cruel and selfish tyrant, but as a man whose crime was a truly tragic fault, the error of a noble nature. Assume such a nature in him, and the turn of circumstances in the drama takes a new aspect: Merope and her son triumph, but the fall of their foe leaves us awestruck and compassionate: the story issues *tragically*, as Aristotle has truly said that the best tragic stories ought to issue. The base modern Polyphontes

Neither Maffei, nor Voltaire, nor Alfieri have drawn Polyphontes with a character to inspire any feeling but aversion, with any traits of nobleness to mitigate our satisfaction at his death. His character being such, it is difficult to render his anxiety to obtain Merope's hand intelligible, for Merope's situation is not such as to make her enmity really dangerous to Polyphontes; he has, therefore, no sufficient motive of self-interest, and the nobler motives of reparation and pacification could have exercised, on such a character, no force. Voltaire accordingly, whose keen eye no weak place of this kind escaped, felt his difficulty. "Neither M. Maffei nor I," he confesses, "have assigned any sufficient motives for the desire of Polyphontes to marry Merope."

To criticise is easier than to create; and if I have been led, in this review of the fortunes of my story, to find fault with the work of others, I do not on that account assume that I have myself produced a work which is not a thousand times more faulty.

Greek dramatic form

It remains to say something, for those who are not familiar with the Greek dramatic forms, of the form in which this tragedy is cast. Greek tragedy, as is well known, took its origin from the songs of a chorus, and the stamp of its origin remained for ever impressed upon it. A chorus, or band of dancers, moving around the altar of Bacchus, sang the adventures of the god. To this band Thespis joined an actor, who held dialogue with the chorus, and who was called ὑποκριτὴς, *the answerer*, because he answered the songs of the chorus. The drama thus commenced; for the dialogue of this actor with the chorus brought before the audience some action of Bacchus, or of one of the heroes; this action, narrated by the actor, was commented on in song, at certain intervals, by the chorus alone. Æschylus added a second actor, thus making the character of the representation more *dramatic*, for the chorus was never itself so much an actor as a hearer and observer of the actor; Sophocles added a third. These three actors might successively personate several characters in the same piece; but to three actors and a chorus the dramatic poet limited himself: only in a single piece of Sophocles, not brought out until after his death, was the employment of a fourth actor, it appears, necessary.

The chorus consisted, in the time of Sophocles, of fifteen persons. After their first entrance they remained before the spectators, without withdrawing, until the end of the piece. Their place was in the orchestra; that of the actors was upon the stage. The orchestra was a circular space, like the pit of our theatres: the chorus arrived in it by side-entrances, and not by the stage. In the centre of

the orchestra was the altar of Bacchus, around which the chorus originally danced; but in dramatic representations their place was between this altar and the stage: here they stood, a little lower than the persons on the stage, but looking towards them, and holding, through their leaders, conversation with them: then, at pauses in the action, the united chorus sang songs expressing their feelings at what was happening upon the stage, making, as they sang, certain measured stately movements between the stage and the altar, and occasionally standing still. Steps led from the orchestra to the stage, and the chorus, or some members of it, might thus, if necessary, join the actors on the stage; but this seldom happened, the proper place for the chorus was the orchestra. The dialogue of the chorus with the actors on the stage passed generally in the ordinary form of dramatic dialogue; but, on occasions where strong feeling was excited, the dialogue took a lyrical form. Long dialogues of this kind sometimes took place between the leaders of the chorus and one of the actors upon the stage, their burden being a lamentation for the dead.

Greek theatrical arrangement

The Greek theatres were vast, and open to the sky; the actors, masked, and in a somewhat stiff tragic costume, were to be regarded from a considerable distance: a solemn, clearly marked style of gesture, a sustained tone of declamation, were thus rendered necessary. Under these conditions, intricate by-play, rapid variations in the action, requiring great mobility, ever-changing shades of tone and gesture in the actor, were impossible. Broad and simple effects were, under these con-

Simplicity, depth, clearness

ditions, above all to be aimed at; a profound and clear impression was to be effected. Unity of plan in the action, and symmetry in the treatment of it, were indispensable. The action represented, therefore, was to be a single, rigorously developed action; the masses of the composition were to be balanced, each bringing out the other into stronger and distincter relief. In the best tragedies, not only do the divisions of the full choral songs accurately correspond to one another, but the divisions of the lyrical dialogue, nay, even the divisions of the regular dramatic dialogue, form corresponding members, of which one member is the answer, the counter-stroke to the other; and an indescribable sense of distinctness and depth of impression is thus produced.

From what has been said, the reader will see that the Greek tragic forms were not chosen as being, in the nature of things, the best tragic forms; such would be a wholly false conception of them. They are an adaptation to dramatic purposes, under certain theatrical conditions, of forms previously existing for other purposes; that adaptation at which the Greeks, after several stages of improvement, finally rested. The laws of Greek tragic art, therefore, are not exclusive; they are for Greek dramatic art itself, but they do not pronounce other modes of dramatic art unlawful; they are, at most, *prophecies of the improbability of dramatic success under other conditions*. "Tragedy," says Aristotle, in a remarkable passage, "after going through many changes, got the nature which suited it, and there it stopped. Whether or no the kinds of tragedy are yet

exhausted," he presently adds, "tragedy being considered either in itself, or in respect to the stage, I shall not now inquire." Travelling in a certain path, the spirit of man arrived at Greek tragedy; travelling in other paths, it may arrive at other kinds of tragedy. Effective severity

But it cannot be denied that the Greek tragic forms, although not the only possible tragic forms, satisfy, in the most perfect manner, some of the most urgent demands of the human spirit. If, on the one hand, the human spirit demands variety and the widest possible range, it equally demands, on the other hand, depth and concentration in its impressions. Powerful thought and emotion, flowing in strongly marked channels, make a stronger impression: this is the main reason why a metrical form is a more effective vehicle for them than prose: in prose there is more freedom, but, in the metrical form, the very limit gives a sense [of] precision and emphasis. This sense of emphatic distinctness in our impressions rises, as the thought and emotion swell higher and higher without overflowing their boundaries, to a lofty sense of the mastery of the human spirit over its own stormiest agitations; and this, again, conducts us to a state of feeling which it is the highest aim of tragedy to produce, to *a sentiment of sublime acquiescence in the course of fate, and in the dispensations of human life.*

What has been said explains, I think, the reason of the effectiveness of the severe forms of Greek tragedy, with its strongly marked boundaries, with its recurrence, even in the most agitating situations, of mutually replying masses of metrical

Repose—Goethe's heresy in practice

arrangement. Sometimes the agitation becomes overwhelming, and the correspondence is for a time lost, the torrent of feeling flows for a space without check: this disorder amid the general order produces a powerful effect; but the balance is restored before the tragedy closes: the final sentiment in the mind must be one not of trouble, but of acquiescence.

This sentiment of acquiescence is, no doubt, a sentiment of *repose*; and, therefore, I cannot agree with Mr. Lewes when he says, in his remarks on Goethe's *Iphigeneia*, that "the Greek Drama is distinguished by its absence of repose; by the currents of passion being for ever kept in agitation." I entirely agree, however, in his criticism of Goethe's tragedy; of that noble poem which Schiller so exactly characterised when he said that it was "full of soul:" I entirely agree with him when he says that "the tragic situation in the story of Iphegeneia is not touched by Goethe; that his tragedy addresses the conscience rather than the emotions." But Goethe does not err from Greek ideas when he thinks that there is repose in tragedy: he errs from Greek practice in the mode in which he strives to produce that repose. Sophocles does not produce the sentiment of repose, of acquiescence, by inculcating it, by avoiding agitating circumstances: he produces it by exhibiting to us the most agitating matter under the conditions of the severest form. Goethe has truly recognised that this sentiment is the grand final effect of Greek tragedy: but he produces it, not in the manner of Sophocles, but, as Mr. Lewes has most ably pointed out, in a manner of

his own; he produces it by inculcating it; by avoiding agitating matter; by keeping himself in the domain of the soul and conscience, not in that of the passions.

Johnstone call ths chorus an encum-brance

I have now to speak of the chorus; for of this, as of the other forms of Greek tragedy, it is not enough, considering how Greek tragedy arose, to show that the Greeks used it; it is necessary to show that it is effective. Johnson says, that "it could only be by long prejudice and the bigotry of learning that Milton could prefer the ancient tragedies, with their encumbrance of a chorus, to the exhibitions of the French and English stages:" and his tragedy of *Irene* sufficiently proves that he himself, in his practice, adopted Greek art as arranged at Paris, by those

> "Juges plus éclairés que ceux qui dans Athène
> Firent naître et fleurir les lois de Melpomène;"

as Voltaire calls them in the prologue to his *Éryphile*. Johnson merely calls the chorus an encumbrance. Voltaire, who, in his *Œdipus*, had made use of the chorus in a singular manner, argued, at a later period, against its introduction. Voltaire is always worth listening to, because his keenness of remark is always suggestive. "In an interesting piece the intrigue generally requires," says Voltaire, "that the principal actors should have secrets to tell one another—*Eh! le moyen de dire son secret à tout un peuple.* And, if the songs of the chorus allude to what has already happened, they must," he says, "be tiresome; if they allude to what is about to happen, their effect will be to *dérober le plaisir de la surprise.*" How ingenious,

The chorus the ideal spectator

and how entirely in Voltaire's manner! The sense to be appealed to in tragedy is *curiosity*; the impression to be awakened in us is *surprise*. But the Greeks thought differently. For them, the aim of tragedy was *profound moral impression*: and the ideal spectator, as Schlegel and Müller have called the chorus, was designed to enable the actual spectator to feel his own impressions more distinctly and more deeply. The chorus was, at each stage in the action, to collect and weigh the impressions which the action would at that stage naturally make on a pious and thoughtful mind; and was at last, at the end of the tragedy, when the issue of the action appeared, to strike the final balance. If the feeling with which the actual spectator regarded the course of the tragedy could be deepened by reminding him of what was past, or by indicating to him what was to come, it was the province of the ideal spectator so to deepen it. To combine, to harmonise, to deepen for the spectator the feelings naturally excited in him by the sight of what was passing upon the stage—this is one grand effect produced by the chorus in Greek tragedy.

There is another. Coleridge observes that Shakspeare, after one of his grandest scenes, often plunges, as if to relax and relieve himself, into a scene of buffoonery. After tragic situations of the greatest intensity, a desire for relief and relaxation is no doubt natural, both to the poet and to the spectator; but the finer feeling of the Greeks found this relief, not in buffoonery, but in lyrical song. The noble and natural relief from the emotion produced by tragic events is in

the transition to the emotion produced by lyric poetry, not in the contrast and shock of a totally opposite order of feelings. The relief afforded to excited feeling by lyrical song every one has experienced at the opera: the delight and facility of this relief renders so universal the popularity of the opera, of this "*beau monstre*," which still, as in Voltaire's time, "*étouffe Melpomène.*" But in the opera, the lyrical element, the element of feeling and relaxation, is in excess: the dramatic element, the element of intellect and labour, is in defect. In the best Greek tragedy, the lyrical element occupies its true place; it is the relief and solace in the stress and conflict of the action; it is not the substantive business. Lyric relief—Milton

Few can have read the *Samson Agonistes* of Milton without feeling that the chorus imparts a peculiar and noble effect to that poem; but I regret that Milton determined, induced probably by his preference for Euripides, to adopt, in the songs of the chorus, "the measure," as he himself says, "called by the Greeks Monostrophic, or rather Apolelymenon, without regard had to Strophe, Antistrophe, or Epode." In this relaxed form of the later Greek tragedy, the means are sacrificed by which the chorus could produce, within the limits of a single choric song, the same effect which it was their business, as we have seen, to produce in the tragedy as a whole. The regular correspondence of part with part, the antithesis, in answering stanzas, of thought to thought, feeling to feeling, with the balance of the whole struck in one independent final stanza or epode, is lost; something of the peculiar distinctness and symmetry,

Oratorical flow—Samson Agonistes

which constitute the vital force of the Greek tragic forms, is thus forfeited. The story of Samson, although it has no mystery or complication, to inspire, like tragic stories of the most perfect kind, a foreboding and anxious gloom in the mind of him who hears it, is yet a truly dramatic and noble one; but the forms of Greek tragedy, which are founded on Greek manners, on the practice of chorus-dancing, and on the ancient habitual transaction of affairs in the open air in front of the dwellings of kings, are better adapted to Greek stories than to Hebrew or any other. These reserves being made, it is impossible to praise the *Samson Agonistes* too highly: it is great with all the greatness of Milton. Goethe might well say to Eckermann, after re-reading it, that hardly any work had been composed so entirely in the spirit of the ancients.

Milton's drama has the true oratorical flow of ancient tragedy, produced mainly, I think, by his making it, as the Greeks made it, the rule, not the exception, to put the pause at the end of the line, not in the middle. Shakspeare has some noble passages, particularly in his *Richard the Third*, constructed with this, the true oratorical rhythm; indeed, that wonderful poet, who has so much besides rhetoric, is also the greatest poetical rhetorician since Euripides; still, it is to the Elizabethan poets that we owe the bad habit, in dramatic poetry, of perpetually dividing the line in the middle. Italian tragedy has the same habit: in Alfieri's plays it is intolerable. The constant occurrence of such lines produces, not a sense of variety, but a sense of perpetual interruption.

Some of the measures used in the choric songs of my tragedy are ordinary measures of English verse: others are not so; but it must not be supposed that these last are the reproduction of any Greek choric measures. So to adapt Greek measures to English verse is impossible: what I have done is to try to follow rhythms which produced on my own feeling a similar impression to that produced on it by the rhythms of Greek choric poetry. In such an endeavour, when the ear is guided solely by its own feeling, there is, I know, a continual risk of failure and of offence. I believe, however, that there are no existing English measures which produce the same effect on the ear, and therefore on the mind, as that produced by many measures indispensable to the nature of Greek lyric poetry. He, therefore, who would obtain certain effects obtained by that poetry, is driven to invent new measures, whether he will or no.

Choric measures—Dryden and Pope

Pope and Dryden felt this. Pope composed two choruses for the Duke of Buckingham's *Brutus*, a tragedy altered from Shakspeare, and performed at Buckingham-house. A short specimen will show what these choruses were—

> "Love's purer flames the Gods approve:
> The Gods and Brutus bend to love:
> Brutus for absent Portia sighs,
> And sterner Cassius melts at Junia's eyes."

In this style he proceeds for eight lines more, and then the antistrophe duly follows. Pope felt that the peculiar effects of Greek lyric poetry were here missed; the measure in itself makes them

Johnson on the St. Cecilia Ode

impossible: in his ode on St. Cecilia's day, accordingly, he tries to come nearer to the Greeks. Here is a portion of his fourth stanza; of one of those stanzas in which Johnson thinks that "we have all that can be performed by sweetness of diction, or elegance of versification:"—

> "Dreadful gleams,
> Dismal screams,
> Fires that glow,
> Shrieks of woe,
> Sullen moans,
> Hollow groans,
> And cries of tortured ghosts."

Horrible! yet how dire must have been the necessity, how strong the feeling of the inadequacy of existing metres to produce effects demanded, which could drive a man of Pope's taste to such prodigies of invention! Dryden in his *Alexander's Feast* deviates less from ordinary English measures; but to deviate from them in some degree he was compelled. My admiration for Dryden's genius is warm: my delight in this incomparable ode, the mighty son of his old age, is unbounded: but it seems to me that in only one stanza and chorus of the *Alexander's Feast*, the fourth, does the rhythm from first to last completely satisfy the ear.

I must have wearied my reader's patience: but I was desirous, in laying before him my tragedy, that it should not lose what benefit it can derive from the foregoing explanations. To his favourable reception of it there will still be obstacles enough, in its unfamiliar form, and in the incapacity of its author.

How much do I regret that the many poets of the present day who possess that capacity which I have not, should not have forestalled me in an endeavour far beyond my powers! How gladly should I have applauded their better success in the attempt to enrich with what, in the forms of the most perfectly-formed literature in the world, is most perfect, our noble English literature; to extend its boundaries in the one direction, in which, with all its force and variety, it has not yet advanced! They would have lost nothing by such an attempt, and English literature would have gained much. Apologia poetæ

Only their silence could have emboldened to undertake it one with inadequate time, inadequate knowledge, and a talent, alas! still more inadequate: one who brings to the task none of the requisite qualifications of genius or learning: nothing but a passion for the great Masters, and an effort to study them without fancifulness.

London: *December*, 1857.

HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

Hercules ancestor of Æpytus

In the foregoing Preface the story of Merope is detailed: what is here added may serve to explain allusions which occur in the course of the tragedy, and to illustrate the situation of its chief personages at the moment when it commences.

The events on which the action turns belong to the period of transition from the heroic and fabulous to the human and historic age of Greece. The hero Hercules, the ancestor of the Messenian Æpytus, belongs to fable: but the invasion of Peloponnesus by the Dorians under chiefs claiming to be descended from Hercules, and their settlement in Argos, Lacedæmon, and Messenia, belong to history. Æpytus is descended on the father's side from Hercules, Perseus, and the kings of Argos: on the mother's side from Pelasgus, and the aboriginal kings of Arcadia. Callisto, the daughter of the wicked Lycaon, and the mother, by Zeus, of Arcas, from whom the Arcadians took their name, was the grand-daughter of Pelasgus. The birth of Arcas brought upon Callisto the anger of the virgin-Goddess Artemis, whose service she followed: she was changed into a she-bear, and in this form was chased by her own son, grown to manhood. At the critical moment Zeus interposed, and the mother and son were removed from the earth, and placed among

the stars: Callisto became the famous constellation of the Great Bear; her son became Arcturus, Arctophylax, or Bootes. From him, Cypselus, the maternal grandfather of Æpytus, and the children of Cypselus, Laias and Merope, were lineally descended. Death of Hercules

The events of the life of Hercules, the paternal ancestor of Æpytus, are so well known that it is hardly necessary to record them. It is sufficient to remind the reader, that, although entitled to the throne of Argos by right of descent from Perseus and Danaus, and to the thrones of Sparta and Messenia by right of conquest, he yet passed his life in labours and wanderings, subjected by the decree of fate to the commands of his far inferior kinsman, the feeble and malignant Eurystheus. Hercules, who is represented with the violence as well as the virtues of an adventurous ever-warring hero, attacked and slew Eurytus, an Eubœan king, with whom he had a quarrel, and carried off the daughter of Eurytus, the beautiful Iole. The wife of Hercules, Deianeira, seized with jealous anxiety, remembered that long ago the centaur Nessus, dying by the poisoned arrows of Hercules, had assured her that the blood flowing from his mortal wound would prove an infallible love-charm to win back the affections of her husband, if she should ever lose them. With this philtre Deianeira now anointed a robe of triumph, which she sent to her victorious husband: he received it when about to offer public sacrifice, and immediately put it on: but the sun's rays called into activity the poisoned blood with which the robe was smeared: it clung to the flesh of the hero

The Heracleidæ

and consumed it. In dreadful agonies Hercules caused himself to be transported from Eubœa to Mount Œta: there, under the crags of Trachis, an immense funeral pile was constructed. Recognising the divine will in the fate which had overtaken him, the hero ascended the pile, and called on his children and followers to set it on fire. They refused; but the office was performed by Pœas, the father of Philoctetes, who, passing near, was attracted by the concourse round the pile, and who received the bow and arrows of Hercules for his reward. The flames arose, and the apotheosis of Hercules was consummated.

He bequeathed to his offspring, the Heracleidæ, his own claims to the kingdoms of Peloponnesus, and to the persecution of Eurystheus. They at first sought shelter with Ceyx, king of Trachis: he was too weak to protect them; and they then took refuge at Athens. The Athenians refused to deliver them up at the demand of Eurystheus: he invaded Attica, and a battle was fought near Marathon, in which, after Macaria, a daughter of Hercules, had devoted herself for the preservation of her house, Eurystheus fell, and the Heracleidæ and their Athenian protectors were victorious. The memory of Macaria's self-sacrifice was perpetuated by the name of a spring of water on the plain of Marathon, the spring Macaria. The Heracleidæ then endeavoured to effect their return to Peloponnesus. Hyllus, the eldest of them, inquired of the oracle at Delphi respecting their return; he was told to return by the *narrow passage*, and in the *third harvest*. Accordingly, in the third year from that time, Hyllus led an

army to the Isthmus of Corinth; but there he was encountered by an army of Achaians and Arcadians, and fell in single combat with Echemus, king of Tegea. Upon this defeat the Heracleidæ retired to Northern Greece: there, after much wandering, they finally took refuge with Ægimius, king of the Dorians, who appears to have been the fastest friend of their house, and whose Dorian warriors formed the army which at last achieved their return. But, for a hundred years from the date of their first attempt, the Heracleidæ were defeated in their successive invasions of Peloponnesus. Cleolaus and Aristomachus, the son and grandson of Hyllus, fell in unsuccessful expeditions. At length the sons of Aristomachus, Temenus, Cresphontes, and Aristodemus, when grown up, repaired to Delphi and taxed the oracle with the non-fulfilment of the promise made to their ancestor Hyllus. But Apollo replied that his oracle had been misunderstood; for that by the *third harvest* he had meant the third generation, and by the *narrow passage* he had meant the straits of the Corinthian Gulf. After this explanation the sons of Aristomachus built a fleet at Naupactus; and finally, in the hundredth year from the death of Hyllus, and the eightieth from the fall of Troy, the invasion was again attempted, and was this time successful. The son of Orestes, Tisamenus, who ruled both Argos and Lacedæmon, fell in battle; many of his vanquished subjects left their homes and retired to Achaia.

Dorian invasion of Peloponnesus

The spoil was now to be divided among the conquerors. Aristodemus, the youngest of the sons of Aristomachus, did not survive to enjoy his

Aga-memnon's house dis-possessed

share. He was slain at Delphi by the sons of Pylades and Electra, the kinsmen of the house of Agamemnon, that house which the Heracleidæ with their Dorian army dispossessed. The claims of Aristodemus descended to his two sons, Procles and Eurysthenes, children under the guardianship of their maternal uncle, Theras. Temenus, the eldest of the sons of Aristomachus, took the kingdom of Argos; for the two remaining kingdoms, that of Sparta and that of Messenia, his two nephews, who were to rule jointly, and their uncle Cresphontes, were to cast lots. Cresphontes wished to have the fertile Messenia, and induced his brother to acquiesce in a trick which secured it to him. The lot of Cresphontes and that of his two nephews were to be placed in a water-jar, and thrown out. Messenia was to belong to him whose lot came out first. With the connivance of Temenus, Cresphontes marked as his own lot a pellet composed of baked clay; as the lot of his nephews, a pellet of unbaked clay: the unbaked pellet was of course dissolved in the water, while the brick pellet fell out alone. Messenia, therefore, was assigned to Cresphontes.

Messenia was at this time ruled by Melanthus, a descendant of Neleus. This ancestor, a prince of the great house of Æolus, had come from Thessaly, and succeeded to the Messenian throne on the failure of the previous dynasty. Melanthus and his race were thus foreigners in Messenia, and were unpopular. His subjects offered little or no opposition to the invading Dorians: Melanthus abandoned his kingdom to Cresphontes, and retired to Athens.

Cresphontes married Merope, whose native country, Arcadia, was not affected by the Dorian invasion. This marriage, the issue of which was three sons, connected him with the native population of Peloponnesus. He built a new capital of Messenia, Stenyclaros, and transferred thither, from Pylos, the seat of government: he at first proposed, it is said by Pausanias, to divide Messenia into five states, and to confer on the native Messenians equal privileges with their Dorian conquerors. The Dorians complained that his administration unduly favoured the vanquished people: his chief magnates, headed by Polyphontes, himself a descendant of Hercules, formed a cabal against him, in which he was slain with his two eldest sons. The youngest son of Cresphontes, Æpytus, then an infant, was saved by his mother, who sent him to her father, Cypselus, the king of Arcadia, under whose protection he was brought up.

Success of wily Cresphontes

The drama begins at the moment when Æpytus, grown to manhood, returns secretly to Messenia to take vengeance on his father's murderers. At this period Temenus was no longer reigning at Argos: he had been murdered by his sons, jealous of their brother-in-law, Deiphontes: the sons of Aristodemus, Procles and Eurysthenes, at variance with their guardian, were reigning at Sparta.

MEROPE

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA

Daybreak at Stenyclaros

LAIAS, *uncle of* ÆPYTUS, *brother of* MEROPE.
ÆPYTUS, *son of* MEROPE *and* CRESPHONTES.
POLYPHONTES, *king of* MESSENIA.
MEROPE, *widow of* CRESPHONTES, *the murdered king of* MESSENIA.
THE CHORUS, *of* MESSENIAN *maidens.*
ARCAS, *an old man of* MEROPE'S *household.*
MESSENGER.
GUARDS, ATTENDANTS, etc.

The Scene is before the royal palace in STENYCLAROS, *the capital of* MESSENIA. *In the foreground is the tomb of* CRESPHONTES. *The action commences at daybreak.*

LAIAS. ÆPYTUS

LAIAS

Son of Cresphontes, we have reached the goal
Of our night-journey, and thou see'st thy home.
Behold thy heritage, thy father's realm!
This is that fruitful, famed Messenian land,
Wealthy in corn and flocks, which, when at last
The late-relenting Gods with victory brought
The Heracleidæ back to Pelops' isle,
Fell to thy father's lot, the second prize.
Before thy feet this recent city spreads

Of Stenyclaros, which he built, and made
Of his fresh-conquered realm the royal seat,
Degrading Pylos from its ancient rule.
There stands the temple of thine ancestor,
Great Hercules; and, in that public place,
Zeus hath his altar, where thy father fell.
Thence to the south, behold those snowy peaks,
Taygetus, Laconia's border-wall:
And, on this side, those confluent streams which make
Pamisus watering the Messenian plain:
Then to the north, Lycæus and the hills
Of pastoral Arcadia, where, a babe
Snatched from the slaughter of thy father's house,
Thy mother's kin received thee, and rear'd up.—
Our journey is well made, the work remains
Which to perform we made it; means for that
Let us consult, before this palace sends
Its inmates on their daily tasks abroad.
Haste and advise, for day comes on apace.

Ægytus and Laias plot

ÆPYTUS

O brother of my mother, guardian true,
And second father from that hour when first
My mother's faithful servant laid me down,
An infant, at the hearth of Cypselus,
My grandfather, the good Arcadian king—
Thy part it were to advise, and mine to obey.
But let us keep that purpose, which, at home,
We judged the best; chance finds no better way.
Go thou into the city, and seek out
Whate'er in the Messenian city stirs
Of faithful fondness towards their former king
Or hatred to their present; in this last

Enter Chorus, Merope, Polyphontes

Will lie, my grandsire said, our fairest chance.
For tyrants make man good beyond himself;
Hate to their rule, which else would die away,
Their daily-practised chafings keep alive.
Seek this; revive, unite it, give it hope;
Bid it rise boldly at the signal given.
Meanwhile within my father's palace I,
An unknown guest, will enter, bringing word
Of my own death; but Laias, well I hope
Through that pretended death to live and reign.
[THE CHORUS *comes forth.*
Softly, stand back!—see, toward the palace gates
What black procession slowly makes approach?—
Sad-chanting maidens clad in mourning robes,
With pitchers in their hands, and fresh-pulled flowers:
Doubtless, they bear them to my father's tomb.—
[MEROPE *comes forth.*
And see, to meet them, that one, grief-plunged Form,
Severer, paler, statelier than they all,
A golden circlet on her queenly brow.—
O Laias, Laias, let the heart speak here!
Shall I not greet her? shall I not leap forth?
[POLYPHONTES *comes forth, following* MEROPE.

LAIAS

Not so: thy heart would pay its moment's speech
By silence ever after; for, behold!
The King (I know him, even through many years)
Follows the issuing Queen, who stops, as call'd.
No lingering now! straight to the city I:
Do thou, till for thine entrance to this house
The happy moment comes, lurk here unseen

Behind the shelter of thy father's tomb: At Cresphontes' tomb
Remove yet further off, if aught comes near.
But, here while harbouring, on its margin lay,
Sole offering that thou hast, locks from thy head:
And fill thy leisure with an earnest prayer
To his avenging Shade, and to the Gods
Who under earth watch guilty deeds of men,
To guide our effort to a prosperous close.

[LAIAS *goes out.* POLYPHONTES, MEROPE, *and* THE CHORUS *come forward. As they advance,* ÆPYTUS, *who at first conceals himself behind the tomb, moves off the stage.*

POLYPHONTES. (*To* THE CHORUS.)

Set down your pitchers, maidens! and fall back;
Suspend your melancholy rites a while:
Shortly ye shall resume them with your Queen.—
(*To* MEROPE.)
I sought thee, Merope; I find thee thus,
As I have ever found thee; bent to keep,
By sad observances and public grief,
A mournful feud alive, which else would die.
I blame thee not, I do thy heart no wrong:
Thy deep seclusion, thine unyielding gloom,
Thine attitude of cold, estranged reproach,
These punctual funeral honours, year by year
Repeated, are in thee, I well believe,
Courageous, faithful actions, nobly dared.
But, Merope, the eyes of other men
Read in these actions, innocent in thee,
Perpetual promptings to rebellious hope,
War-cries to faction, year by year renew'd,
Beacons of vengeance, not to be let die.
And me, believe it, wise men gravely blame,

The plea of Polyphontes

And ignorant men despise me, that I stand
Passive, permitting thee what course thou wilt.
Yes, the crowd mutters that remorseful fear
And paralysing conscience stop my arm,
When it should pluck thee from thy hostile way.
All this I bear, for, what I seek, I know;
Peace, peace is what I seek, and public calm:
Endless extinction of unhappy hates:
Union cemented for this nation's weal.
And even now, if to behold me here,
This day, amid these rites, this black-robed train,
Wakens, O Queen! remembrance in thy heart
Too wide at variance with the peace I seek—
I will not violate thy noble grief,
The prayer I came to urge I will defer.

MEROPE

This day, to-morrow, yesterday, alike
I am, I shall be, have been, in my mind
Tow'rds thee; towards thy silence as thy speech.
Speak, therefore, or keep silence, which thou wilt.

POLYPHONTES

Hear me, then, speak; and let this mournful day,
The twentieth anniversary of strife,
Henceforth be honoured as the date of peace.
Yes, twenty years ago this day beheld
The king Cresphontes, thy great husband, fall:
It needs no yearly offerings at his tomb
To keep alive that memory in my heart;
It lives, and, while I see the light, will live.
For we were kinsmen—more than kinsmen—friends:
Together we had sprung, together lived;

Together to this isle of Pelops came
To take the inheritance of Hercules;
Together won this fair Messenian land—
Alas, that how to rule it, was our broil!
He had his counsel, party, friends—I mine;
He stood by what he wished for—I the same;
I smote him, when our wishes clashed in arms;
He had smit me, had he been swift as I.
But while I smote him, Queen, I honoured him;
Me, too, had he prevailed, he had not scorn'd.
Enough of this!—since then, I have maintain'd
The sceptre—not remissly let it fall—
And I am seated on a prosperous throne:
Yet still, for I conceal it not, ferments
In the Messenian people what remains
Of thy dead husband's faction; vigorous once,
Now crush'd but not quite lifeless by his fall.
And these men look to thee, and from thy grief—
Something too studiously, forgive me, shown—
Infer thee their accomplice; and they say
That thou in secret nurturest up thy son.
Him whom thou hiddest when thy husband fell,
To avenge that fall, and bring them back to power,
Such are their hopes—I ask not if by thee
Willingly fed or no—their most vain hopes;
For I have kept conspiracy fast-chained
Till now, and I have strength to chain it still.
But, Merope, the years advance;—I stand
Upon the threshold of old age, alone,
Always in arms, always in face of foes.
The long repressive attitude of rule
Leaves me austerer, sterner, than I would;
Old age is more suspicious than the free
And valiant heart of youth, or manhood's firm,

Hopes of dead Cresphontes' followers

Polyphontes woos Merope

Unclouded reason; I would not decline
Into a jealous tyrant, scourged with fears,
Closing, in blood and gloom, his sullen reign.
The cares which might in me with time, I feel,
Beget a cruel temper, help me quell;
The breach between our parties help me close;
Assist me to rule mildly: let us join
Our hands in solemn union, making friends
Our factions with the friendship of their chiefs.
Let us in marriage, King and Queen, unite
Claims ever hostile else; and set thy son—
No more an exile fed on empty hopes,
And to an unsubstantial title heir,
But prince adopted by the will of power,
And future king—before this people's eyes.
Consider him; consider not old hates:
Consider, too, this people, who were dear
To their dead king, thy husband—yea, too dear,
For that destroyed him. Give them peace; thou canst.
O Merope, how many noble thoughts,
How many precious feelings of man's heart,
How many loves, how many gratitudes,
Do twenty years wear out, and see expire!
Shall they not wear one hatred out as well?

MEROPE

Thou hast forgot, then, who I am who hear,
And who thou art who speakest to me? I
Am Merope, thy murdered master's wife . . .
And thou art Polyphontes, first his friend,
And then . . . his murderer. These offending tears
That murder draws . . . this breach that thou wouldst close

Was by that murder opened . . . that one child (If still, indeed, he lives) whom thou wouldst seat Upon a throne not thine to give, is heir Because thou slew'st his brothers with their father . . . Who can patch union here? . . . What can there be But everlasting horror 'twixt us two, Gulfs of estranging blood? . . . Across that chasm Who can extend their hands? . . . Maidens, take back These offerings home! our rites are spoiled to-day. Merope's horror

POLYPHONTES

Not so: let these Messenian maidens mark The fear'd and blacken'd ruler of their race, Albeit with lips unapt to self-excuse, Blow off the spot of murder from his name.— Murder!—but what *is* murder! When a wretch For private gain or hatred takes a life, We call it murder, crush him, brand his name: But when, for some great public cause, an arm Is, without love or hate, austerely raised Against a Power exempt from common checks, Dangerous to all, to be but thus annulled— Ranks any man with murder such an act? With grievous deeds, perhaps; with murder—no! Find then such cause, the charge of murder falls: Be judge thyself if it abound not here.— All know how weak the Eagle, Hercules, Soaring from his death-pile on Œta, left His puny, callow Eaglets; and what trials— Infirm protectors, dubious oracles Construed awry, misplann'd invasions—used

Defence of Polyphontes

Two generations of his offspring up;
Hardly the third, with grievous loss, regain'd
Their fathers' realm, this isle, from Pelops nam'd.—
Who made that triumph, though deferr'd, secure?
Who, but the kinsmen of the royal brood
Of Hercules, scarce Heracleidæ less
Than they? these, and the Dorian lords, whose king
Ægimius gave our outcast house a home
When Thebes, when Athens dared not; who in arms
Thrice issued with us from their pastoral vales,
And shed their blood like water in our cause?—
Such were the dispossessors: of what stamp
Were they we dispossessed?—of us I speak,
Who to Messenia with thy husband came—
I speak not now of Argos, where his brother,
Not now of Sparta, where his nephews reign'd:—
What we found here were tribes of fame obscure,
Much turbulence, and little constancy,
Precariously ruled by foreign lords
From the Æolian stock of Neleus sprung,
A house once great, now dwindling in its sons.
Such were the conquer'd, such the conquerors: who
Had most thy husband's confidence? Consult
His acts; the wife he chose was—full of virtues—
But an Arcadian princess, more akin
To his new subjects than to us; his friends
Were the Messenian chiefs; the laws he framed
Were aim'd at their promotion, our decline;
And, finally, this land, then half-subdued,
Which from one central city's guarded seat
As from a fastness in the rocks our scant
Handful of Dorian conquerors might have curbed,
He parcelled out in five confederate states,

Sowing his victors thinly through them all,
Mere prisoners, meant or not, among our foes.
If this was fear of them, it shamed the king:
If jealousy of us, it shamed the man.—
Long we refrained ourselves, submitted long,
Construed his acts indulgently, revered,
Though found perverse, the blood of Hercules:
Reluctantly the rest; but, against all,
One voice preached patience, and that voice was mine.
At last it reached us, that he, still mistrustful,
Deeming, as tyrants deem, our silence hate,
Unadulating grief conspiracy,
Had to this city, Stenyclaros, call'd
A general assemblage of the realm,
With compact in that concourse to deliver,
For death, his ancient to his new-made friends.
Patience was thenceforth self-destruction. I,
I his chief kinsman, I his pioneer
And champion to the throne, I honouring most
Of men the line of Hercules, preferr'd
The many of that lineage to the one:
What his foes dared not, I, his lover, dared:
I, at that altar, where 'mid shouting crowds
He sacrificed, our ruin in his heart,
To Zeus, before he struck his blow, struck mine:
Struck once, and awed his mob, and saved this realm.
Murder let others call this, if they will;
I, self-defence and righteous execution.

"Righteous execution" —not murder

MEROPE

Alas, how fair a colour can his tongue,
Who self-exculpates, lend to foulest deeds.

Cresphontes' policy of conciliation

Thy trusting lord didst thou, his servant, slay;
Kinsman, thou slew'st thy kinsman; friend, thy friend:
This were enough; but let me tell thee, too,
Thou hadst no cause, as feign'd, in his misrule.
For ask at Argos, ask in Lacedæmon,
Whose people, when the Heracleidæ came,
Were hunted out, and to Achaia fled,
Whether is better, to abide alone,
A wolfish band, in a dispeopled realm,
Or conquerors with conquer'd to unite
Into one puissant folk, as he design'd?
These sturdy and unworn Messenian tribes,
Who shook the fierce Neleidæ on their throne,
Who to the invading Dorians stretch'd a hand,
And half bestow'd half yielded up their soil—
He would not let his savage chiefs alight,
A cloud of vultures, on this vigorous race;
Ravin a little while in spoil and blood,
Then, gorged and helpless, be assail'd and slain.
He would have saved you from your furious selves,
Not in abhorr'd estrangement let you stand;
He would have mix'd you with your friendly foes,
Foes dazzled with your prowess, well inclined
To reverence your lineage, more, to obey:
So would have built you, in a few short years,
A just, therefore a safe, supremacy.
For well he knew, what you, his chiefs, did not—
How of all human rules the over-tense
Are apt to snap; the easy-stretch'd endure.—
O gentle wisdom, little understood!
O arts, above the vulgar tyrant's reach!
O policy too subtle far for sense
Of heady, masterful, injurious men!

This good he meant you, and for this he died. The offer rejected
Yet not for this—else might thy crime in part
Be error deem'd—but that pretence is vain.
For, if ye slew him for supposed misrule,
Injustice to his kin and Dorian friends,
Why with the offending father did ye slay
Two unoffending babes, his innocent sons?
Why not on them have placed the forfeit crown,
Ruled in their name, and train'd them to your will?
Had *they* misruled? had *they* forgot their friends?
Forsworn their blood? ungratefully had *they*
Preferred Messenian serfs to Dorian lords?
No: but to thy ambition their poor lives
Were bar; and this, too, was their father's crime.
That thou might'st reign he died, not for his fault
Even fancied; and his death thou wroughtest chief.
For, if the other lords desired his fall
Hotlier than thou, and were by thee kept back,
Why dost thou only profit by his death?
Thy crown condemns thee, while thy tongue absolves.
And now to me thou tenderest friendly league,
And to my son reversion to thy throne:
Short answer is sufficient; league with thee,
For me I deem such impious; and for him,
Exile abroad more safe than heirship here.

POLYPHONTES

I ask thee not to approve thy husband's death,
No, nor expect thee to admit the grounds,
In reason good, which justified my deed:
With women the heart argues, not the mind.
But, for thy children's death, I stand assoil'd:
I saved them, meant them honour: but thy friends

The slain children

Rose, and with fire and sword assailed my house
By night; in that blind tumult they were slain.
To chance impute their deaths, then, not to me.

MEROPE

Such chance as kill'd the father, kill'd the sons.

POLYPHONTES

One son at least I spared, for still he lives.

MEROPE

Tyrants think him they murder not they spare.

POLYPHONTES

Not much a tyrant thy free speech displays me.

MEROPE

Thy shame secures my freedom, not thy will.

POLYPHONTES

Shame rarely checks the genuine tyrant's will.

MEROPE

One merit, then, thou hast: exult in that.

POLYPHONTES

Thou standest out, I see, repellest peace.

MEROPE

Thy sword repelled it long ago, not I.

POLYPHONTES

Doubtless thou reckonest on the hope of friends.

MEROPE

Not help of men, although, perhaps, of Gods. Beware!

POLYPHONTES

What Gods? the Gods of concord, civil weal?

MEROPE

No: the avenging Gods, who punish crime.

POLYPHONTES

Beware! from thee upbraidings I receive
With pity, nay, with reverence; yet, beware!
I know, I know how hard it is to think
That right, that conscience pointed to a deed,
Where interest seems to have enjoin'd it too.
Most men are led by interest; and the few
Who are not, expiate the general sin,
Involved in one suspicion with the base.
Dizzy the path and perilous the way
Which in a deed like mine a just man treads,
But it is sometimes trodden, oh! believe it.
Yet how *canst* thou believe it? therefore thou
Hast all impunity. Yet, lest thy friends,
Emboldened by my lenience, think it fear,
And count on like impunity, and rise,
And have to thank thee for a fall, beware!
To rule this kingdom I intend: with sway
Clement, if may be, but to rule it: there
Expect no wavering, no retreat, no change.—
And now I leave thee to these rites, esteem'd
Pious, but impious, surely, if their scope
Be to foment old memories of wrath.
Pray, as thou pour'st libations on this tomb,

The rite at the tomb

To be delivered from thy foster'd hate,
Unjust suspicion, and erroneous fear.

[POLYPHONTES *goes into the palace.* THE CHORUS *and* MEROPE *approach the tomb with their offerings.*

THE CHORUS

strophe

Draw, draw near to the tomb.
Lay honey-cakes on its marge,
Pour the libation of milk,
Deck it with garlands of flowers.
Tears fall thickly the while!
Behold, O King, from the dark
House of the grave, what we do.

antistrophe

O Arcadian hills,
Send us the Youth whom ye hide,
Girt with his coat for the chase,
With the low broad hat of the tann'd
Hunter o'ershadowing his brow:
Grasping firm, in his hand
Advanc'd, two javelins, not now
Dangerous alone to the deer.

MEROPE

str. 1

What shall I bear, O lost
Husband and King, to thy grave?—
Pure libations, and fresh
Flowers? But thou, in the gloom,
Discontented, perhaps,
Demandest vengeance, not grief?
Sternly requirest a man,
Light to spring up to thy race?

THE CHORUS

Vengeance is due

Vengeance, O Queen, is his due, *str.* 2
His most just prayer: yet his race—
If that might soothe him below—
Prosperous, mighty, came back
In the third generation, the way
Order'd by Fate, to their home.
And now, glorious, secure,
Fill the wealth-giving thrones
Of their heritage, Pelops' isle.

MEROPE

Suffering sent them, Death *ant.* 1
March'd with them, Hatred and Strife
Met them entering their halls.
For from the day when the first
Heracleidæ received
That Delphic hest to return,
What hath involved them but blind
Error on error, and blood?

THE CHORUS

Truly I hear of a Maid *ant.* 2
Of that stock born, who bestow'd
Her blood that so she might make
Victory sure to her race,
When the fight hung in doubt; but she now,
Honour'd and sung of by all,
Far on Marathon plain
Gives her name to the spring
Macaria, blessed Child.

MEROPE

She led the way of death. *str.* 3
And the plain of Tegea,

What hope of vengeance?

And the grave of Orestes—
Where, in secret seclusion
Of his unreveal'd tomb,
Sleeps Agamemnon's unhappy,
Matricidal, world-famed,
Seven-cubit-statured son—
Sent forth Echemus, the victor, the king,
By whose hand, at the Isthmus,
At the Fate-denied Straits,
Fell the eldest of the sons of Hercules
Hyllus, the chief of his house.—
Brother follow'd sister
The all-wept way.

THE CHORUS

Yes; but his son's seed, wiser-counsell'd,
Sail'd by the Fate-meant Gulf to their conquest;
Slew their enemies' king, Tisamenus.
Wherefore accept that happier omen!
Yet shall restorers appear to the race.

MEROPE

Three brothers won the field, *ant.* 3
And to two did Destiny
Give the thrones that they conquer'd.
But the third, what delays him
From his unattain'd crown? . . .
Ah Pylades and Electra,
Ever faithful, untired,
Jealous, blood-exacting friends!
Ye lie watching for the foe of your kin,
In the passes of Delphi,
In the temple-built gorge.—
There the youngest of the band of conquerors

Perish'd, in sight of the goal.
Grandsire follow'd sire
The all-wept way.

The murder of Cresphontes

THE CHORUS

Thou tellest the fate of the last *str.* 4
Of the three Heracleidæ. 471
Not of him, of Cresphontes thou sharedst the lot.
A king, a king was he while he lived,
Swaying the sceptre with predestined hand.
And now, minister loved,
Holds rule ——

MEROPE

Ah me . . . Ah . . .

THE CHORUS

For the awful Monarchs below.

MEROPE

Thou touchest the worst of my ills. *str.* 5
Oh had he fallen of old
At the Isthmus, in fight with his foes, 480
By Achaian, Arcadian spear!
Then had his sepulchre risen
On the high sea-bank, in the sight
Of either Gulf, and remain'd
All-regarded afar,
Noble memorial of worth
Of a valiant Chief, to his own.

THE CHORUS

There rose up a cry in the streets *ant.* 4
From the terrified people.

The murder of Merope's sons

From the altar of Zeus, from the crowd, came a wail.
A blow, a blow was struck, and he fell,
Sullying his garment with dark-streaming blood:
While stood o'er him a Form—
Some Form——

MEROPE

Ah me . . . Ah . . .

THE CHORUS

Of a dreadful Presence of fear.

EROPE

More piercing the second cry rang, *ant.* 5
Wail'd from the palace within,
From the Children . . . The Fury to them,
Fresh from their father, draws near.
Ah bloody axe! dizzy blows!
In these ears, they thunder, they ring,
These poor ears, still:—and these eyes
Night and day see them fall,
Fiery phantoms of death,
On the fair, curl'd heads of my sons.

THE CHORUS

Not to thee only hath come *str.* 6
Sorrow, O Queen, of mankind.
Had not Electra to haunt
A palace defiled by a death unavenged,
For years, in silence, devouring her heart?
But her nursling, her hope, came at last.
Thou, too, rearest in joy,
Far 'mid Arcadian hills,

Somewhere, in safety, a nursling, a light. Hope in Æpytus
Yet, yet shall Zeus bring him home!
Yet shall he dawn on this land!

MEROPE

Him in secret, in tears, *str.* 7
Month after month, through the slow-dragging year,
Longing, listening, I wait, I implore.
But he comes not. What dell,
O Erymanthus! from sight
Of his mother, which of thy glades,
O Lycæus! conceals
The happy hunter? He basks
In youth's pure morning, nor thinks
On the blood-stained home of his birth.

THE CHORUS

Give not thy heart to despair. *ant.* 6
No lamentation can loose
Prisoners of death from the grave:
But Zeus, who accounteth thy quarrel his own,
Still rules, still watches, and numbers the hours
Till the sinner, the vengeance, be ripe.
Still, by Acheron stream,
Terrible Deities throned
Sit, and make ready the serpent, the scourge.
Still, still the Dorian boy,
Exiled, remembers his home.

MEROPE

Him if high-ruling Zeus *ant.* 7
Bring to his mother, the rest I commit,
Willing, patient, to Zeus, to his care.
Blood I ask not. Enough

May Æpytus return

Sated, and more than enough,
Are mine eyes with blood. But if this,
O my comforters! strays
Amiss from Justice, the Gods
Forgive my folly, and work
What they will!—but to me give my son!

THE CHORUS

Hear us and help us, Shade of our King! *str.* 8

MEROPE

A return, O Father! give to thy boy! *str.* 9

THE CHORUS

Send an avenger, Gods of the dead! *ant.* 8

MEROPE

An avenger I ask not: send me my son! *ant.* 9

THE CHORUS

O Queen, for an avenger to appear,
Thinking that so I pray'd aright, I pray'd:
If I pray'd wrongly, I revoke the prayer.

MEROPE

Forgive me, maidens, if I seem too slack
In calling vengeance on a murderer's head.
Impious I deem the alliance which he asks;
Requite him words severe, for seeming kind;
And righteous, if he falls, I count his fall.
With this, to those unbribed inquisitors,
Who in man's inmost bosom sit and judge,
The true avengers these, I leave his deed,
By him shown fair, but, I believe, most foul.

If these condemn him, let them pass his doom! Merope prays
That doom obtain effect, from Gods or men!
So be it! yet will that more solace bring
To the chafed heart of Justice than to mine.—
To hear another tumult in these streets,
To have another murder in these halls,
To see another mighty victim bleed—
There is small comfort for a woman here.
A woman, O my friends, has one desire—
To see secure, to live with, those she loves.
Can Vengeance give me back the murdered? no!
Can it bring home my child? Ah, if it can,
I pray the Furies' ever-restless band,
And pray the Gods, and pray the all-seeing Sun—
"Sun, who careerest through the height of Heaven,
When o'er the Arcadian forests thou art come,
And seest my stripling hunter there afield,
Put tightness in thy gold-embossed rein,
And check thy fiery steeds, and, leaning back,
Throw him a pealing word of summons down,
To come, a late avenger, to the aid
Of this poor soul who bore him, and his sire."
If this will bring him back, be this my prayer!—
But Vengeance travels in a dangerous way,
Double of issue, full of pits and snares
For all who pass, pursuers and pursued—
That way is dubious for a mother's prayer.
Rather on thee I call, Husband beloved!—
May Hermes, herald of the dead, convey
My words below to thee, and make thee hear.—
Bring back our son! if may be, without blood!
Install him in thy throne, still without blood!
Grant him to reign there wise and just like thee,
More fortunate than thee, more fairly judged!

Libation to the dead

This for our son: and for myself I pray,
Soon, having once beheld him, to descend
Into the quiet gloom, where thou art now.
These words to thine indulgent ear, thy wife,
I send, and these libations pour the while.

[*They make their offerings at the tomb.* MEROPE *then goes towards the palace.*

THE CHORUS

The dead hath now his offerings duly paid.
But whither goest thou hence, O Queen, away?

MEROPE

To receive Arcas, who to-day should come,
Bringing me of my boy the annual news.

THE CHORUS

No certain news if like the rest it run.

MEROPE

Certain in this, that 'tis uncertain still.

THE CHORUS

What keeps him in Arcadia from return?

MEROPE

His grandsire and his uncles fear the risk.

THE CHORUS

Of what? it lies with them to make risk none.

MEROPE

Discovery of a visit made by stealth.

THE CHORUS

Arcas expected

With arms then they should send him, not by stealth.

MEROPE

With arms they dare not, and by stealth they fear.

THE CHORUS

I doubt their caution little suits their ward.

MEROPE

The heart of youth I know; that most I fear.

THE CHORUS

I augur thou wilt hear some bold resolve.

MEROPE

I dare not wish it; but, at least, to hear
That my son still survives, in health, in bloom;
To hear that still he loves, still longs for, me; 620
Yet, with a light uncareworn spirit, turns
Quick from distressful thought, and floats in joy—
Thus much from Arcas, my old servant true,
Who saved him from these murderous halls a babe,
And since has fondly watch'd him night and day
Save for this annual charge, I hope to hear.
If this be all, I know not; but I know,
These many years I live for this alone.

[MEROPE *goes in.*

THE CHORUS

Much is there which the Sea *str.* 1
Conceals from man, who cannot plumb its depths.
Air to his unwing'd form denies a way, 631

The secret heart of man

And keeps its liquid solitudes unscal'd.
Even Earth, whereon he treads,
So feeble is his march, so slow,
Holds countless tracts untrod.

But, more than all unplumb'd, *ant.* 1
Unscaled, untrodden, is the heart of Man.
More than all secrets hid, the way it keeps.
Nor any of our organs so obtuse,
Inaccurate, and frail,
As those with which we try to test
Feelings and motives there.

Yea, and not only have we not explored *str.* 2
That wide and various world, the heart of others,
But even our own heart, that narrow world
Bounded in our own breast, we hardly know,
Of our own actions dimly trace the causes.
Whether a natural obscureness, hiding
That region in perpetual cloud,
Or our own want of effort, be the bar.

Therefore — while acts are from their motives judged, *ant.* 2
And to one act many most unlike motives,
This pure, that guilty, may have each impell'd—
Power fails us to try clearly if that cause
Assign'd us by the actor be the true one:
Power fails the man himself to fix distinctly
The cause which drew him to his deed,
And stamp himself, thereafter, bad or good.

The most are bad, wise men have said. *str.* 3
Let the best rule, they say again.

The best, then, to dominion have the right. The best should reign
Rights unconceded and denied,
Surely, if rights, may be by force asserted—
May be, nay should, if for the general weal.
The best, then, to the throne may carve his way,
And hew opposers down,
Free from all guilt of lawlessness,
Or selfish lust of personal power:
Bent only to serve Virtue,
Bent to diminish wrong.

And truly, in this ill-ruled world, *ant.* 3
Well sometimes may the good desire
To give to Virtue her dominion due.
Well may they long to interrupt
The reign of Folly, usurpation ever,
Though fenced by sanction of a thousand years.
Well thirst to drag the wrongful ruler down.
Well purpose to pen back
Into the narrow path of right,
The ignorant, headlong multitude,
Who blindly follow ever
Blind leaders, to their bane.

But who can say, without a fear, *str.* 4
That best, who ought to rule, am I;
The mob, who ought to obey, are these;
I the one righteous, they the many bad?—
Who, without check of conscience, can aver
That he to power makes way by arms,
Sheds blood, imprisons, banishes, attaints,
Commits all deeds the guilty oftenest do,
Without a single guilty thought,
Arm'd for right only, and the general good?

Æpytus comes incognito

Therefore, with censure unallay'd, *ant.* 4
Therefore, with unexcepting ban,
Zeus and pure-thoughted Justice brand
Imperious self-asserting Violence.
Sternly condemn the too bold man, who dares
Elect himself Heaven's destined arm.
And, knowing well man's inmost heart infirm,
However noble the committer be,
His grounds however specious shown,
Turn with averted eyes from deeds of blood.

Thus, though a woman, I was school'd *epode*
By those whom I revere.
Whether I learnt their lessons well,
Or, having learnt them, well apply
To what hath in this house befall'n,
If in the event be any proof,
The event will quickly show.

[ÆPYTUS *comes in.*

ÆPYTUS

Maidens, assure me if they told me true
Who told me that the royal house was here.

THE CHORUS

Rightly they told thee, and thou art arrived.

ÆPYTUS

Here, then, it is, where Polyphontes dwells?

THE CHORUS

He doth: thou hast both house and master right.

ÆPYTUS

Might some one straight inform him he is sought?

THE CHORUS

Inform him that thyself, for here he comes. Fictitious account of his death

[POLYPHONTES *comes forth, with* ATTENDANTS *and* GUARDS.

ÆPYTUS

O King, all hail! I come with weighty news:
Most likely, grateful; but, in all case, sure.

POLYPHONTES

Speak them, that I may judge their kind myself.

ÆPYTUS

Accept them in one word, for good or bad:
Æpytus, the Messenian prince, is dead!

POLYPHONTES

Dead!—and when died he? where? and by what hand?
And who art thou, who bringest me such news?

ÆPYTUS

He perish'd in Arcadia, where he lived
With Cypselus; and two days since he died.
One of the train of Cypselus am I.

POLYPHONTES

Instruct me of the manner of his death.

ÆPYTUS

That will I do, and to this end I came.
For, being of like age, of birth not mean,
The son of an Arcadian noble, I
Was chosen his companion from a boy;

A hunting excursion

And on the hunting-rambles which his heart,
Unquiet, drove him ever to pursue,
Through all the lordships of the Arcadian dales,
From chief to chief, I wander'd at his side,
The captain of his squires, and his guard.
On such a hunting-journey, three morns since,
With beaters, hounds, and huntsmen, he and I
Set forth from Tegea, the royal town.
The prince at start seem'd sad, but his regard
Clear'd with blithe travel and the morning air.
We rode from Tegea, through the woods of oaks,
Past Arnê spring, where Rhea gave the babe
Poseidon to the shepherd-boys to hide
From Saturn's search among the new-yean'd lambs,
To Mantinea, with its unbaked walls;
Thence, by the Sea-God's Sanctuary, and the tomb
Whither from wintry Mænalus were brought
The bones of Arcas, whence our race is named,
On, to the marshy Orchomenian plain,
And the Stone Coffins;—then, by Caphyæ Cliffs,
To Pheneos with its craggy citadel.
There, with the chief of that hill-town, we lodged
One night; and the next day, at dawn, fared on
By the Three Fountains and the Adder's Hill
To the Stymphalian Lake, our journey's end,
To draw the coverts on Cyllene's side.
There, on a grassy spur which bathes its root
Far in the liquid lake, we sate, and drew
Cates from our hunters' pouch, Arcadian fare,
Sweet chestnuts, barley-cakes, and boar's flesh dried:
And as we ate, and rested there, we talk'd
Of places we had pass'd, sport we had had,

Of beasts of chase that haunt the Arcadian hills,
Wild hog, and bear, and mountain-deer, and roe:
Last, of our quarters with the Arcadian chiefs.
For courteous entertainment, welcome warm,
Sad, reverential homage, had our prince
From all, for his great lineage and his woes:
All which he own'd, and praised with grateful mind.
But still over his speech a gloom there hung,
As of one shadow'd by impending death;
And strangely, as we talk'd, he would apply
The story of spots mention'd to his own:
Telling us, Arnê minded him, he too
Was saved a babe, but to a life obscure,
Which he, the seed of Hercules, dragg'd on
Inglorious, and should drop at last unknown,
Even as those dead unepitaph'd, who lie
In the stone coffins at Orchomenus.
And, then, he bade remember how we pass'd
The Mantinean Sanctuary, forbid
To foot of mortal, where his ancestor,
Named Æpytus like him, having gone in,
Was blinded by the outgushing springs of brine.
Then, turning westward to the Adder's Hill—
Another ancestor, named, too, like me,
Died of a snake-bite, said he, *on that brow:*
Still at his mountain tomb men marvel, built
Where, as life ebb'd, his bearers laid him down.
So he play'd on; then ended, with a smile—
This region is not happy for my race.
We cheer'd him; but, that moment, from the copse
By the lake-edge, broke the sharp cry of hounds;
The prickers shouted that the stag was gone:

The gloom of Æpytus

"Full cry" We sprang upon our feet, we snatch'd our spears,
We bounded down the swarded slope, we plunged
Through the dense ilex-thickets to the dogs.
Far in the woods ahead their music rang;
And many times that morn we coursed in ring
The forests round which belt Cyllene's side;
Till I, thrown out and tired, came to halt
On the same spur where we had sate at morn.
And resting there to breathe, I saw below
Rare, straggling hunters, foil'd by brake and crag,
And the prince, single, pressing on the rear
Of that unflagging quarry and the hounds.
Now, in the woods far down, I saw them cross
An open glade; now he was high aloft
On some tall scar fringed with dark feathery pines,
Peering to spy a goat-track down the cliff,
Cheering with hand, and voice, and horn his dogs.
At last the cry drew to the water's edge—
And through the brushwood, to the pebbly strand,
Broke, black with sweat, the antler'd mountain stag,
And took the lake: two hounds alone pursued;
Then came the prince—he shouted and plunged in.—
There is a chasm rifted in the base
Of that unfooted precipice, whose rock
Walls on one side the deep Stymphalian Lake:
There the lake-waters, which in ages gone
Wash'd, as the marks upon the hills still show,
All the Stymphalian plain, are now suck'd down.
A headland, with one aged plane-tree crown'd,
Parts from the cave-pierced cliff the shelving bay
Where first the chase plunged in: the bay is smooth,

But round the headland's point a current sets,
Strong, black, tempestuous, to the cavern-mouth.
Stoutly, under the headland's lee, they swam:
But when they came abreast the point, the race
Caught them, as wind takes feathers, whirl'd them round
Struggling in vain to cross it, swept them on,
Stag, dogs, and hunter, to the yawning gulph.
All this, O King, not piecemeal, as to thee
Now told, but in one flashing instant pass'd:
While from the turf whereon I lay I sprang,
And took three strides, quarry and dogs were gone;
A moment more—I saw the prince turn round
Once in the black and arrowy race, and cast
One arm aloft for help; then sweep beneath
The low-brow'd cavern-arch, and disappear.
And what I could, I did—to call by cries
Some straggling hunters to my aid, to rouse
Fishers who live on the lake-side, to launch
Boats, and approach, near as we dared, the chasm.
But of the prince nothing remain'd, save this,
His boar-spear's broken shaft, back on the lake
Cast by the rumbling subterranean stream;
And this, at landing spied by us and saved,
His broad-brimm'd hunter's hat, which, in the bay,
Where first the stag took water, floated still.
And I across the mountains brought with haste
To Cypselus, at Basilis, this news:
Basilis, his new city, which he now
Near Lycosura builds, Lycaon's town,
First city founded on the earth by men.
He to thee sends me on, in one thing glad
While all else grieves him, that his grandchild's death

End of Æpytus's tale

Ægytus entertained hospitably

Extinguishes distrust 'twixt him and thee.
But I from our deplored mischance learn this—
The man who to untimely death is doom'd,
Vainly you hedge him from the assault of harm;
He bears the seed of ruin in himself.

THE CHORUS

So dies the last shoot of our royal tree!
Who shall tell Merope this heavy news?

POLYPHONTES

Stranger, the news thou bringest is too great
For instant comment, having many sides
Of import, and in silence best received,
Whether it turn at last to joy or woe.
But thou, the zealous bearer, hast no part
In what it has of painful, whether now,
First heard, or in its future issue shown.
Thou for thy labour hast deserved our best
Refreshment needed by thee, as I judge,
With mountain-travel and night-watching spent.—
To the guest-chamber lead him, some one! give
All entertainment which a traveller needs,
And such as fits a royal house to show:
To friends, still more, and labourers in our cause.
[ATTENDANTS *conduct* ÆPYTUS *within the palace.*

THE CHORUS

The youth is gone within; alas! he bears
A presence sad for some one through those doors.

POLYPHONTES

Admire then, maidens, how in one short hour
The schemes pursued in vain for twenty years,

Are by a stroke, though undesired, complete,
Crown'd with success, not in my way, but
Heaven's!
This at a moment, too, when I had urged
A last, long-cherish'd project, in my aim
Of concord, and been baffled with disdain.
Fair terms of reconcilement, equal rule,
I offer'd to my foes, and they refused:
Worse terms than mine they have obtain'd from
Heaven.
Dire is this blow for Merope; and I
Wish'd, truly wish'd, solution to our broil
Other than by this death: but it hath come!
I speak no word of boast, but this I say,
A private loss here founds a nation's peace.
[POLYPHONTES *goes out.*

Polyphontes exultant

THE CHORUS

Peace, who tarriest too long: *str.* 5
Peace, with Delight in thy train;
Come, come back to our prayer!
Then shall the revel again
Visit our streets, and the sound
Of the harp be heard with the pipe,
When the flashing torches appear
In the marriage-train coming on,
With dancing maidens and boys:
While the matrons come to the doors,
And the old men rise from their bench,
When the youths bring home the bride.

Not decried by my voice *ant.*
He who restores thee shall be,
Not unfavour'd by Heaven.

Let Peace come!

Surely no sinner the man,
Dread though his acts, to whose hand
Such a boon to bring hath been given.
Let her come, fair Peace! let her come!
But the demons long nourish'd here,
Murder, Discord, and Hate,
In the stormy desolate waves
Of the Thracian Sea let her leave,
Or the howling outermost Main.

[MEROPE *comes forth.*

MEROPE

A whisper through the palace flies of one
Arrived from Tegea with weighty news;
And I came, thinking to find Arcas here.
Ye have not left this gate, which he must pass:
Tell me—hath one not come? or, worse mischance,
Come, but been intercepted by the King?

THE CHORUS

A messenger, sent from Arcadia here,
Arrived, and of the King had speech but now.

MEROPE

Ah me! the wrong expectant got his news.

THE CHORUS

The message brought was for the King design'd.

MEROPE

How so? was Arcas not the messenger?

THE CHORUS

A younger man, and of a different name.

MEROPE

Arcas comes

And what Arcadian news had he to tell?

THE CHORUS

Learn that from other lips, O Queen, than mine.

MEROPE

He kept his tale, then, for the King alone?

THE CHORUS

His tale was meeter for that ear than thine.

MEROPE

Why dost thou falter, and make half reply?

THE CHORUS

O thrice unhappy, how I groan thy fate!

MEROPE

Thou frightenest and confound'st me by thy word.
O were but Arcas come, all would be well! 940

THE CHORUS

If so, all 's well: for look, the old man speeds
Up from the city tow'rds this gated hill.
[ARCAS *comes in.*

MEROPE

Not with the failing breath and foot of age
My faithful follower comes. Welcome, old friend!

ARCAS

Faithful, not welcome, when my tale is told.
O that my over-speed and bursting grief

A tale of disaster

Had on the journey choked my labouring breath,
And lock'd my speech for ever in my breast!
Yet then another man would bring this news.—
O honour'd Queen, thy son, my charge, is gone.

THE CHORUS

Too suddenly thou tellest such a loss.
Look up, O Queen! look up, O mistress dear!
Look up, and see thy friends who comfort thee.

MEROPE

Ah . . Ah . . . Ah me!

THE CHORUS

And I, too, say, ah me!

ARCAS

Forgive, forgive the bringer of such news!

MEROPE

Better from thine than from an enemy's tongue.

THE CHORUS

And yet no enemy did this, O Queen:
But the wit-baffling will and hand of Heaven.

ARCAS

No enemy! and what hast thou, then, heard?
Swift as I came, hath Falsehood been before?

THE CHORUS

A youth arrived but now, the son, he said,
Of an Arcadian lord, our prince's friend,
Jaded with travel, clad in hunter's garb.

He brought report that his own eyes had seen
The prince, in chase after a swimming stag,
Swept down a chasm broken in the cliff
Which hangs o'er the Stymphalian Lake, and drown'd.

The King's plot

ARCAS

Ah me! with what a foot doth Treason post,
While Loyalty, with all her speed, is slow!
Another tale, I trow, thy messenger
For the King's private ear reserves, like this
In one thing only, that the prince is dead.

THE CHORUS

And how then runs this true and private tale?

ARCAS

As much to the King's wish, more to his shame.
This young Arcadian noble, guard and mate
To Æpytus, the king seduced with gold,
And had him at the prince's side in leash,
Ready to slip on his unconscious prey.
He on a hunting party three days since,
Among the forests on Cyllene's side,
Perform'd good service for his bloody wage;
The prince, his uncle Laias, whom his ward
Had in a father's place, he basely murder'd.
Take this for true, the other tale for feign'd.

THE CHORUS

And this perfidious murder who reveal'd?

ARCAS

The faithless murderer's own, no other tongue.

The King's supposed tool

THE CHORUS

Did conscience goad him to denounce himself?

ARCAS

To Cypselus at Basilis he brought
This strange unlikely tale, the prince was drown'd.

THE CHORUS

But not a word appears of murder here.

ARCAS

Examin'd close, he own'd this story false.
Then evidence came—his comrades of the hunt,
Who saw the prince and Laias last with him,
Never again in life—next, agents, fee'd
To ply 'twixt the Messenian king and him,
Spoke, and revealed that traffic, and the traitor.
So charged, he stood dumbfounder'd : Cypselus,
On this suspicion, cast him into chains.
Thence he escaped—and next I find him here.

THE CHORUS

His presence with the King, thou mean'st, implies——

ARCAS

He comes to tell his prompter he hath sped.

THE CHORUS

Still he repeats the drowning story here.

ARCAS

To thee—that needs no Œdipus to explain.

THE CHORUS

Interpret, then ; for we, it seems, are dull.

Merope's wrath kindled

ARCAS

Your King desired the profit of his death,
Not the black credit of his murderer.
That stern word '*murder*' had too dread a sound
For the Messenian hearts, who loved the prince.

THE CHORUS

Suspicion grave I see, but no clear proof.

MEROPE

Peace! peace! all 's clear.—The wicked watch and work
While the good sleep: the workers have the day.
He who was sent hath sped, and now comes back,
To chuckle with his sender o'er the game
Which foolish innocence plays with subtle guilt.
Ah! now I comprehend the liberal grace
Of this far-scheming tyrant, and his boon
Of heirship to his kingdom for my son:
He had his murderer ready, and the sword
Lifted, and that unwish'd-for heirship void—
A tale, meanwhile, forged for his subjects' ears:
And me, henceforth sole rival with himself
In their allegiance, me, in my son's death-hour,
When all turn'd tow'rds me, me he would have shown
To my Messenians, duped, disarm'd, despised,
The willing sharer of his guilty rule,
All claim to succour forfeit, to myself
Hateful, by each Messenian heart abhorred.—
His offers I repelled—but what of that?

She nerves herself for

If with no rage, no fire of righteous hate,
Such as ere now hath spurr'd to fearful deeds
Weak women with a thousandth part my wrongs,
But calm, but unresentful, I endured
His offers, coldly heard them, cold repell'd?
While all this time I bear to linger on
In this blood-deluged palace, in whose halls
Either a vengeful Fury I should stalk,
Or else not live at all—but here I haunt,
A pale, unmeaning ghost, powerless to fright
Or harm, and nurse my longing for my son,
A helpless one, I know it:—but the Gods
Have temper'd me e'en thus; and, in some souls,
Misery, which rouses others, breaks the spring.
And even now, my son, ah me! my son,
Fain would I fade away, as I have lived,
Without a cry, a struggle, or a blow,
All vengeance unattempted, and descend
To the invisible plains, to roam with thee,
Fit denizen, the lampless under-world——
But with what eyes should I encounter there
My husband, wandering with his stern compeers,
Amphiaraos, or Mycenæ's king,
Who led the Greeks to Ilium, Agamemnon,
Betray'd like him, but, not like him, avenged?
Or with what voice shall I the questions meet
Of my two elder sons, slain long ago,
Who sadly ask me, what, if not revenge,
Kept me, their mother, from their side so long?
Or how reply to thee, my child, last-born,
Last murder'd, who reproachfully wilt say—
Mother, I well belived thou livedst on
In the detested palace of thy foe,
With patience on thy face, death in thy heart,

Counting, till I grew up, the laggard years, a fearful deed
That our joint hands might then together pay
To one unhappy house the debt we owe.
My death makes my debt void, and doubles thine—
But down thou fleest here, and leav'st our scourge
Triumphant, and condemnest all our race
To lie in gloom for ever unappeased.
What shall I have to answer to such words?—
No, something must be dared; and, great as erst
Our dastard patience, be our daring now!
Come, ye swift Furies, who to him ye haunt
Permit no peace till your behests are done;
Come Hermes, who dost watch the unjustly kill'd,
And canst teach simple ones to plot and feign;
Come, lightning Passion, that with foot of fire
Advancest to the middle of a deed
Almost before 'tis plann'd; come, glowing Hate;
Come, baneful Mischief, from thy murky den
Under the dripping black Tartarean cliff
Which Styx's awful waters trickle down—
Inspire this coward heart, this flagging arm!
How say ye, maidens, do ye know these prayers?
Are these words Merope's—is this voice mine?
Old man, old man, thou hadst my boy in charge,
And he is lost, and thou hast that to atone.
Fly, find me on the instant where confer
The murderer and his impious setter-on:
And ye, keep faithful silence, friends, and mark
What one weak woman can achieve alone.

ARCAS

O mistress, by the Gods, do nothing rash!

MEROPE

Unfaithful servant, dost thou, too, desert me?

Hope suggested

ARCAS.

I go! I go!—yet, Queen, take this one word:
Attempting deeds beyond thy power to do,
Thou nothing profitest thy friends, but mak'st
Our misery more, and thine own ruin sure.

[ARCAS *goes out.*

THE CHORUS

I have heard, O Queen, how a prince, *str.* 1
Agamemnon's son, in Mycenæ,
Orestes, died but in name, 1100
Lived for the death of his foes.

MEROPE

Peace!

THE CHORUS

What is it?

MEROPE

Alas,
Thou destroyest me!

THE CHORUS

How?

MEROPE

Whispering hope of a life
Which no stranger unknown,
But the faithful servant and guard,
Whose tears warrant his truth,
Bears sad witness is lost.

THE CHORUS

Whereso'er men are, there is grief. *ant.* 1
In a thousand countries, a thousand 1110

Homes, e'en now is there wail;
Mothers lamenting their sons.

None is preëminent in calamity

MEROPE

Yes——

THE CHORUS

Thou knowest it?

MEROPE.

This,
Who lives, witnesses.

THE CHORUS

True.

MEROPE

But, is it only a fate
Sure, all-common, to lose
In a land of friends, by a friend,
One last, murder-saved child?

THE CHORUS

Ah me! *str.* 2

MEROPE

Thou confessest the prize 1120
In the rushing, thundering, mad,
Cloud-enveloped, obscure,
Unapplauded, unsung
Race of calamity, mine?

THE CHORUS

None can truly claim that
Mournful preeminence, not
Thou.

The Arcadian within?

MEROPE

Fate *gives* it, ah me!

THE CHORUS

Not, above all, in the doubts,
Double and clashing, that hang——

MEROPE

What then? *ant.* 2
Seems it lighter, my loss,
If, perhaps, unpierced by the sword,
My child lies in a jagg'd
Sunless prison of rocks,
On the black wave borne to and fro?

THE CHORUS

Worse, far worse, if his friend,
If the Arcadian within,
If——

MEROPE (*with a start*)

How say'st thou? within? . . .

THE CHORUS

He in the guest-chamber now,
Faithlessly murder'd his friend.

MEROPE

Ye, too, ye, too, join to betray, then,
Your Queen!

THE CHORUS

What is this?

MEROPE

The sacrifice-axe

Ye knew,
O false friends! into what
Haven the murderer had dropp'd?
Ye kept silence?

THE CHORUS

In fear,
O loved mistress! in fear,
Dreading thine over-wrought mood,
What I knew, I conceal'd.

MEROPE

Swear by the Gods henceforth to obey me!

THE CHORUS

Unhappy one, what deed
Purposes thy despair?
I promise; but I fear.

MEROPE

From the altar, the unavenged tomb,
Fetch me the sacrifice-axe!——
[THE CHORUS *goes towards the tomb of* CRESPHONTES, *and their leader brings back the axe.*
O Husband, O clothed
With the grave's everlasting,
All-covering darkness! O King,
Well mourn'd, but ill-avenged!
Approv'st thou thy wife now?——
The axe!—who brings it?

THE CHORUS

'Tis here!

Merope unwitting will

But thy gesture, thy look,
Appals me, shakes me with awe.

MEROPE

Thrust back now the bolt of that door!

THE CHORUS

Alas! alas!—
Behold the fastenings withdrawn
Of the guest-chamber door!—
Ah! I beseech thee—with tears——

MEROPE

Throw the door open!

THE CHORUS

'Tis done! . . .

[*The door of the house is thrown open: the interior of the guest-chamber is discovered, with* Æpytus *asleep on a couch.*

MEROPE

He sleeps—sleeps calm. O ye all-seeing Gods!
Thus peacefully do ye let sinners sleep,
While troubled innocents toss, and lie awake?
What sweeter sleep than this could I desire
For thee, my child, if thou wert yet alive?
How often have I dream'd of thee like this,
With thy soil'd hunting-coat, and sandals torn,
Asleep in the Arcadian glens at noon,
Thy head droop'd softly, and the golden curls
Clustering o'er thy white forehead, like a girl's;
The short proud lip showing thy race, thy cheeks
Brown'd with thine open-air, free, hunter's life.
Ah me! . . .

slay her son Æpytus

And where dost thou sleep now, my innocent boy?—
In some dark fir-tree's shadow, amid rocks
Untrodden, on Cyllene's desolate side;
Where travellers never pass, where only come
Wild beasts, and vultures sailing overhead.
There, there thou liest now, my hapless child!
Stretched among briars and stones, the slow, black gore
Oozing through thy soak'd hunting-shirt, with limbs
Yet stark from the death-struggle, tight-clench'd hands,
And eyeballs staring for revenge in vain.
Ah miserable! . . .
And thou, thou fair-skinned Serpent! thou art laid
In a rich chamber, on a happy bed,
In a king's house, thy victim's heritage;
And drink'st untroubled slumber, to sleep off
The toils of thy foul service, till thou wake
Refresh'd, and claim thy master's thanks and gold.—
Wake up in hell from thine unhallow'd sleep,
Thou smiling Fiend, and claim thy guerdon there!
Wake amid gloom, and howling, and the noise
Of sinners pinion'd on the torturing wheel,
And the stanch Furies' never-silent scourge.
And bid the chief-tormentors there provide
For a grand culprit shortly coming down.
Go thou the first, and usher in thy lord!
A more just stroke than that thou gav'st my son,
Take——

[MEROPE *advances towards the sleeping* ÆPYTUS, *with the axe uplifted. At the same moment* ARCAS *returns.*

Arcas intervenes

ARCAS (*to the Chorus*)

Not with him to council did the King
Carry his messenger, but left him here.
[*Sees* MEROPE *and* ÆPYTUS.
O Gods! . . .

MEROPE

Foolish old man, thou spoil'st my blow!

ARCAS

What do I see? . . .

MEROPE

A murderer at death's door.
Therefore no words!

ARCAS

A murderer? . . .

MEROPE

And a captive
To the dear next-of-kin of him he murder'd.
Stand, and let vengeance pass!

ARCAS

Hold, O Queen, hold!
Thou know'st not whom thou strik'st . . .

MEROPE

I know his crime.

ARCAS

Unhappy one! thou strik'st——

MEROPE

A most just blow.

ARCAS

Æpytus made known

No, by the Gods, thou slay'st——

MEROPE

Stand off!

ARCAS

Thy son!

MEROPE

Ah! . . . [*She lets the axe drop, and falls insensible.*

ÆPYTUS (*awaking*)

Who are these? What shrill, ear-piercing scream
Wakes me thus kindly from the perilous sleep
Wherewith fatigue and youth had bound mine eyes,
Even in the deadly palace of my foe?—
Arcas! Thou here?

ARCAS (*embracing him*)

O my dear master! O
My child, my charge beloved, welcome to life!
As dead we held thee, mourn'd for thee as dead.

ÆPYTUS

In word I died, that I in deed might live.
But who are these?

ARCAS

Messenian maidens, friends.

ÆPYTUS

And, Arcas!—but I tremble!

The axe away!

ARCAS

Boldly ask.

ÆPYTUS

That black-robed, swooning figure? . . .

ARCAS

Merope.

ÆPYTUS

O mother! mother!

MEROPE

Who upbraids me? Ah! . . .
[*seeing the axe.*

ÆPYTUS

Upbraids thee? no one.

MEROPE

Thou dost well: but take . . .

ÆPYTUS

What wav'st thou off?

MEROPE

That murderous axe away!

ÆPYTUS

Thy son is here.

MEROPE

One said so, sure, but now.

ÆPYTUS

Here, here thou hast him!

Mother and son

MEROPE

Slaughter'd by this hand! . . .

ÆPYTUS

No, by the Gods, alive and like to live!

MEROPE

What, thou?—I dream——

ÆPYTUS

May'st thou dream ever so!

MEROPE (*advancing towards him*)

My child? unhurt? . . .

ÆPYTUS

Only by over joy.

MEROPE

Art thou, then, come? . . .

ÆPYTUS

Never to part again.

[*They fall into one another's arms. Then* MEROPE, *holding* ÆPYTUS *by the hand, turns to* THE CHORUS.

MEROPE

O kind Messenian maidens, O my friends,
Bear witness, see, mark well, on what a head
My first stroke of revenge had nearly fallen! 1240

THE CHORUS

We see, dear mistress: and we say, the Gods,
As hitherto they kept him, keep him now.

Vengeance again

MEROPE

O my son!
I have, I have thee . . . . the years
Fly back, my child! and thou seem'st
Ne'er to have gone from these eyes,
Never been torn from this breast.

ÆPYTUS

Mother, my heart runs over: but the time
Presses me, chides me, will not let me weep.

MEROPE

Fearest thou now?

ÆPYTUS

I fear not, but I think on my design.

MEROPE

At the undried fount of this breast,
A babe, thou smilest again.
Thy brothers play at my feet,
Early-slain innocents! near,
Thy kind-speaking father stands.

ÆPYTUS

Remember, to revenge his death I come!

MEROPE

Ah . . . revenge! *ant.*
That word! it kills me! I see
Once more roll back on my house,
Never to ebb, the accurs'd
All-flooding ocean of blood.

ÆPYTUS

What help?

Mother, sometimes the justice of the Gods
Appoints the way to peace through shedding blood.

MEROPE

Sorrowful peace!

ÆPYTUS

And yet the only peace to us allow'd.

MEROPE

From the first-wrought vengeance is born
A long succession of crimes.
Fresh blood flows, calling for blood:
Fathers, sons, grandsons, are all
One death-dealing vengeful train.

ÆPYTUS

Mother, thy fears are idle: for I come
To close an old wound, not to open new.
In all else willing to be taught, in this
Instruct me not; I have my lesson clear.—
Arcas, seek out my uncle Laias, now
Concerting in the city with our friends;
Here bring him, ere the king come back from council:
That, how to accomplish what the Gods enjoin,
And the slow-ripening time at last prepares,
We two with thee, my mother, may consult:
For whose help dare I count on if not thine?

MEROPE

Approves my brother Laias this design?

Laias in the plot

ÆPYTUS

Yes, and alone is with me here to share.

MEROPE

And what of thine Arcadian mate, who bears
Suspicion from thy grandsire of thy death,
For whom, as I suppose, thou passest here?

ÆPYTUS

Sworn to our plot he is: but, that surmise
Fix'd him the author of my death, I knew not.

MEROPE

Proof, not surmise, shows him in commerce close—

ÆPYTUS

With this Messenian tyrant—that I know. 1291

MEROPE

And entertain'st thou, child, such dangerous friends?

ÆPYTUS

This commerce for my best behoof he plies.

MEROPE

That thou may'st read thine enemy's counsel plain?

ÆPYTUS

Too dear his secret wiles have cost our house.

MEROPE

And of his unsure agent what demands he?

ÆPYTUS

News of my business, pastime, temper, friends.

MEROPE [Merope counsels delay

His messages, then, point not to thy murder?

ÆPYTUS

Not yet; though such, no doubt, his final aim.

MEROPE

And what Arcadian helpers bring'st thou here?

ÆPYTUS

Laias alone; no errand mine for crowds.

MEROPE

On what relying, to crush such a foe?

ÆPYTUS

One sudden stroke, and the Messenians' love.

MEROPE

O thou long-lost, long seen in dreams alone,
But now seen face to face, my only child!
Why wilt thou fly to lose as soon as found
My new-won treasure, thy beloved life?
Or how expectest not to lose, who comest
With such slight means to cope with such a foe?
Thine enemy thou know'st not, nor his strength.
The stroke thou purposest is desperate, rash—
Yet grant that it succeeds;—thou hast behind
The stricken king a second enemy
Scarce dangerous less than him, the Dorian lords.
These are not now the savage band who erst
Follow'd thy father from their northern hills,
Mere ruthless and uncounsell'd tools of war,
Good to obey, without a leader nought.

"Sage experience"

Their chief hath train'd them, made them like himself,
Sagacious, men of iron, watchful, firm,
Against surprise and sudden panic proof:
Their master fall'n, these will not flinch, but band
To keep their master's power: thou wilt find
Behind his corpse their hedge of serried spears.
But, to match these, thou hast the people's love?
On what a reed, my child, thou leanest there!
Knowest thou not how timorous, how unsure,
How useless an ally a people is
Against the one and certain arm of power?
Thy father perish'd in this people's cause,
Perish'd before their eyes, yet no man stirr'd:
For years, his widow, in their sight I stand,
A never-changing index to revenge—
What help, what vengeance, at their hands have I?—
At least, if thou wilt trust them, try them first:
Against the King himself array the host
Thou countest on to back thee 'gainst his lords:
First rally the Messenians to thy cause,
Give them cohesion, purpose, and resolve,
Marshal them to an army—then advance,
Then try the issue; and not, rushing on
Single and friendless, throw to certain death
That dear-belov'd, that young, that gracious head.
Be guided, O my son! spurn counsel not:
For know thou this, a violent heart hath been
Fatal to all the race of Hercules.

THE CHORUS

With sage experience she speaks; and thou,
O Æpytus, weigh well her counsel given.

ÆPYTUS

Ill counsel, in my judgment, gives she here,
Maidens, and reads experience much amiss;
Discrediting the succour which our cause
Might from the people draw, if rightly used:
Advising us a course which would, indeed,
If followed, make their succour slack and null.
A people is no army, train'd to fight,
A passive engine, at their general's will;
And, if so used, proves, as thou say'st, unsure.
A people, like a common man, is dull,
Is lifeless, while its heart remains untouch'd;
A fool can drive it, and a fly may scare:
When it admires and loves, its heart awakes;
Then irresistibly it lives, it works:
A people, then, is an ally indeed;
It is ten thousand fiery wills in one.
Now I, if I invite them to run risk
Of life for my advantage, and myself,
Who chiefly profit, run no more than they—
How shall I rouse their love, their ardour so?
But, if some signal, unassisted stroke,
Dealt at my own sole risk, before their eyes,
Announces me their rightful prince return'd—
The undegenerate blood of Hercules—
The daring claimant of a perilous throne—
How might not such a sight as this revive
Their loyal passion tow'rd my father's house?
Electrify their hearts? make them no more
A craven mob, but a devouring fire?
Then might I use them, then, for one who thus
Spares not himself, themselves they will not spare.
Haply, had but one daring soul stood forth

Æpytus defends his plot

Æpytus resolved

To rally them and lead them to revenge,
When my great father fell, they had replied:—
Alas! our foe alone stood forward then.
And thou, my mother, hadst thou made a sign—
Hadst thou, from thy forlorn and captive state
Of widowhood in these polluted halls,
Thy prison-house, raised one imploring cry—
Who knows but that avengers thou hadst found?
But mute thou sat'st, and each Messenian heart
In thy despondency desponded too.
Enough of this!—though not a finger stir
To succour me in my extremest need;
Though all free spirits in this land be dead,
And only slaves and tyrants left alive—
Yet for me, mother, I had liefer die
On native ground, than drag the tedious hours
Of a protected exile any more.
Hate, duty, interest, passion call one way:
Here stand I now, and the attempt shall be.

THE CHORUS

Prudence is on the other side; but deeds
Condemned by prudence have sometimes gone well.

MEROPE

Not till the ways of prudence all are tried,
And tried in vain, the turn of rashness comes.
Thou leapest to thy deed, and hast not ask'd
Thy kinsfolk and thy father's friends for aid.

ÆPYTUS

And to what friends should I for aid apply?

Friends discussed

MEROPE

The royal race of Temenus, in Argos——

ÆPYTUS

That house like ours, intestine murder maims.

MEROPE

Thy Spartan cousins, Procles and his brother——

ÆPYTUS

Love a won cause, but not a cause to win.

MEROPE

My father, then, and his Arcadian chiefs——

ÆPYTUS

Mean still to keep aloof from Dorian broil.

MEROPE

Wait, then, until sufficient help appears.

ÆPYTUS

Orestes in Mycenæ had no more.

MEROPE

He to fulfil an order raised his hand.

ÆPYTUS

What order more precise had he than I?

MEROPE

Apollo peal'd it from his Delphian cave.

ÆPYTUS

A mother's murder needed hest divine.

The precedent of Orestes

MEROPE

He had a hest, at least, and thou hast none.

ÆPYTUS

The Gods command not where the heart speaks clear.

MEROPE

Thou wilt destroy, I see, thyself and us.

ÆPYTUS

O suffering! O calamity! how ten,
How twentyfold worse are ye, when your blows
Not only wound the sense, but kill the soul,
The noble thought, which is alone the man!
That I, to-day returning, find myself
Orphan'd of both my parents—by his foes
My father, by your strokes my mother slain!—
For this is not my mother, who dissuades,
At the dread altar of her husband's tomb,
His son from vengeance on his murderer;
And not alone dissuades him, but compares
His just revenge to an unnatural deed,
A deed so awful, that the general tongue
Fluent of horrors, falters to relate it—
Of darkness so tremendous, that its author,
Though to his act empower'd, nay, impell'd,
By the oracular sentence of the Gods,
Fled, for years after, o'er the face of earth,
A frenzied wanderer, a God-driven man,
And hardly yet, some say, hath found a grave—
With such a deed as *this* thou matchest mine,
Which Nature sanctions, which the innocent blood
Clamours to find fulfill'd, which good men praise,

And only bad men joy to see undone? Laias comes
O honour'd father! hide thee in thy grave
Deep as thou canst, for hence no succour comes;
Since from thy faithful subjects what revenge
Canst thou expect, when thus thy widow fails?
Alas! an adamantine strength indeed,
Past expectation, hath thy murderer built:
For this is the true strength of guilty kings,
When they corrupt the souls of those they rule.

THE CHORUS

Zeal makes him most unjust: but, in good time,
Here, as I guess, the noble Laias comes.

LAIAS

Break off, break off your talking, and depart
Each to his post, where the occasion calls;
Lest from the council-chamber presently
The King return, and find you prating here.
A time will come for greetings; but to-day
The hour for words is gone, is come for deeds.

ÆPYTUS

O princely Laias! to what purpose calls
The occasion, if our chief confederate fails?
My mother stands aloof, and blames our deed.

LAIAS

My royal sister? . . . but, without some cause,
I know, she honours not the dead so ill.

MEROPE

Brother, it seems thy sister must present,
At this first meeting after absence long,

Merope unconvinced

Not welcome, exculpation to her kin:
Yet exculpation needs it, if I seek,
A woman and a mother, to avert
Risk from my new-restored, my only son?—
Sometimes, when he was gone, I wished him back,
Risk what he might; now that I have him here,
Now that I feed mine eyes on that young face,
Hear that fresh voice, and clasp that gold-lock'd head,
I shudder, Laias, to commit my child
To Murder's dread arena, where I saw
His father and his ill-starr'd brethren fall;
I loathe for him the slippery way of blood;
I ask if bloodless means may gain his end.
In me the fever of revengeful hate,
Passion's first furious longing to imbrue
Our own right hand in the detested blood
Of enemies, and count their dying groans—
If in this feeble bosom such a fire
Did ever burn—is long by time allay'd,
And I would now have Justice strike, not me.
Besides—for from my brother and my son
I hide not even this—the reverence deep,
Remorseful, tow'rd my hostile solitude,
By Polyphontes never fail'd-in once
Through twenty years; his mournful anxious zeal
To efface in me the memory of his crime—
Though it efface not that, yet makes me wish
His death a public, not a personal act,
Treacherously plotted 'twixt my son and me;
To whom this day he came to proffer peace,
Treaty, and to this kingdom for my son
Heirship, with fair intent, as I believe:—
For that he plots thy death, account it false;

[*to* Æpytus.

Number it with the thousand rumours vain, Trust the Gods!
Figments of plots, wherewith intriguers fill
The enforced leisure of an exile's ear:—
Immersed in serious state-craft is the King,
Bent above all to pacify, to rule,
Rigidly, yet in settled calm, this realm;
Not prone, all say, to useless bloodshed now.—
So much is due to truth, even tow'rds our foe.
[*to* LAIAS.
Do I, then, give to usurpation grace,
And from his natural rights my son debar?
Not so: let him—and none shall be more prompt
Than I to help—raise his Messenian friends;
Let him fetch succours from Arcadia, gain
His Argive or his Spartan cousins' aid;
Let him do this, do aught but recommence
Murder's uncertain, secret, perilous game—
And I, when to his righteous standard down
Flies Victory wing'd, and Justice raises *then*
Her sword, will be the first to bid it fall.
If, haply, at this moment, such attempt
Promise not fair, let him a little while
Have faith, and trust the future and the Gods.
He may—for never did the Gods allow
Fast permanence to an ill-gotten throne.—
These are but woman's words;—yet, Laias, thou
Despise them not! for, brother, thou, like me,
Wert not among the feuds of warrior-chiefs,
Each sovereign for his dear-bought hour, born;
But in the pastoral Arcadia rear'd,
With Cypselus our father, where we saw
The simple patriarchal state of kings,
Where sire to son transmits the unquestion'd crown,

Laias urges action

Unhack'd, unsmirch'd, unbloodied, and hast learnt
That spotless hands unshaken sceptres hold.
Having learnt this, then, use thy knowledge now.

THE CHORUS

Which way to lean I know not: bloody strokes
Are never free from doubt, though sometimes due.

LAIAS

O Merope, the common heart of man
Agrees to deem some deeds so horrible,
That neither gratitude, nor tie of race,
Womanly pity, nor maternal fear,
Nor any pleader else, shall be indulged
To breathe a syllable to bar revenge.
All this, no doubt, thou to thyself hast urged—
Time presses, so that theme forbear I now:
Direct to thy dissuasions I reply.
Blood-founded thrones, thou say'st, are insecure;
Our father's kingdom, because pure, is safe.
True; but what cause to our Arcadia gives
Its privileged immunity from blood,
But that, since first the black and fruitful Earth
In the primeval mountain-forests bore
Pelasgus, our forefather and mankind's,
Legitimately sire to son, with us,
Bequeaths the allegiance of our shepherd-tribes,
More loyal, as our line continues more?—
How can your Heracleidan chiefs inspire
This awe which guards our earth-sprung, lineal kings?
What permanence, what stability like ours,
Whether blood flows or no, can yet invest
The broken order of your Dorian thrones,

Fix'd yesterday, and ten times changed since then?— Now is the moment
Two brothers, and their orphan nephews, strove
For the three conquer'd kingdoms of this isle:
The eldest, mightiest brother, Temenus, took
Argos: a juggle to Cresphontes gave
Messenia: to those helpless Boys, the lot
Worst of the three, the stony Sparta, fell.
August, indeed, was the foundation here!
What followed?—His most trusted kinsman slew
Cresphontes in Messenia; Temenus
Perish'd in Argos by his jealous sons;
The Spartan Brothers with their guardian strive:—
Can houses thus ill-seated—thus embroil'd—
Thus little founded in their subjects' love,
Practise the indulgent, bloodless policy
Of dynasties long-fix'd, and honour'd long?
No! Vigour and severity must chain
Popular reverence to these recent lines;
If their first-founded order be maintain'd—
Their murder'd rulers terribly avenged—
Ruthlessly their rebellious subjects crush'd.—
Since policy bids thus, what fouler death
Than thine illustrious husband's to avenge
Shall we select?—than Polyphontes, what
More daring and more grand offender find?
Justice, my sister, long demands this blow,
And Wisdom, now thou seest, demands it too:
To strike it, then, dissuade thy son no more;
For to live disobedient to these two,
Justice and Wisdom, is no life at all.

THE CHORUS

The Gods, O mistress dear! the hard-soul'd man,
Who spared not others, bid not us to spare.

Merope gives way

MEROPE

Alas! against my brother, son, and friends,
One, and a woman, how can I prevail?—
O brother! thou hast conquer'd; yet, I fear. . . .
Son! with a doubting heart thy mother yields . . .
May it turn happier than my doubts portend!

LAIAS

Meantime on thee the task of silence only
Shall be imposed; to us shall be the deed.
Now, not another word, but to our act!
Nephew! thy friends are sounded, and prove true·
Thy father's murderer, in the public place,
Performs, this noon, a solemn sacrifice:
Go with him—choose the moment—strike thy blow!
If prudence counsels thee to go unarm'd,
The sacrificer's axe will serve thy turn.
To me and the Messenians leave the rest,
With the Gods' aid—and, if they give but aid
As our just cause deserves, I do not fear.

[ÆPYTUS, LAIAS, *and* ARCAS, *go out.*

THE CHORUS

str. 1

O Son and Mother,
Whom the Gods o'ershadow,
In dangerous trial,
With certainty of favour!
As erst they shadow'd
Your race's founders
From irretrievable woe:
When the seed of Lycaon
Lay forlorn, lay outcast,
Callisto and her Boy.

What deep-grass'd meadow *ant.* 1 The tale of Callisto
At the meeting valleys—
Where clear-flowing Ladon,
Most beautiful of waters,
Receives the river
Whose trout are vocal,
The Aroanian stream—
Without home, without mother,
Hid the babe, hid Arcas,
The nursling of the dells?

But the sweet-smelling myrtle, *str.* 2
And the pink-flower'd oleander,
And the green agnus-castus,
To the West-Wind's murmur,
Rustled round his cradle;
And Maia rear'd him.
Then, a boy, he startled
In the snow-fill'd hollows
Of high Cyllene
The white mountain-birds;
Or surprised, in the glens,
The basking tortoises,
Whose striped shell founded
In the hand of Hermes
The glory of the lyre.

But his mother, Callisto, *ant.* 2
In her hiding-place of the thickets
Of the lentisk and ilex,
In her rough form, fearing
The hunter on the outlook,
Poor changeling! trembled.
Or the children, plucking

Callisto the changeling

In the thorn-choked gullies
Wild gooseberries, scared her,
The shy mountain-bear.
Or the shepherds, on slopes
With pale-spiked lavender
And crisp thyme tufted,
Came upon her, stealing
At day-break through the dew.

Once, 'mid the gorges, *str.* 3
Spray-drizzled, lonely,
Unclimb'd by man—
O'er whose cliffs the townsmen
Of crag-perch'd Nonacris
Behold in summer
The slender torrent
Of Styx come dancing,
A wind-blown thread—
By the precipices of Khelmos,
The fleet, desperate hunter,
The youthful Arcas, born of Zeus,
His fleeing mother,
Transform'd Callisto,
Unwitting follow'd—
And raised his spear.

Turning, with piteous *ant.* 3
Distressful longing,
Sad, eager eyes,
Mutely she regarded
Her well-known enemy.
Low moans half utter'd
What speech refused her;
Tears coursed, tears human,

Down those disfigured
Once human cheeks.
With unutterable foreboding
Her son, heart-stricken, eyed her.
The Gods had pity, made them Stars.
Stars now they sparkle
In the northern Heaven;
The guard Arcturus,
The guard-watch'd Bear.

Arcturus and the Bear

So, o'er thee and thy child, *epode.*
Some God, Merope, now,
In dangerous hour, stretches his hand.
So, like a star, dawns thy son,
Radiant with fortune and joy.

[POLYPHONTES *comes in.*

POLYPHONTES

O Merope, the trouble on thy face
Tells me enough thou know'st the news which all
Messenia speaks: the prince, thy son, is dead.
Not from my lips should consolation fall:
To offer that I came not; but to urge,
Even after news of this sad death, our league.
Yes, once again I come; I will not take
This morning's angry answer for thy last:
To the Messenian kingdom thou and I
Are the sole claimants left; what cause of strife
Lay in thy son is buried in his grave.
Most honourably I meant, I call the Gods
To witness, offering him return and power:
Yet, had he lived, suspicion, jealousy,
Inevitably had surged up, perhaps,
'Twixt thee and me; suspicion, that I nursed

Polyphontes renews his suit

Some ill design against him; jealousy,
That he enjoyed but part, being heir to all.
And he himself, with the impetuous heart,
Of youth, 'tis like, had never quite foregone
The thought of vengeance on me, never quite
Unclosed his itching fingers from his sword.
But thou, O Merope, though deeply wrong'd,
Though injured past forgiveness, as men deem,
Yet hast been long at school with thoughtful Time,
And from that teacher mayst have learn'd, like me,
That all may be endured, and all forgiven;
Have learn'd that we must sacrifice the thirst
Of personal vengeance to the public weal;
Have learn'd, that there are guilty deeds, which leave
The hand that does them guiltless; in a word,
That kings live for their peoples, not themselves.
This having learn'd, let us a union found
(For the last time I ask, ask earnestly)
Based on pure public welfare; let us be—
Not Merope and Polyphontes, foes
Blood-sever'd—but Messenia's King and Queen:
Let us forget ourselves for those we rule.
Speak: I go hence to offer sacrifice
To the Preserver Zeus; let me return
Thanks to him for our amity as well.

MEROPE

Oh hadst thou, Polyphontes, still but kept
The silence thou hast kept for twenty years!

POLYPHONTES

Henceforth, if what I urge displease, I may:
But fair proposal merits fair reply.

MEROPE

and is counselled to fly

And thou shalt have it! Yes, because thou *hast*
For twenty years forborne to interrupt
The solitude of her whom thou hast wrong'd—
That scanty grace shall earn thee this reply.—
First, for our union. Trust me, 'twixt us two
The brazen-footed Fury ever stalks,
Waving her hundred hands, a torch in each,
Aglow with angry fire, to keep us twain.
Now, for thyself. Thou com'st with well-cloak'd joy,
To announce the ruin of my husband's house,
To sound thy triumph in his widow's ears,
To bid her share thine unendanger'd throne:—
To this thou would'st have answer.—Take it: Fly!
Cut short thy triumph, seeming at its height;
Fling off thy crown, supposed at last secure;
Forsake this ample, proud Messenian realm:
To some small, humble, and unnoted strand,
Some rock more lonely than that Lemnian isle
Where Philoctetes pined, take ship and flee:
Some solitude more inaccessible
Than the ice-bastion'd Caucasean Mount,
Chosen a prison for Prometheus, climb:
There in unvoiced oblivion hide thy name,
And bid the sun, thine only visitant,
Divulge not to the far-off world of men
What once-famed wretch he hath seen lurking there.
There nurse a late remorse, and thank the Gods,
And thank thy bitterest foe, that, having lost
All things but life, thou lose not life as well.

POLYPHONTES

What mad bewilderment of grief is this?

Atonement

MEROPE

Thou art bewilder'd: the sane head is mine.

POLYPHONTES

I pity thee, and wish thee calmer mind.

MEROPE

Pity thyself; none needs compassion more.

POLYPHONTES

Yet, oh! could'st thou but act as reason bids!

MEROPE

And in my turn I wish the same for thee.

POLYPHONTES

All I could do to soothe thee has been tried.

MEROPE

For that, in this my warning, thou art paid.

POLYPHONTES

Know'st thou then aught, that thus thou sound'st the alarm?

MEROPE

Thy crime: that were enough to make one fear.

POLYPHONTES

My deed is of old date, and long atoned.

MEROPE

Atoned this very day, perhaps, it is.

POLYPHONTES

My final victory proves the Gods appeased. "The Gods appeased"

MEROPE

O victor, victor, trip not at the goal!

POLYPHONTES

Hatred and passionate Envy blind thine eyes.

MEROPE

O Heaven-abandon'd wretch, that envies thee!

POLYPHONTES

Thou hold'st so cheap, then, the Messenian crown?

MEROPE

I think on what the future hath in store.

POLYPHONTES

To-day I reign: the rest I leave to Fate.

MEROPE

For Fate thou wait'st not long; since, in this hour——

POLYPHONTES

What? for so far she hath not proved my foe—

MEROPE

Fate seals my lips, and drags to ruin thee.

POLYPHONTES

Enough! enough! I will no longer hear
The ill-boding note which frantic Envy sounds
To affright a fortune which the Gods secure.

Poly-phontes goes to sacrifice

Once more my friendship thou rejectest: well!
More for this land's sake grieve I, than mine own.
I chafe not with thee, that thy hate endures,
Nor bend myself too low, to make it yield.
What I have done is done; by my own deed,
Neither exulting nor ashamed, I stand.
Why should this heart of mine set mighty store
By the construction and report of men?
Not men's good-word hath made me what I am.
Alone I master'd power; and alone,
Since so thou wilt, I will maintain it still.

[POLYPHONTES *goes out.*

THE CHORUS

Did I then waver *str.* 1
(O woman's judgment!)
Misled by seeming
Success of crime?
And ask, if sometimes
The Gods, perhaps, allow'd you,
O lawless daring of the strong,
O self-will recklessly indulged?

Not time, not lightning, *ant.* 1
Not rain, not thunder,
Efface the endless
Decrees of Heaven.
Make Justice alter,
Revoke, assuage her sentence,
Which dooms dread ends to dreadful deeds,
And violent deaths to violent men.

But the signal example *str.* 2
Of invariableness of justice
Our glorious founder

Hercules gave us,
Son loved of Zeus his father: for he err'd. 1830 Error and expiation of Hercules

And the strand of Eubœa, *ant.* 2
And the promontory of Cenæum,
His painful, solemn
Punishment witness'd,
Beheld his expiation: for he died.

O villages of Œta *str.* 3
With hedges of the wild rose!
O pastures of the mountain,
Of short grass, beaded with dew,
Between the pine-woods and the cliffs! 1840
O cliffs, left by the eagles,
On that morn, when the smoke-cloud
From the oak-built, fiercely-burning pyre,
Up the precipices of Trachis,
Drove them screaming from their eyries!
A willing, a willing sacrifice on that day
Ye witness'd, ye mountain lawns,
When the shirt-wrapt, poison-blister'd Hero
Ascended, with undaunted heart,
Living, his own funeral-pile, 1850
And stood, shouting for a fiery torch;
And the kind, chance-arrived Wanderer,
The inheritor of the bow,
Coming swiftly through the sad Trachinians,
Put the torch to the pile:
That the flame tower'd on high to the Heaven;
Bearing with it, to Olympus,
To the side of Hebe,
To immortal delight,
The labour-released Hero. 1860

The new expiation

O heritage of Neleus, *ant.* 3
Ill-kept by his infirm heirs!
O kingdom of Messenê,
Of rich soil, chosen by craft,
Possess'd in hatred, lost in blood!
O town, high Stenyclaros,
With new walls, which the victors
From the four-town'd, mountain-shadow'd Doris,
For their Hercules-issued princes
Built in strength against the vanquish'd!
Another, another sacrifice on this day
Ye witness, ye new-built towers!
When the white-robed, garland-crowned Monarch
Approaches, with undoubting heart,
Living, his own sacrifice-block,
And stands, shouting for a slaughterous axe;
And the stern, Destiny-brought Stranger,
The inheritor of the realm,
Coming swiftly through the jocund Dorians,
Drives the axe to its goal:
That the blood rushes in streams to the dust;
Bearing with it, to Erinnys,
To the Gods of Hades,
To the dead unavenged,
The fiercely-required Victim.

Knowing he did it, unknowing pays for it. *epode*
Unknowing, unknowing,
Thinking atoned-for
Deeds unatonable,
Thinking appeas'd
Gods unappeasable,
Lo, the Ill-fated One,
Standing for harbour,

Right at the harbour-mouth,
Strikes, with all sail set,
Full on the sharp-pointed
Needle of ruin! [*A* MESSENGER *comes in.*

"Polyphontes is no more"

MESSENGER

O honour'd Queen, O faithful followers
Of your dead master's line, I bring you news
To make the gates of this long-mournful house
Leap, and fly open of themselves for joy!
[*noise and shouting heard.*
Hark how the shouting crowds tramp hitherward
With glad acclaim! Ere they forestall my news,
Accept it:—Polyphontes is no more.

MEROPE

Is my son safe? that question bounds my care.

MESSENGER

He is, and by the people hail'd for king.

MEROPE

The rest to me is little: yet, since that
Must from some mouth be heard, relate it thou.

MESSENGER

Not little, if thou saw'st what love, what zeal,
At thy dead husband's name the people show.
For when this morning in the public square
I took my stand, and saw the unarm'd crowds
Of citizens in holiday attire,
Women and children intermix'd; and then,
Group'd around Zeus's altar, all in arms,
Serried and grim, the ring of Dorian lords—
I trembled for our prince and his attempt.
Silence and expectation held us all:

The slaying of Polyphontes and

Till presently the King came forth, in robe
Of sacrifice, his guards clearing the way
Before him—at his side, the prince, thy son,
Unarm'd and travel-soil'd, just as he was:
With him conferring the King slowly reach'd
The altar in the middle of the square,
Where, by the sacrificing minister,
The flower-dress'd victim stood, a milk-white bull,
Swaying from side to side his massy head
With short impatient lowings: there he stopp'd,
And seem'd to muse a while, then raised his eyes
To Heaven, and laid his hand upon the steer,
And cried—*O Zeus, let what blood-guiltiness*
Yet stains our land be by this blood wash'd out,
And grant henceforth to the Messenians peace!
That moment, while with upturn'd eyes he pray'd,
The prince snatched from the sacrificer's hand
The axe, and on the forehead of the King,
Where twines the chaplet, dealt a mighty blow
Which fell'd him to the earth, and o'er him stood,
And shouted—*Since by thee defilement came,*
What blood so meet as thine to wash it out?
What hand to strike thee meet as mine, the hand
Of Æpytus, thy murder'd master's son?—
But, gazing at him from the ground, the King . . .
Is it, then, thou? he murmur'd; and with that,
He bow'd his head, and deeply groan'd, and died.
Till then we all seem'd stone: but then a cry
Broke from the Dorian lords: forward they rush'd
To circle the prince round: when suddenly
Laias in arms sprang to his nephew's side,
Crying—*O ye Messenians, will ye leave*
The son to perish as ye left the sire?
And from that moment I saw nothing clear:

For from all sides a deluge, as it seem'd, of the Dorian nobles
Burst o'er the altar and the Dorian lords,
Of holiday-clad citizens transform'd
To armèd warriors: I heard vengeful cries;
I heard the clash of weapons; then I saw
The Dorians lying dead, thy son hail'd king.
And, truly, one who sees, what seem'd so strong,
The power of this tyrant and his lords,
Melt like a passing smoke, a nightly dream,
At one bold word, one enterprising blow—
Might ask, why we endured their yoke so long:
But that we know how every perilous feat
Of daring, easy as it seems when done,
Is easy at no moment but the right.

THE CHORUS

Thou speakest well; but here, to give our eyes
Authentic proof of what thou tell'st our ears,
The conquerors, with the King's dead body, come.

[ÆPYTUS, LAIAS, *and* ARCAS *come in with the dead body of* POLYPHONTES, *followed by a crowd of the* MESSENIANS.

LAIAS

Sister, from this day forth thou art no more
The widow of a husband unavenged,
The anxious mother of an exiled son.
Thine enemy is slain, thy son is king!
Rejoice with us! and trust me, he who wish'd
Welfare to the Messenian state, and calm,
Could find no way to found them sure as this.

ÆPYTUS

Mother, all these approve me: but if thou
Approve not too, I have but half my joy.

MEROPE

Poly-phontes a riddle

O Æpytus, my son, behold, behold
This iron man, my enemy and thine,
This politic sovereign, lying at our feet,
With blood-bespatter'd robes, and chaplet shorn!
Inscrutable as ever, see, it keeps
Its sombre aspect of majestic care,
Of solitary thought, unshared resolve,
Even in death, that countenance austere.
So look'd he, when to Stenyclaros first,
A new-made wife, I from Arcadia came,
And found him at my husband's side, his friend,
His kinsman, his right hand in peace and war;
Unsparing in his service of his toil,
His blood; to me, for I confess it, kind:
So look'd he in that dreadful day of death:
So, when he pleaded for our league but now.
What meantest thou, O Polyphontes, what
Desired'st thou, what truly spurr'd thee on?
Was policy of state, the ascendency
Of the Heracleidan conquerors, as thou said'st,
Indeed thy lifelong passion and sole aim?
Or did'st thou but, as cautious schemers use,
Cloak thine ambition with these specious words?
I know not; just, in either case, the stroke
Which laid thee low, for blood requireth blood:
But yet, not knowing this, I triumph not
Over thy corpse, triumph not, neither mourn;
For I find worth in thee, and badness too.
What mood of spirit, therefore, shall we call
The true one of a man—what way of life
His fix'd condition and perpetual walk?
None, since a twofold colour reigns in all.
But thou, my son, study to make prevail

One colour in thy life, the hue of truth : The task of Æpytus
That Justice, that sage Order, not alone
Natural Vengeance, may maintain thine act,
And make it stand indeed the will of Heaven.
Thy father's passion was this people's ease,
This people's anarchy, thy foe's pretence ;
As the chiefs rule, indeed, the people are :
Unhappy people, where the chiefs themselves
Are, like the mob, vicious and ignorant ! 2010
So rule, that even thine enemies may fail
To find in thee a fault whereon to found,
Of tyrannous harshness, or remissness weak :
So rule, that as thy father thou be loved ;
So rule, that as thy foe thou be obey'd.
Take these, my son, over thine enemy's corpse
Thy mother's prayers : and this prayer last of all,
That even in thy victory thou show,
Mortal, the moderation of a man.

ÆPYTUS

O mother, my best diligence shall be 2020
In all by thy experience to be ruled
Where my own youth falls short. But, Laias, now,
First work after such victory, let us go
To render to my true Messenians thanks,
To the Gods grateful sacrifice ; and then,
Assume the ensigns of my father's power.

THE CHORUS

Son of Cresphontes, past what perils
Com'st thou, guided safe, to thy home !
What things daring ! what enduring !
And all this by the will of the Gods. 2030

THE END

EMPEDOCLES ON ETNA

A DRAMATIC POEM

PERSONS

EMPEDOCLES.
PAUSANIAS, *a Physician.*
CALLICLES, *a young Harp-player.*

The Scene of the Poem is on Mount Etna; at first in the forest region, afterwards on the summit of the mountain.

Morning in the woods of Etna

FIRST ACT: FIRST SCENE

A Pass in the forest region of Etna. Morning.
CALLICLES, *alone, resting on a rock by the path.*

CALLICLES

THE mules, I think, will not be here this hour.
They feel the cool wet turf under their feet
By the stream side, after the dusty lanes
In which they have toil'd all night from Catana,
And scarcely will they budge a yard. O Pan!
How gracious is the mountain at this hour!
A thousand times have I been here alone
Or with the revellers from the mountain towns,
But never on so fair a morn:—the sun
Is shining on the brilliant mountain crests,
And on the highest pines: but further down
Here in the valley is in shade; the sward
Is dark, and on the stream the mist still hangs:

Harp-player and physician

One sees one's foot-prints crush'd in the wet grass,
One's breath curls in the air; and on these pines
That climb from the stream's edge, the long grey tufts,
Which the goats love, are jewell'd thick with dew.
Here will I stay till the slow litter comes.
I have my harp too—that is well.—Apollo!
What mortal could be sick or sorry here?
I know not in what mind Empedocles,
Whose mules I follow'd, may be coming up,
But if, as most men say, he is half mad
With exile, and with brooding on his wrongs,
Pausanias, his sage friend, who mounts with him,
Could scarce have lighted on a lovelier cure.
The mules must be below, far down: I hear
Their tinkling bells, mix'd with the song of birds,
Rise faintly to me—now it stops!—Who 's here?
Pausanias! and on foot? alone?

PAUSANIAS

And thou, then?
I left thee supping with Pisianax,
With thy head full of wine, and thy hair crown'd,
Touching thy harp as the whim came on thee,
And prais'd and spoil'd by master and by guests
Almost as much as the new dancing girl.
Why hast thou follow'd us?

CALLICLES

The night was hot,
And the feast past its prime: so we slipp'd out,
Some of us, to the portico to breathe:
Pisianax, thou know'st, drinks late: and then,
As I was lifting my soil'd garland off,

Callicles would help Empedocles

I saw the mules and litter in the court,
And in the litter sate Empedocles;
Thou, too, wert with him. Straightway I sped home;
I saddled my white mule, and all night long
Through the cool lovely country follow'd you,
Pass'd you a little since as morning dawn'd,
And have this hour sate by the torrent here,
Till the slow mules should climb in sight again.
And now?

PAUSANIAS

And now, back to the town with speed.
Crouch in the wood first, till the mules have pass'd:
They do but halt, they will be here anon.
Thou must be viewless to Empedocles;
Save mine, he must not meet a human eye.
One of his moods is on him that thou know'st:
I think, thou would'st not vex him.

CALLICLES

No—and yet
I would fain stay and help thee tend him: once
He knew me well, and would oft notice me.
And still, I know not how, he draws me to him,
And I could watch him with his proud sad face,
His flowing locks and gold-encircled brow
And kingly gait, for ever: such a spell
In his severe looks, such a majesty
As drew of old the people after him,
In Agrigentum and Olympia,
When his star reign'd, before his banishment,
Is potent still on me in his decline.
But oh, Pausanias, he is changed of late:
There is a settled trouble in his air

Admits no momentary brightening now;
And when he comes among his friends at feasts,
'Tis as an orphan among prosperous boys.
Thou know'st of old he loved this harp of mine,
When first he sojourn'd with Pisianax:
He is now always moody, and I fear him;
But I would serve him, soothe him, if I could,
Dar'd one but try.

Callicles shall harp unseen

PAUSANIAS

Thou wert a kind child ever.
He loves thee, but he must not see thee now.
Thou hast indeed a rare touch on thy harp,
He loves that in thee too: there was a time
(But that is pass'd) he would have paid thy strain
With music to have drawn the stars from heaven.
He has his harp and laurel with him still,
But he has laid the use of music by,
And all which might relax his settled gloom.
Yet thou mayst try thy playing if thou wilt,
But thou must keep unseen: follow us on,
But at a distance; in these solitudes,
In this clear mountain air, a voice will rise,
Though from afar, distinctly: it may soothe him.
Play when we halt, and when the evening comes,
And I must leave him, (for his pleasure is
To be left musing these soft nights alone
In the high unfrequented mountain spots,)
Then watch him, for he ranges swift and far,
Sometimes to Etna's top, and to the cone;
But hide thee in the rocks a great way down,
And try thy noblest strains, my Callicles,
With the sweet night to help thy harmony.
Thou wilt earn my thanks sure, and perhaps his.

Panthea's trance

CALLICLES

More than a day and night, Pausanias,
Of this fair summer weather, on these hills,
Would I bestow to help Empedocles.
That needs no thanks: one is far better here
Than in the broiling city in these heats.
But tell me, how hast thou persuaded him
In this his present fierce, man-hating mood
To bring thee out with him alone on Etna?

PAUSANIAS.

Thou hast heard all men speaking of Panthea,
The woman who at Agrigentum lay
Thirty long days in a cold trance of death,
And whom Empedocles call'd back to life.
Thou art too young to note it, but his power
Swells with the swelling evil of this time,
And holds men mute to see where it will rise.
He could stay swift diseases in old days,
Chain madmen by the music of his lyre,
Cleanse to sweet airs the breath of poisonous streams,
And in the mountain chinks inter the winds.
This he could do of old, but now, since all
Clouds and grows daily worse in Sicily,
Since broils tear us in twain, since this new swarm
Of Sophists has got empire in our schools,
Where he was paramount, since he is banish'd,
And lives a lonely man in triple gloom,
He grasps the very reins of life and death.
I asked him of Panthea yesterday,
When we were gathered with Pisianax,
And he made answer, I should come at night
On Etna here, and be alone with him.

And he would tell me, as his old, tried friend,
Who still was faithful, what might profit me ; Pausanias superstitious
That is, the secret of this miracle.

CALLICLES.

Bah! Thou a doctor? Thou art superstitious.
Simple Pausanias, 'twas no miracle.
Panthea, for I know her kinsmen well,
Was subject to these trances from a girl.
Empedocles would say so, did he deign :
But he still lets the people, whom he scorns,
Gape and cry wizard at him, if they list.
But thou, thou art no company for him,
Thou art as cross, as sour'd as himself.
Thou hast some wrong from thine own citizens,
And then thy friend is banished, and on that
Straightway thou fallest to arraign the times,
As if the sky was impious not to fall.
The Sophists are no enemies of his ;
I hear, Gorgias, their chief, speaks nobly of him,
As of his gifted master and once friend.
He is too scornful, too high-wrought, too bitter.
'Tis not the times, 'tis not the Sophists vex him :
There is some root of suffering in himself,
Some secret and unfollow'd vein of woe,
Which makes the times look black and sad to him.
Pester him not in this his sombre mood
With questionings about an idle tale,
But lead him through the lovely mountain paths,
And keep his mind from preying on itself,
And talk to him of things at hand, and common,
Not miracles : thou art a learned man,
But credulous of fables as a girl.

In the highest glen

PAUSANIAS

And thou, a boy whose tongue outruns his knowledge,
And on whose lightness blame is thrown away.
Enough of this: I see the litter wind
Up by the torrent side, under the pines.
I must rejoin Empedocles. Do thou
Crouch in the brush-wood till the mules have passed,
Then play thy kind part well. Farewell till night.

Scene Second

Noon. A Glen on the highest skirts of the woody regions of Etna.

EMPEDOCLES. PAUSANIAS

PAUSANIAS

The noon is hot: when we have crossed the stream
We shall have left the woody tract, and come
Upon the open shoulder of the hill.
See how the giant spires of yellow bloom
Of the sun-loving gentian, in the heat,
Are shining on those naked slopes like flame.
Let us rest here: and now, Empedocles,
Panthea's history.

[*A harp note below is heard.*

EMPEDOCLES

Hark! what sound was that
Rose from below? If it were possible,
And we were not so far from human haunt,
I should have said that some one touched a harp.
Hark! there again!

PAUSANIAS

Philosopher and Physician

'Tis the boy Callicles,
The sweetest harp player in Catana.
He is for ever coming on these hills,
In summer, to all country festivals,
With a gay revelling band: he breaks from them
Sometimes, and wanders far among the glens.
But heed him not, he will not mount to us;
I spoke with him this morning. Once more, therefore,
Instruct me of Panthea's story, Master,
As I have prayed thee.

EMPEDOCLES

That? and to what end?

PAUSANIAS

It is enough that all men speak of it.
But I will also say, that, when the Gods
Visit us as they do with sign and plague,
To know those spells of time that stay their hand
Were to live freed from terror.

EMPEDOCLES

Spells? Mistrust them.
Mind is the spell which governs earth and heaven.
Man has a mind with which to plan his safety.
Know that, and help thyself.

PAUSANIAS

But thy own words?
"The wit and counsel of man was never clear,
Troubles confuse the little wit he has."

The harp once more!

Mind is a light which the Gods mock us with,
To lead those false who trust it.

[*The harp sounds again.*

EMPEDOCLES

Hist! once more!
Listen, Pausanias!—Ay, 'tis Callicles:
I know those notes among a thousand. Hark!

CALLICLES *sings unseen, from below.*

The track winds down to the clear stream,
To cross the sparkling shallows: there
The cattle love to gather, on their way
To the high mountain pastures, and to stay,
Till the rough cow-herds drive them past,
Knee-deep in the cool ford: for 'tis the last
Of all the woody, high, well-water'd dells
Of Etna; and the beam
Of noon is broken there by chestnut boughs
Down its steep verdant sides: the air
Is freshen'd by the leaping stream, which throws
Eternal showers of spray on the moss'd roots
Of trees, and veins of turf, and long dark shoots
Of ivy-plants, and fragrant hanging bells
Of hyacinths, and on late anemones,
That muffle its wet banks: but glade,
And stream, and sward, and chestnut trees,
End here: Etna beyond, in the broad glare
Of the hot noon, without a shade,
Slope behind slope, up to the peak, lies bare;
The peak, round which the white clouds play.

In such a glen, on such a day,
On Pelion, on the grassy ground,

Chiron, the aged Centaur, lay;
The young Achilles standing by.
The Centaur taught him to explore
The mountains: where the glens are dry,
And the tired Centaurs come to rest,
And where the soaking springs abound,
And the straight ashes grow for spears,
And where the hill-goats come to feed,
And the sea-eagles build their nest.
He show'd him Phthia far away,
And said—O Boy, I taught this lore
To Peleus, in long distant years.—
He told him of the Gods, the stars,
The tides:—and then of mortal wars,
And of the life that Heroes lead
Before they reach the Elysian place
And rest in the immortal mead:
And all the wisdom of his race.

Of Chiron and Achilles

[*The music below ceases, and* EMPEDOCLES *speaks, accompanying himself in a solemn manner on his harp.*

The howling void to span
A cord the Gods first slung,
And then the Soul of Man
There, like a mirror, hung,
And bade the winds through space impel the gusty toy.

Hither and thither spins
The wind-borne mirroring Soul:
A thousand glimpses wins,
And never sees a whole:
Looks once, and drives elsewhere, and leaves its last employ.

The Philosopher talks and harps

The Gods laugh in their sleeve
To watch man doubt and fear,
Who knows not what to believe
Where he sees nothing clear,
And dares stamp nothing false where he finds nothing sure.

Is this, Pausanias, so?
And can our souls not strive,
But with the winds must go
And hurry where they drive?
Is Fate indeed so strong, man's strength indeed so poor?

I will not judge: that man,
Howbeit, I judge as lost,
Whose mind allows a plan
Which would degrade it most:
And he treats doubt the best who tries to see least ill.

Be not, then, Fear's blind slave.
Thou art my friend; to thee,
All knowledge that I have,
All skill I wield, are free.
Ask not the latest news of the last miracle;

Ask not what days and nights
In trance Panthea lay,
But ask how thou such sights
Mayst see without dismay.
Ask what most helps when known, thou son of Anchitus.

Be Man—not Saint or Sophist!

What? hate, and awe, and shame
Fill thee to see our day;
Thou feelest thy Soul's frame
Shaken and in dismay:
What? life and time go hard with thee too, as with us;

Thy citizens, 'tis said,
Envy thee and oppress,
Thy goodness no men aid,
All strive to make it less:
Tyranny, pride, and lust fill Sicily's abodes:

Heaven is with earth at strife,
Signs make thy soul afraid,
The dead return to life,
Rivers are dried, winds stay'd:
Scarce can one think in calm, so threatening are the Gods:

And we feel, day and night,
The burden of ourselves?—
Well, then, the wiser wight
In his own bosom delves,
And asks what ails him so, and gets what cure he can.

The Sophist sneers—Fool, take
Thy pleasure, right or wrong.—
The pious wail—Forsake
A world these Sophists throng.—
Be neither Saint nor Sophist led, but be a man.

These hundred doctors try
To preach thee to their school.

Man has no rights

We have the truth, they cry.
And yet their oracle,
Trumpet it as they will, is but the same as thine.

Once read thy own breast right,
And thou hast done with fears.
Man gets no other light,
Search he a thousand years.
Sink in thyself: there ask what ails thee, at that shrine.

What makes thee struggle and rave?
Why are men ill at ease?
'Tis that the lot they have
Fails their own will to please.
For man would make no murmuring, were his will obeyed.

And why is it that still
Man with his lot thus fights?
'Tis that he makes this *will*
The measure of his *rights*,
And believes Nature outraged if his will's gainsaid.

Couldst thou, Pausanias, learn
How deep a fault is this;
Couldst thou but once discern
Thou hast no *right* to bliss,
No title from the Gods to welfare and repose;

Then, thou wouldst look less mazed
Whene'er from bliss debarr'd,
Nor think the Gods were crazed
When thy own lot went hard.
But we are all the same—the fools of our own woes.

Man's aim is bliss

For, from the first faint morn
Of life, the thirst for bliss
Deep in Man's heart is born,
And, sceptic as he is,
He fails not to judge clear if this is quench'd or no.

Nor is that thirst to blame.
Man errs not that he deems
His welfare his true aim.
He errs because he dreams
The world does but exist that welfare to bestow.

We mortals are no kings
For each of whom to sway
A new-made world up-springs
Meant merely for his play.
No, we are strangers here: the world is from of old.

In vain our pent wills fret
And would the world subdue,
Limits we did not set
Condition all we do.
Born into life we are, and life must be our mould.

Born into life: who lists
May what is false maintain,
And for himself make mists
Through which to see less plain:
The world is what it is, for all our dust and din.

Born into life: in vain,
Opinions, those or these,
Unaltered to retain
The obstinate mind decrees.
Experience, like a sea, soaks all-effacing in

Man baffles himself

Born into life: 'tis we,
And not the world, are new.
Our cry for bliss, our plea,
Others have urged it too.
Our wants have all been felt, our errors made before.

No eye could be too sound
To observe a world so vast:
No patience too profound
To sort what 's here amassed.
How man may here best live no care too great to explore.

But we,—as some rude guest
Would change, where'er he roam,
The manners there profess'd
To those he brings from home;—
We mark not the world's ways, but would have *it* learn *ours*.

The world proclaims the terms
On which man wins content.
Reason its voice confirms.
We spurn them: and invent
False weakness in the world, and in ourselves false powers.

Riches we wish to get,
Yet remain spendthrifts still;
We would have health, and yet
Still use our bodies ill:
Bafflers of our own prayers from youth to life's last scenes.

The pessimism of Empedocles

We would have inward peace,
Yet will not look within:
We would have misery cease,
Yet will not cease from sin:
We want all pleasant ends, but will use no harsh means;

We do not what we ought;
What we ought not, we do;
And lean upon the thought
That Chance will bring us through.
But our own acts, for good or ill, are mightier powers.

Yet, even when man forsakes
All sin,—is just, is pure;
Abandons all that makes
His welfare insecure;
Other existences there are, which clash with ours.

Like us the lightning fires
Love to have scope and play.
The stream, like us, desires
An unimpeded way.
Like us, the Libyan wind delights to roam at large.

Streams will not curb their pride
The just man not to entomb,
Nor lightnings go aside
To leave his virtues room,
Nor is the wind less rough that blows a good man's barge.

Darker and darker

Nature, with equal mind,
Sees all her sons at play,
Sees man control the wind,
The wind sweep man away;
Allows the proudly-riding and the foundered bark.

And, lastly, though of ours
No weakness spoil our lot;
Through the non-human powers
Of Nature harm us not;
The ill-deeds of other men make often *our* life dark.

What were the wise man's plan?
Through this sharp, toil-set life
To fight as best he can,
And win what's won by strife;
But we an easier way to cheat our pains have found.

Scratched by a fall, with moans,
As children of weak age
Lend life to the dumb stones
Whereon to vent their rage,
And bend their little fists, and rate the senseless ground;

So, loath to suffer mute,
We, peopling the void air,
Make Gods to whom to impute
The ills we ought to bear;
With God and Fate to rail at, suffering easily.

Yet grant—as sense long miss'd
Things that are now perceived,

Man's vain dreams

And much may still exist
Which is not yet believed—
Grant that the world were full of Gods we cannot see—

All things the world that fill
Of but one stuff are spun,
That we who rail are still
With what we rail at one:
One with the o'er-labour'd Power that through the breadth and length

Of Earth, and Air, and Sea,
In men, and plants, and stones,
Has toil perpetually,
And struggles, pants, and moans;
Fain would do all things well, but sometimes fails in strength.

And, punctually exact,
This universal God
Alike to any act
Proceeds at any nod,
And patiently declaims the cursings of himself.

This is not what Man hates,
Yet he can curse but this.
Harsh Gods and hostile Fates
Are dreams: this only *is*:
Is everywhere: sustains the wise, the foolish elf.

Nor only, in the intent
To attach blame elsewhere,
Do we at will invent
Stern Powers who make their care,
To embitter human life, malignant Deities;

All is vanity

But, next, we would reverse
The scheme ourselves have spun,
And what we made to curse
We now would lean upon,
And feign kind Gods who perfect what man vainly tries.

Look, the world tempts our eye,
And we would know it all.
We map the starry sky,
We mind this earthen ball,
We measure the sea-tides, we number the sea-sands:

We scrutinize the dates
Of long-past human things,
The bounds of effaced states,
The lines of deceas'd kings:
We search out dead men's words, and works of dead men's hands:

We shut our eyes, and muse
How our own minds are made;
What springs of thought they use,
How righten'd, how betray'd;
And spend our wit to name what most employ unnamed:

But still, as we proceed,
The mass swells more and more
Of volumes yet to read,
Of secrets yet to explore.
Our hair grows grey, our eyes are dimmed, our heat is tamed—

Man's follies

We rest our faculties,
And thus address the Gods:—
"True Science if there is,
It stays in your abodes.
Man's measures cannot span the illimitable All:

"You only can take in
The world's immense design.
Our desperate search was sin,
Which henceforth we resign:
Sure only that *your* mind sees all things which befall."

Fools! that in man's brief term
He cannot all things view,
Affords no ground to affirm
That there are Gods who do:
Nor does being weary prove that he has where to rest.

Again: our youthful blood
Claims rapture as its right.
The world, a rolling flood
Of newness and delight,
Draws in the enamour'd gazer to its shining breast;

Pleasure to our hot grasp
Gives flowers after flowers;
With passionate warmth we clasp
Hand after hand in ours:
Nor do we soon perceive how fast our youth is spent.

At once our eyes grow clear:
We see in blank dismay

Man's lack of reason

Year posting after year,
Sense after sense decay;
Our shivering heart is mined by secret discontent:

Yet still, in spite of truth,
In spite of hopes entombed
That longing of our youth
Burns ever unconsumed:
Still hungrier for delight, as delights grow more rare.

We pause; we hush our heart,
And then address the Gods:—
"The world hath fail'd to impart
The joy our youth forbodes,
Fail'd to fill up the void which in our breasts we bear.

"Changeful till now, we still
Looked on to something new:
Let us, with changeless will,
Henceforth look on to you;
To find with you the joy we in vain *here* require."

Fools! that so often here
Happiness mock'd our prayer,
I think, might make us fear
A like event elsewhere:
Make us not fly to dreams, but moderate desire.

And yet, for those who know
Themselves, who wisely take
Their way through life, and bow
To what they cannot break,—
Why should I say that life need yield but *moderate* bliss?

Shall we, with tempers spoil'd, His warped judgment
Health sapped by living ill,
And judgments all embroiled
By sadness and self-will,
Shall we judge what for man is not high bliss or is?

Is it so small a thing
To have enjoy'd the sun,
To have lived light in the spring,
To have loved, to have thought, to have done;
To have advanced true friends, and beat down baffling foes;

That we must feign a bliss
Of doubtful future date,
And while we dream on this
Lose all our present state,
And relegate to worlds yet distant our repose?

Not much, I know, you prize
What pleasures may be had,
Who look on life with eyes
Estranged, like mine, and sad:
And yet the village churl feels the truth more than you.

Who's loth to leave this life
Which to him little yields:
His hard-task'd sunburnt wife,
His often-laboured fields;
The boors with whom he talk'd, the country spots he knew.

Callicles sings again

But thou, because thou hear'st
Men scoff at Heaven and Fate;
Because the Gods thou fear'st
Fail to make blest thy state,
Tremblest, and wilt not dare to trust the joys there are.

I say, Fear not! life still
Leaves human effort scope.
But, since life teems with ill,
Nurse no extravagant hope.
Because thou must not dream, thou need'st not then despair.

[*A long pause. At the end of it the notes of a harp below are again heard, and* CALLICLES *sings:—*

Far, far from here,
The Adriatic breaks in a warm bay
Among the green Illyrian hills; and there
The sunshine in the happy glens is fair,
And by the sea, and in the brakes.
The grass is cool, the sea-side air
Buoyant and fresh, the mountain flowers
More virginal and sweet than ours.
And there, they say, two bright and aged snakes,
Who once were Cadmus and Harmonia,
Bask in the glens or on the warm sea-shore,
In breathless quiet, after all their ills.
Nor do they see their country, nor the place
Where the Sphinx liv'd among the frowning hills,
Nor the unhappy palace of their race,
Nor Thebes, nor the Ismenus, any more.

There those two live, far in the Illyrian brakes.
They had staid long enough to see,

Of Cadmus and Harmonia

In Thebes, the billow of calamity
Over their own dear children roll'd,
Curse upon curse, pang upon pang,
For years, they sitting helpless in their home,
A grey old man and woman: yet of old
The Gods had to their marriage come,
And at the banquet all the Muses sang.

Therefore they did not end their days
In sight of blood; but were rapt, far away.
To where the west wind plays,
And murmurs of the Adriatic come
To those untrodden mountain lawns: and there
Placed safely in changed forms, the Pair
Wholly forget their first sad life, and home,
And all that Theban woe, and stray
For ever through the glens, placid and dumb.

EMPEDOCLES

That was my harp-player again—where is he?
Down by the stream?

PAUSANIAS

Yes, Master, in the wood.

EMPEDOCLES

He ever loved the Theban story well.
But the day wears. Go now, Pausanias,
For I must be alone. Leave me one mule;
Take down with thee the rest to Catana.
And for young Callicles, thank him from me;
Tell him I never fail'd to love his lyre:
But he must follow me no more to-night.

Empedocles ascends Etna

PAUSANIAS

Thou wilt return to-morrow to the city? 460

EMPEDOCLES

Either to-morrow or some other day,
In the sure revolutions of the world,
Good friend, I shall revisit Catana.
I have seen many cities in my time
Till my eyes ache with the long spectacle,
And I shall doubtless see them all again:
Thou know'st me for a wanderer from of old.
Meanwhile, stay me not now. Farewell, Pausanias!
[*He departs on his way up the mountain.*

PAUSANIAS (*alone*)

I dare not urge him further; he must go:
But he is strangely wrought;—I will speed back 470
And bring Pisianax to him from the city:
His counsel could once soothe him. But, Apollo!
How his brow lighten'd as the music rose!
Callicles must wait here, and play to him:
I saw him through the chestnuts far below,
Just since, down at the stream.—Ho! Callicles!
[*He descends, calling*

Act Second

Evening. The Summit of Etna.

EMPEDOCLES

Alone—
On this charr'd, blacken'd, melancholy waste,
Crown'd by the awful peak, Etna's great mouth,

Round which the sullen vapour rolls—alone. Lonely and miserable
Pausanias is far hence, and that is well,
For I must henceforth speak no more with man.
He has his lesson too, and that debt's paid:
And the good, learnéd, friendly, quiet man,
May bravelier front his life, and in himself
Find henceforth energy and heart:—but I,
The weary man, the banish'd citizen,
Whose banishment is not his greatest ill,
Whose weariness no energy can reach,
And for whose hurt courage is not the cure—
What should I do with life and living more?

No, thou art come too late, Empedocles!
And the world hath the day, and must break thee,
Not thou the world. With men thou canst not live;
Their thoughts, their ways, their wishes, are not thine:
And being lonely thou art miserable,
For something has impair'd thy spirit's strength,
And dried its self-sufficing fount of joy.
Thou canst not live with men nor with thyself—
Oh sage! oh sage!—Take then the one way left,
And turn thee to the Elements, thy friends,
Thy well-tried friends, thy willing ministers,
And say,—Ye servants, hear Empedocles,
Who asks this final service at your hands.
Before the Sophist brood hath overlaid
The last spark of man's consciousness with words—
Ere quite the being of man, ere quite the world
Be disarrayed of their divinity—
Before the soul lose all her solemn joys,

Callicles sings to Typho

And awe be dead, and hope impossible,
And the soul's deep eternal night come on,
Receive me, hide me, quench me, take me home!

[*He advances to the edge of the crater. Smoke and fire break forth with a loud noise, and* Callicles *is heard below, singing*:—

The lyre's voice is lovely everywhere.
In the courts of Gods, in the city of men,
And in the lonely rock-strewn mountain glen,
In the still mountain air.

Only to Typho it sounds hatefully,
Only to Typho, the rebel o'erthrown,
Through whose heart Etna drives her roots of stone,
To imbed them in the sea.

Wherefore dost thou groan so loud?
Wherefore do thy nostrils flash,
Through the dark night, suddenly,
Typho, such red jets of flame?
Is thy tortured heart still proud?
Is thy fire-scath'd arm still rash?
Still alert thy stone-crush'd frame?
Does thy fierce soul still deplore
Thy ancient rout in the Cilician hills,
And that curst treachery on the Mount of Gore?
Do thy bloodshot eyes still see
The fight that crown'd thy ills,
Thy last defeat in this Sicilian sea?
Hast thou sworn, in thy sad lair,
Where erst the strong sea-currents suck'd thee down,
Never to cease to writhe, and try to sleep,
Letting the sea-stream wander through thy hair?

That thy groans, like thunder deep, The Thunderer
Begin to roll, and almost drown
The sweet notes, whose lulling spell
Gods and the race of mortals love so well,
When through thy caves thou hearest music swell?

But an awful pleasure bland
Spreading o'er the Thunderer's face,
When the sound climbs near his seat,
The Olympian Council sees;
As he lets his lax right hand,
Which the lightnings doth embrace,
Sink upon his mighty knees.
And the Eagle, at the beck
Of the appeasing gracious harmony,
Droops all his sheeny, brown, deep-feather'd neck,
Nestling nearer to Jove's feet:
While o'er his sovereign eye
The curtains of the blue films slowly meet.
And the white Olympus peaks
Rosily brighten, and the sooth'd Gods smile
At one another from their golden chairs;
And no one round the charmed circle speaks.
Only the lov'd Hebe bears
The cup about, whose draughts beguile
Pain and care, with a dark store
Of fresh-pull'd violets wreathed and nodding o'er;
And her flush'd feet glow on the marble floor.

EMPEDOCLES

He fables, yet speaks truth.
The brave impetuous hand yields everywhere
To the subtle, contriving head.
Great qualities are trodden down,

Meaning of the Typho fable

And littleness united
Is become invincible.

These rumblings are not Typho's groans, I know
These angry smoke-bursts
Are not the passionate breath
Of the mountain-crush'd, tortur'd, intractable
Titan king.
But over all the world
What suffering is there not seen
Of plainness oppressed by cunning,
As the well-counsell'd Zeus oppress'd
The self-helping son of Earth?
What anguish of greatness
Rail'd and hunted from the world
Because its simplicity rebukes
This envious, miserable age!
I am weary of it!
Lie there, ye ensigns
Of my unloved pre-eminence
In an age like this!
Among a people of children,
Who throng'd me in their cities,
Who worshipp'd me in their houses,
And ask'd, not wisdom,
But drugs to charm with,
But spells to mutter—
All the fool's armoury of magic—Lie there,
My golden circlet!
My purple robe!

CALLICLES (*from below*).

As the sky-brightening south wind clears the day,
And makes the mass'd clouds roll,

The music of the lyre blows away
The clouds that wrap the soul.

Triumph of the lyre

Oh, that Fate had let me see
That triumph of the sweet persuasive lyre,
That famous, final victory
When jealous Pan with Marsyas did conspire;

When, from far Parnassus' side,
Young Apollo, all the pride
Of the Phrygian flutes to tame,
To the Phrygian highlands came:
Where the long green reed-beds sway
In the rippled waters grey
Of that solitary lake
Where Mæander's springs are born:
Where the ridged pine-muffled roots
Of Messogis westward break,
Mounting westward, high and higher:
There was held the famous strife;
There the Phrygian brought his flutes,
And Apollo brought his lyre,
And, when now the westering sun
Touch'd the hills, the strife was done,
And the attentive Muses said,
Marsyas! thou art vanquishèd.
Then Apollo's minister
Hang'd upon a branching fir
Marsyas, that unhappy Faun,
And began to whet his knife.
But the Mænads, who were there,
Left their friend, and with robes flowing
In the wind, and loose dark hair
O'er their polish'd bosoms blowing,

The Fate of Marsyas

Each her ribbon'd tambourine
Flinging on the mountain sod,
With a lovely frighten'd mien
Came about the youthful God.
But he turned his beauteous face
Haughtily another way,
From the grassy sun-warmed place,
Where in proud repose he lay,
With one arm over his head,
Watching how the whetting sped.

But aloof, on the lake strand,
Did the young Olympus stand,
Weeping at his master's end;
For the Faun had been his friend.
For he taught him how to sing,
And he taught him flute-playing.
Many a morning had they gone
To the glimmering mountain lakes,
And had torn up by the roots
The tall crested water reeds
With long plumes and soft brown seeds,
And had carved them into flutes,
Sitting on a tabled stone
Where the shoreward ripple breaks.
And he taught him how to please
The red-snooded Phrygian girls,
Whom the summer evening sees
Flashing in the dance's whirls
Underneath the starlit trees
In the mountain villages.
Therefore now Olympus stands,
At his master's piteous cries,
Pressing fast with both his hands

His white garment to his eyes,
Not to see Apollo's scorn;—
Ah, poor Faun, poor Faun! ah, poor Faun!

Apollo's vain defence

EMPEDOCLES

And lie thou there,
My laurel bough!
Though thou hast been my shade in the world's heat—
Though I have loved thee, lived in honouring thee—
Yet lie thou there,
My laurel bough!

I am weary of thee.
I am weary of the solitude
Where he who bears thee must abide.
Of the rocks of Parnassus,
Of the gorge of Delphi,
Of the moonlit peaks, and the caves,
Thou guardest them, Apollo!
Over the grave of the slain Pytho,
Though young, intolerably severe.
Thou keepest aloof the profane,
But the solitude oppresses thy votary.
The jars of men reach him not in thy valley—
But can life reach him?
Thou fencest him from the multitude—
Who will fence him from himself?
He hears nothing but the cry of the torrents
And the beating of his own heart.
The air is thin, the veins swell—
The temples tighten and throb there—
Air! air!

Thoughts of age and youth

Take thy bough; set me free from my solitude!
I have been enough alone.
Where shall thy votary fly then? back to men?
But they will gladly welcome him once more,
And help him to unbend his too tense thought,
And rid him of the presence of himself,
And keep their friendly chatter at his ear,
And haunt him, till the absence from himself,
That other torment, grow unbearable:
And he will fly to solitude again,
And he will find its air too keen for him,
And so change back: and many thousand times
Be miserably bandied to and fro
Like a sea wave, betwixt the world and thee,
Thou young, implacable God! and only death
Shall cut his oscillations short, and so
Bring him to poise. There is no other way.

And yet what days were those, Parmenides!
When we were young, when we could number friends
In all the Italian cities like ourselves,
When with elated hearts we join'd your train,
Ye Sun-born virgins! on the road of Truth.
Then we could still enjoy, then neither thought
Nor outward things were clos'd and dead to us,
But we received the shock of mighty thoughts
On simple minds with a pure natural joy;
And if the sacred load oppress'd our brain,
We had the power to feel the pressure eas'd,
The brow unbound, the thought flow free again,
In the delightful commerce of the world.
We had not lost our balance then, nor grown
Thought's slaves, and dead to every natural joy.

The smallest thing could give us pleasure then— No friend, no fellow!
The sports of the country people;
A flute note from the woods;
Sunset over the sea;
Seed-time and harvest;
The reapers in the corn;
The vinedresser in his vineyard;
The village girl at her wheel.

Fulness of life and power of feeling, ye
Are for the happy, for the souls at ease,
Who dwell on a firm basis of content.
But he who has outliv'd his prosperous days,
But he, whose youth fell on a different world
From that on which his exil'd age is thrown;
Whose mind was fed on other food, was train'd
By other rules than are in vogue to-day;
Whose habit of thought is fix'd, who will not change,
But in a world he loves not must subsist
In ceaseless opposition, be the guard
Of his own breast, fetter'd to what he guards,
That the world win no mastery over him;
Who has no friend, no fellow left, not one;
Who has no minute's breathing space allow'd
To nurse his dwindling faculty of joy;—
Joy and the outward world must die to him
As they are dead to me.

[*A long pause, during which* EMPEDOCLES *remains motionless, plunged in thought. The night deepens. He moves forward and gazes round him, and proceeds:—*

And you, ye Stars!
Who slowly begin to marshal,

Night deepens

As of old, in the fields of heaven,
Your distant, melancholy lines—
Have you, too, survived yourselves?
Are you, too, what I fear to become?
You too once lived—
You too moved joyfully
Among august companions
In an older world, peopled by Gods,
In a mightier order,
The radiant, rejoicing, intelligent Sons of Heaven!
But now, you kindle
Your lonely, cold-shining lights,
Unwilling lingerers
In the heavenly wilderness,
For a younger, ignoble world.
And renew, by necessity,
Night after night your courses,
In echoing unnear'd silence,
Above a race you know not.
Uncaring and undelighted,
Without friend and without home.
Weary like us, though not
Weary with our weariness.

No, no, ye Stars! there is no death with you,
No languor, no decay! Languor and death,
They are with me, not you! ye are alive!
Ye and the pure dark ether where ye ride
Brilliant above me! And thou, fiery world!
That sapp'st the vitals of this terrible mount
Upon whose charr'd and quaking crust I stand,
Thou, too, brimmest with life;—the sea of cloud
That heaves its white and billowy vapours up
To moat this isle of ashes from the world,

Lives;—and that other fainter sea, far down,
O'er whose lit floor a road of moonbeam leads
To Etna's Liparean sister fires
And the long dusky line of Italy—
That mild and luminous floor of waters lives,
With held-in joy swelling its heart:—I only,
Whose spring of hope is dried, whose spirit has fail'd—
I, who have not, like these, in solitude
Maintain'd courage and force, and in myself,
Nursed an immortal vigour—I alone
Am dead to life and joy; therefore I read
In all things my own deadness.

Empedocles dead to life

[*A long silence. He continues:*

Oh, that I could glow like this mountain!
Oh, that my heart bounded with the swell of the sea!
Oh, that my soul were full of light as the stars!
Oh, that it brooded over the world like the air!

But no, this heart will glow no more: thou art
A living man no more, Empedocles!
Nothing but a devouring flame of thought—
But a naked, eternally restless mind.

[*After a pause:*—

To the elements it came from
Everything will return.
Our bodies to Earth;
Our blood to Water;
Heat to Fire;
Breath to Air.
They were well born, they will be well entomb'd.
But mind!—

Mind and Thought our lords

And we might gladly share the fruitful stir
Down on our mother Earth's miraculous womb.
Well would it be
With what roll'd of us in the stormy deep.
We should have joy, blent with the all-bathing Air.
Or with the active radiant life of Fire.

But Mind—but Thought—
If these have been the master part of us—
Where will *they* find their parent element?
What will receive *them*, who will call *them* home?
But we shall still be in them, and they in us,
And we shall be the strangers of the world,
And they will be our lords, as they are now;
And keep us prisoners of our consciousness,
And never let us clasp and feel the All
But through their forms, and modes, and stifling veils.
And we shall be unsatisfied as now,
And we shall feel the agony of thirst,
The ineffable longing for the life of life
Baffled for ever: and still Thought and Mind
Will hurry us with them on their homeless march,
Over the unallied unopening Earth,
Over the unrecognising Sea: while Air
Will blow us fiercely back to Sea and Earth,
And Fire repel us from its living waves.
And then we shall unwillingly return
Back to this meadow of calamity,
This uncongenial place, this human life.
And in our individual human state
Go through the sad probation all again,
To see if we will poise our life at last,

To see if we will now at last be true
To our own only true deep-buried selves,
Being one with which we are one with the whole world;
Or whether we will once more fall away
Into some bondage of the flesh or mind,
Some slough of sense, or some fantastic maze
Forged by the imperious lonely Thinking-Power.
And each succeeding age in which we are born
Will have more peril for us than the last;
Will goad our senses with a sharper spur,
Will fret our minds to an intenser play,
Will make ourselves harder to be discern'd.
And we shall struggle a while, gasp and rebel:
And we shall fly for refuge to past times.
Their soul of unworn youth, their breath of greatness:
And the reality will pluck us back,
Knead us in its hot hand, and change our nature.
And we shall feel our powers of effort flag,
And rally them for one last fight—and fail.
And we shall sink in the impossible strife,
And be astray for ever.

Metempsychosis

Slave of Sense

I have in no wise been: but slave of Thought?—
And who can say,—I have been always free,
Lived ever in the light of my own soul?—
I cannot: I have lived in wrath and gloom,
Fierce, disputatious, ever at war with man,
Far from my own soul, far from warmth and light.
But I have not grown easy in these bonds—
But I have not denied what bonds these were.
Yea, I take myself to witness,
That I have loved no darkness,

Fire! Receive me! Save me!

Sophisticated no truth,
Nursed no delusion,
Allow'd no fear.

And therefore, O ye Elements, I know—
Ye know it too—it hath been granted me
Not to die wholly, not to be all enslaved.
I feel it in this hour. The numbing cloud
Mounts off my soul: I feel it, I breathe free.

Is it but for a moment?
Ah! boil up, ye vapours!
Leap and roar, thou Sea of Fire!
My soul glows to meet you.
Ere it flag, ere the mists
Of despondency and gloom
Rush over it again,
Receive me! save me!

[*He plunges into the crater.*

Callicles (*from below*).

Through the black, rushing smoke-bursts,
Quick breaks the red flame.
All Etna heaves fiercely
Her forest-clothed frame.

Not here, O Apollo!
Are haunts meet for thee.
But, where Helicon breaks down
In cliff to the sea.

Where the moon-silver'd inlets
Send far their light voice
Up the still vale of Thisbe,
O speed, and rejoice!

On the sward, at the cliff-top,
Lie strewn the white flocks;
On the cliff-side, the pigeons
Roost deep in the rocks.

Not here, O Apollo!

In the moonlight the shepherds,
Soft lull'd by the rills,
Lie wrapt in their blankets,
Asleep on the hills.

—What Forms are these coming
So white through the gloom?
What garments out-glistening
The gold-flower'd broom?

What sweet-breathing Presence
Out-perfumes the thyme?
What voices enrapture
The night's balmy prime?—

'Tis Apollo comes leading
His choir, The Nine.
—The Leader is fairest,
But all are divine.

They are lost in the hollows,
They stream up again.
What seeks on this mountain
The glorified train?—

They bathe on this mountain,
In the spring by their road.
Then on to Olympus,
Their endless abode.

On to Olympus!

—Whose praise do they mention,
Of what is it told?—
What will be for ever,
What was from of old.

First hymn they the Father
Of all things: and then
The rest of Immortals,
The action of men.

The Day in its hotness,
The strife with the palm;
The Night in its silence,
The Stars in their calm.

EARLIER POEMS

ALARIC AT ROME

'Admire, exult, despise, laugh, weep, for here
There is such matter for all feeling.'
CHILDE HAROLD.

UNWELCOME shroud of the forgotten dead, Where is Oblivion?
Oblivion's dreary fountain, where art thou:
Why speed'st thou not thy deathlike wave to shed
O'er humbled pride, and self-reproaching woe:
Or time's stern hand, why blots it not away
The saddening tale that tells of sorrow and decay?

There are, whose glory passeth not away—
Even in the grave their fragrance cannot fade:
Others there are as deathless full as they,
Who for themselves a monument have made
By their own crimes—a lesson to all eyes—
Of wonder to the fool—of warning to the wise.

Yes, there are stories registered on high,
Yes, there are stains time's fingers cannot blot,
Deeds that shall live when they who did them, die;
Things that may cease, but never be forgot:
Yet some there are, their very lives would give
To be remember'd thus, and yet they cannot live.

The Stains of Rome

But thou, imperial City! that hast stood
In greatness once, in sackcloth now and tears,
A mighty name, for evil or for good,
Even in the loneness of thy widow'd years:
Thou that hast gazed, as the world hurried by,
Upon its headlong course with sad prophetic eye.

Is thine the laurel-crown that greatness wreathes
Round the wan temples of the hallow'd dead?
Is it the blighting taint dishonour breathes
In fires undying o'er the guilty head,
Or the brief splendour of that meteor light
That for a moment gleams, and all again is night?

Fain would we deem that thou hast risen so high
Thy dazzling light an eagle's gaze should tire;
No meteor brightness to be seen and die,
No passing pageant, born but to expire,
But full and deathless as the deep dark hue
Of ocean's sleeping face, or heaven's unbroken blue.

Yet stains there are to blot thy brightest page,
And wither half the laurels on thy tomb;
A glorious manhood, yet a dim old age,
And years of crime, and nothingness, and gloom:
And then that mightiest crash, that giant fall,
Ambition's boldest dream might sober and appal.

Thou wondrous chaos, where together dwell
Present and past, the living and the dead,
Thou shatter'd mass, whose glorious ruins tell
The vanish'd might of that discrownëd head:
Where all we see, or do, or hear, or say,
Seems strangely echoed back by tones of yesterday:

Thou solemn grave, where every step we tread
Treads on the slumbering dust of other years;
The while there sleeps within thy precincts dread
What once had human passions, hopes, and fears;
And memory's gushing tide swells deep and full
And makes thy very ruin fresh and beautiful.

Rome one vast fane

Alas, no common sepulchre art thou,
No habitation for the nameless dead,
Green turf above, and crumbling dust below,
Perchance some mute memorial at their head,
But one vast fane where all unconscious sleep
Earth's old heroic forms in peaceful slumbers deep.

Thy dead are kings, thy dust are palaces,
Relics of nations thy memorial-stones:
And the dim glories of departed days
Fold like a shroud around thy wither'd bones:
And o'er thy towers the wind's half utter'd sigh
Whispers, in mournful tones, thy silent elegy.

Yes, in such eloquent silence didst thou lie
When the Goth stooped upon his stricken prey,
And the deep hues of an Italian sky
Flash'd on the rude barbarian's wild array:
While full and ceaseless as the ocean roll,
Horde after horde stream'd up thy frowning Capitol.

Twice, ere that day of shame, the embattled foe
Had gazed in wonder on that glorious sight;
Twice had the eternal city bow'd her low
In sullen homage to the invader's might:
Twice had the pageant of that vast array
Swept, from thy walls, O Rome, on its triumphant way.

The third attempt

Twice, from without thy bulwarks, hath the din
Of Gothic clarion smote thy startled ear;
Anger, and strife, and sickness are within,
Famine and sorrow are no strangers here:
Twice hath the cloud hung o'er thee, twice been stay'd
Even in the act to burst, twice threaten'd, twice delay'd.

Yet once again, stern Chief, yet once again,
Pour forth the foaming vials of thy wrath:
There lies thy goal, to miss or to attain,
Gird thee, and on upon thy fateful path,
The world hath bow'd to Rome, oh! cold were he
Who would not burst his bonds, and in his turn be free.

Therefore arise and arm thee! lo, the world
Looks on in fear! and when the seal is set,
The doom pronounced, the battle-flag unfurl'd,
Scourge of the nations, wouldst thou linger yet?
Arise and arm thee! spread thy banners forth,
Pour from a thousand hills thy warriors of the north!

Hast thou not mark'd on a wild autumn day
When the wind slumbereth in a sudden lull,
What deathlike stillness o'er the landscape lay,
How calmly sad, how sadly beautiful;
How each bright tint of tree, and flower, and heath
Were mingling with the sere and wither'd hues of death.

Rome's mournful loveliness

And thus, beneath the clear, calm vault of heaven
In mournful loveliness that city lay,
And thus, amid the glorious hues of even
That city told of languor and decay:
Till what at morning's hour look'd warm and bright
Was cold and sad beneath that breathless, voiceless night.

Soon was that stillness broken: like the cry
Of the hoarse onset of the surging wave,
Or louder rush of whirlwinds sweeping by
Was the wild shout those Gothic myriads gave,
As tower'd on high, above their moonlit road,
Scenes where a Cæsar triumph'd, or a Scipio trod.

Think ye it strikes too slow, the sword of fate,
Think ye the avenger loiters on his way,
That your own hands must open wide the gate,
And your own voices guide him to his prey?
Alas, it needs not; is it hard to know
Fate's threat'nings are not vain, the spoiler comes not slow.

And were there none, to stand and weep alone,
And as the pageant swept before their eyes
To hear a dim and long forgotten tone
Tell of old times, and holiest memories,
Till fanciful regret and dreamy woe
Peopled night's voiceless shades with forms of long Ago.

Oh yes! if fancy feels, beyond to-day,
Thoughts of the past and of the future time,

Conquered Rome

How should that mightiest city pass away
And not bethink her of her glorious prime,
Whilst every chord that thrills at thoughts of home
Jarr'd with the bursting shout, "They come, the Goth, they come!"

The trumpet swells yet louder: they are here!
Yea, on your fathers' bones the avengers tread,
Not this the time to weep upon the bier
That holds the ashes of your hero-dead,
If wreaths may twine for you, or laurels wave,
They shall not deck your life, but sanctify your grave.

Alas! no wreaths are here. Despair may teach
Cowards to conquer and the weak to die;
Nor tongue of man, nor fear, nor shame can preach
So stern a lesson as necessity,
Yet here it speaks not. Yea, though all around
Unhallow'd feet are trampling on this haunted ground,

Though every holiest feeling, every tie
That binds the heart of man with mightiest power,
All natural love, all human sympathy
Be crush'd, and outraged in this bitter hour,
Here is no echo to the sound of home,
No shame that suns should rise to light a conquer'd Rome.

That troublous night is over: on the brow
Of thy stern hill, thou mighty Capitol,

Alaric on the Capitol

One form stands gazing: silently below
The morning mists from tower and temple roll,
And lo! the eternal city, as they rise,
Bursts, in majestic beauty, on her conqueror's eyes.

Yes, there he stood, upon that silent hill,
And there beneath his feet his conquest lay:
Unlike her ocean-Sister, gazing still
Smilingly forth upon her sunny bay,
But o'er her vanish'd might and humbled pride
Mourning, as widow'd Venice o'er her Adrian tide.

Breathe there not spirits on the peopled air?
Float there not voices on the murmuring wind?
Oh! sound there not some strains of sadness there,
To touch with sorrow even a victor's mind,
And wrest one tear from joy! Oh! who shall pen
The thoughts that touch'd thy breast, thou lonely conqueror, then?

Perchance his wandering heart was far away
Lost in dim memories of his early home,
And his young dreams of conquest; how to-day
Beheld him master of Imperial Rome,
Crowning his wildest hopes; perchance his eyes
As they look'd sternly on, beheld new victories,

New dreams of wide dominion, mightier, higher,
Come floating up from the abyss of years;
Perchance that solemn sight might quench the fire
Even of that ardent spirit; hopes and fears
Might well be mingling at that murmur'd sigh,
Whispering from all around, "All earthly things must die."

A year before his death

Perchance that wondrous city was to him
But as one voiceless blank : a place of graves,
And recollections indistinct and dim,
Whose sons were conquerors once, and now were slaves :
It may be in that desolate sight his eye
Saw but another step to climb to victory !

Alas ! that fiery spirit little knew
The change of life, the nothingness of power,
How both were hastening, as they flow'red and grew,
Nearer and nearer to their closing hour :
How every birth of time's miraculous womb
Swept off the wither'd leaves that hide the naked tomb.

One little year ; that restless soul shall rest
That frame of vigour shall be crumbling clay,
And tranquilly, above that troubled breast,
The sunny waters hold their joyous way :
And gently shall the murmuring ripples flow,
Nor wake the weary soul that slumbers on below.

Alas ! far other thoughts might well be ours
And dash our holiest raptures while we gaze :
Energies wasted, unimprovèd hours,
The saddening visions of departed days :
And while they rise here might we stand alone,
And mingle with thy ruins somewhat of our own.

Beautiful city ! If departed things
Ever again put earthly likeness on,

Here should a thousand forms on fancy's wings Rome's requiem
Float up to tell of ages that are gone:
Yea though hand touch thee not, nor eye should see,
Still should the Spirit hold communion, Rome, with thee!

Oh! it is bitter, that each fairest dream
Should fleet before us but to melt away;
That wildest visions still should loveliest seem
And soonest fade in the broad glare of day:
That while we feel the world is dull and low,
Gazing on thee, we wake to find it is not so.

A little while, alas! a little while,
And the same world has tongue, and ear, and eye,
The careless glance, the cold unmeaning smile,
The thoughtless word, the lack of sympathy!
Who would not turn him from the barren sea
And rest his weary eyes on the green land and thee!

So pass we on. But oh! to harp aright
The vanish'd glories of thine early day,
There needs a minstrel of diviner might,
A holier incense than this feeble lay;
To chant thy requiem with more passionate breath,
And twine with bolder hand thy last memorial wreath!

CROMWELL

Schrecklich ist es, deiner Wahrheit
Sterbliches Gefäss zu seyn.

SCHILLER.

SYNOPSIS

The author's synopsis

INTRODUCTION—The mountains and the sea the cradles of Freedom—contrasted with the birth-place of Cromwell—His childhood and youth—The germs of his future character probably formed during his life of inaction—Cromwell at the moment of his intended embarkation—Retrospect of his past life and profligate youth—Temptations held out by the prospect of a life of rest in America—How far such rest was allowable—Vision of his future life—Different persons represented in it—Charles the First—Cromwell himself—His victories and maritime glory—Pym—Strafford—Laud—Hampden—Falkland—Milton—Charles the First—Cromwell on his death-bed—His character—Dispersion of the vision—Conclusion.

HIGH fate is theirs, ye sleepless waves, whose ear
Learns Freedom's lesson from your voice of fear;
Whose spell-bound sense from childhood's hour hath known
Familiar meanings in your mystic tone:
Sounds of deep import—voices that beguile
Age of its tears and childhood of its smile,
To yearn with speechless impulse to the free
And gladsome greetings of the buoyant sea!
High fate is theirs, who where the silent sky
Stoops to the soaring mountains, live and die;

Who scale the cloud-capp'd height, or sink to rest
In the deep stillness of its shelt'ring breast;—
Around whose feet the exulting waves have sung,
The eternal hills their giant shadows flung.

Cromwell born far from mountains and sea

No wonders nursed thy childhood; not for thee
Did the waves chant their song of liberty!
Thine was no mountain home, where Freedom's form
Abides enthroned amid the mist and storm,
And whispers to the listening winds, that swell
With solemn cadence round her citadel!
These had no sound for thee: that cold calm eye
Lit with no rapture as the storm swept by,
To mark with shiver'd crest the reeling wave
Hide his torn head beneath his sunless cave;
Or hear 'mid circling crags, the impatient cry
Of the pent winds, that scream in agony!
Yet all high sounds that mountain children hear
Flash'd from thy soul upon thine inward ear;
All Freedom's mystic language—storms that roar
By hill or wave, the mountain or the shore,—
All these had stirr'd thy spirit, and thine eye
In common sights read secret sympathy;
Till all bright thoughts that hills or waves can yield
Deck'd the dull waste, and the familiar field;
Or wondrous sounds from tranquil skies were borne
Far o'er the glistening sheets of windy corn:
Skies—that, unbound by clasp of mountain chain,
Slope stately down, and melt into the plain;
Sounds—such as erst the lone wayfaring man
Caught, as he journey'd, from the lips of Pan;
Or that mysterious cry, that smote with fear,
Like sounds from other worlds, the Spartan's ear,

High thoughts

While o'er the dusty plain, the murmurous throng
Of Heaven's embattled myriads swept along.

Say not such dreams are idle: for the man
Still toils to perfect what the child began;
And thoughts, that were but outlines, time engraves
Deep on his life; and childhood's baby waves,
Made rough with care, become the changeful sea,
Stemm'd by the strength of manhood fearlessly;
And fleeting thoughts, that on the lonely wild
Swept o'er the fancy of that heedless child,
Perchance had quicken'd with a living truth
The cold dull soil of his unfruitful youth;
Till with his daily life, a life that threw
Its shadows o'er the future flower'd and grew,
With common cares unmingling, and apart,
Haunting the shrouded chambers of his heart;
Till life unstirr'd by action, life became
Threaded and lighten'd by a track of flame;
An inward light, that, with its streaming ray
On the dark current of his changeless day,
Bound all his being with a silver chain—
Like a swift river through a silent plain!

High thoughts were his, when by the gleaming flood,
With heart new strung, and stern resolve, he stood;
Where rode the tall dark ships, whose loosen'd sail
All idly flutter'd in the eastern gale;
High thoughts were his; but Memory's glance the while
Fell on the cheerful past with tearful smile;
And peaceful joys and gentler thoughts swept by,
Like summer lightnings o'er a darken'd sky.

The peace of childhood, and the thoughts that roam, Recollections and visions
Like loving shadows, round that childhood's home;
Joys that had come and vanish'd, half unknown,
Then slowly brighten'd, as the days had flown;
Years that were sweet or sad, becalm'd or tossed
On life's wild waves—the living and the lost.
Youth stain'd with follies: and the thoughts of ill
Crush'd, as they rose, by manhood's sterner will.
Repentant prayers, that had been strong to save;
And the first sorrow, which is childhood's grave!
All shapes that haunt remembrance—soft and fair,
Like a green land at sunset, all were there!
Eyes that he knew, old faces unforgot,
Gazed sadly down on his unrestful lot,
And Memory's calm clear voice, and mournful eye,
Chill'd every buoyant hope that floated by;
Like frozen winds on southern vales that blow
From a far land—the children of the snow—
O'er flowering plain and blossom'd meadow fling
The cold dull shadow of their icy wing.

Then Fancy's roving visions, bold and free,
A moment dispossess'd reality.
All airy hopes that idle hearts can frame.
Like dreams between two sorrows, went and came:
Fond hearts that fain would clothe the unwelcome truth
Of toilsome manhood in the dreams of youth,
To bend in rapture at some idle throne,
Some lifeless soulless phantom of their own;
Some shadowy vision of a tranquil life,
Of joys unclouded, years unstirr'd by strife;
Of sleep unshadow'd by a dream of woe;
Of many a lawny hill, and streams with silver flow;

Thoughts of America

Of giant mountains by the western main,
The sunless forest, and the sealike plain;
Those lingering hopes of coward hearts, that still
Would play the traitor to the steadfast will,
One moment's space, perchance, might charm his eye
From the stern future, and the years gone by.
One moment's space might waft him far away
To western shores—the death-place of the day!
Might paint the calm, sweet peace—the rest of home,
Far o'er the pathless waste of labouring foam—
Peace, that recall'd his childish hours anew,
More calm, more deep, than childhood ever knew!
Green happy places, like a flowery lea
Between the barren mountains and the stormy sea.

O pleasant rest, if once the race were run!
O happy slumber, if the day were done!
Dreams that were sweet at eve, at morn were sin;
With cares to conquer, and a goal to win!
His were no tranquil years—no languid sleep—
No life of dreams—no home beyond the deep—
No softening ray—no visions false and wild—
No glittering hopes on life's grey distance smiled—
Like isles of sunlight on a mountain's brow.
Lit by a wandering gleam, we know not how,
Far on the dim horizon, when the sky
With glooming clouds broods dark and heavily.

Then his eye slumber'd, and the chain was broke
That bound his spirit, and his heart awoke;
Then, like a kingly river, swift and strong,
The future roll'd its gathering tides along!

Visions of his future

The shout of onset and the shriek of fear
Smote, like the rush of waters, on his ear;
And his eye kindled with the kindling fray,
The surging battle and the mail'd array!
All wondrous deeds the coming days should see,
And the long Vision of the years to be.
Pale phantom hosts, like shadows, faint and far,
Councils, and armies, and the pomp of war!
And one sway'd all, who wore a kingly crown,
Until another rose and smote him down:
A form that tower'd above his brother men;
A form he knew—but it was shrouded then!
With stern, slow steps, unseen yet still the same,
By leaguer'd tower and tented field it came;
By Naseby's hill, o'er Marston's heathy waste,
By Worcester's field, the warrior-vision pass'd!
From their deep base, thy beetling cliffs, Dunbar,
Rang, as he trode them, with the voice of war!
The soldier kindled at his words of fire;
The statesmen quail'd before his glance of ire!
Worn was his brow with cares no thought could scan
His step was loftier than the steps of man;
And the winds told his glory, and the wave
Sonorous witness to his empire gave!

What forms are these, that with complaining sound,
And slow reluctant steps are gathering round?
Forms that with him shall tread life's changing stage,
Cross his lone path, or share his pilgrimage.
There, as he gazed, a wondrous band—they came
Pym's look of hate, and Strafford's glance of flame:

His coevals

There Laud, with noiseless steps and glittering eye,
In priestly garb, a frail old man, went by;
His drooping head bow'd meekly on his breast;
His hands were folded, like a saint at rest!
There Hampden bent him o'er his saddle bow,
And death's cold dews bedimm'd his earnest brow;
Still turn'd to watch the battle—still forgot
Himself, his sufferings, in his country's lot!
There Falkland eyed the strife that would not cease,
Shook back his tangled locks, and murmured "Peace!"
With feet that spurn'd the ground, lo! Milton there
Stood like a statue; and his face was fair—
Fair beyond human beauty; and his eye,
That knew not earth, soared upwards to the sky!

He, too, was there—it was the princely boy,
The child-companion of his childish joy!
But oh! how changed! those deathlike features wore
Childhood's bright glance and sunny smile no more!
That brow so sad, so pale, so full of care—
What trace of careless childhood lingered there?
What spring of youth in that majestic mien,
So sadly calm, so kingly, so serene?
No—all was changed! the monarch wept alone,
Between a ruin'd church and shatter'd throne!
Friendless and hopeless—like a lonely tree,
On some bare headland straining mournfully,
That all night long its weary moan doth make
To the vex'd waters of a mountain lake!

Still, as he gazed, the phantom's mournful glance Troubled dreams
Shook the deep slumber of his deathlike trance;
Like some forgotten strain that haunts us still,
That calm eye followed, turn him where he will;
Till the pale monarch, and the long array,
Pass'd like a morning mist, in tears away!

Then all his dream was troubled, and his soul
Thrill'd with a dread no slumber could control;
On that dark form his eyes had gazed before,
Nor known it then;—but it was veiled no more!
In broad clear light the ghastly vision shone,—
That form was his,—those features were his own!
The night of terrors, and the day of care,
The years of toil—all, all were written there!
Sad faces watched around him, and his breath
Came faint and feeble in the embrace of death.
The gathering tempest, with its voice of fear,
His latest loftiest music, smote his ear!
That day of boundless hope and promise high,
That day that hailed his triumphs, saw him die!
Then from those whitening lips, as death drew near,
The imprisoning chains fell off, and all was clear!
Like lowering clouds, that at the close of day,
Bathed in a blaze of sunset, melt away;
And with its clear calm tones, that dying prayer
Cheered all the failing hearts that sorrowed there!

A life—whose ways no human thought could scan;
A life—that was not as the life of man;
A life—that wrote its purpose with a sword,
Moulding itself in action, not in word!

The vision fades

Rent with tumultuous thoughts, whose conflict rung
Deep through his soul, and choked his faltering tongue;
A heart that reck'd not of the countless dead,
That strewed the blood-stained path where Empire led;
A daring hand, that shrunk not to fulfil
The thought that spurr'd it; and a dauntless will,
Bold action's parent; and a piercing ken
Through the dark chambers of the hearts of men,
To read each thought, and teach that master-mind
The fears and hopes and passions of mankind;
All these were thine—oh thought of fear!—and thou,
Stretched on that bed of death, art nothing now.

Then all his vision faded, and his soul
Sprang from its sleep! and lo! the waters roll
Once more beneath him; and the fluttering sail,
Where the dark ships rode proudly, wooed the gale;
And the wind murmured round him, and he stood
Once more alone beside the gleaming flood.

SONNETS

I.—QUIET WORK

One lesson, Nature, let me learn of thee—
One lesson that in every wind is blown,
One lesson of two duties served in one,
Though the loud world proclaim their enmity—
Of Toil unsever'd from Tranquillity:

Lesson from Nature

Of Labour, that in still advance outgrows
Far noisier schemes, accomplish'd in Repose,
Too great for haste, too high for rivalry.
Yes, while on earth a thousand discords ring,
Man's senseless uproar mingling with his toil,
Still do thy sleepless ministers move on,
Their glorious tasks in silence perfecting;
Still working, blaming still our vain turmoil;
Labourers that shall not fail, when man is gone.

II.—TO A FRIEND

Who prop, thou ask'st, in these bad days, my mind?
He much, the old man, who, clearest-soul'd of men,
Saw The Wide Prospect,[1] and the Asian Fen,
And Tmolus' hill, and Smyrna's bay, though blind.
Much he, whose friendship I not long since won,
That halting slave, who in Nicopolis
Taught Arrian, when Vespasian's brutal son
Clear'd Rome of what most shamed him. But be his
My special thanks, whose even-balanc'd soul,
From first youth tested up to extreme old age,
Business could not make dull, nor Passion wild:
Who saw life steadily, and saw it whole:
The mellow glory of the Attic stage;
Singer of sweet Colonus, and its child.

III.—SHAKSPEARE

Others abide our question. Thou art free.
We ask and ask: Thou smilest and art still,
Out-topping knowledge. For the loftiest hill
That to the stars uncrowns his majesty,

[1] Εὐρώπη.

Shakspeare Emerson Butler

Planting his stedfast footsteps in the sea,
Making the Heaven of Heavens his dwelling-place,
Spares but the cloudy border of his base
To the foil'd searching of mortality:
And thou, who didst the stars and sunbeams know,
Self-school'd, self-scann'd, self-honour'd, self-secure,
Didst walk on Earth unguess'd at. Better so!
All pains the immortal spirit must endure,
All weakness that impairs, all griefs that bow,
Find their sole voice in that victorious brow.

IV.—WRITTEN IN EMERSON'S ESSAYS

"O MONSTROUS, dead, unprofitable world,
That thou canst hear, and hearing, hold thy way.
A voice oracular hath peal'd to-day,
To-day a hero's banner is unfurl'd.
Hast thou no lip for welcome?" So I said.
Man after man, the world smiled and pass'd by:
A smile of wistful incredulity
As though one spake of noise unto the dead:
Scornful, and strange, and sorrowful; and full
Of bitter knowledge. Yet the will is free:
Strong is the Soul, and wise, and beautiful:
The seeds of godlike power are in us still:
Gods are we, Bards, Saints, Heroes, if we will.—
Dumb judges, answer, truth or mockery?

V.—WRITTEN IN BUTLER'S SERMONS

AFFECTIONS, Instincts, Principles, and Powers,
Impulse and Reason, Freedom and Control—

So men, unravelling God's harmonious whole,
Rend in a thousand shreds this life of ours.
Vain labour! Deep and broad, where none may see,
Spring the foundations of the shadowy throne
Where man's one Nature, queen-like, sits alone,
Centred in a majestic unity.
And rays her powers, like sister islands, seen
Linking their coral arms under the sea:
Or cluster'd peaks, with plunging gulfs between
Spann'd by aërial arches, all of gold;
Whereo'er the chariot wheels of Life are rolled
In cloudy circles, to eternity.

The bridge to eternity

VI.—TO THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON

ON HEARING HIM MISPRAISED

Because thou hast believed, the wheels of life
Stand never idle, but go always round:
Not by their hands, who vex the patient ground,
Moved only; but by genius, in the strife
Of all its chafing torrents after thaw,
Urged; and to feed whose movement, spinning sand,
The feeble sons of pleasure set their hand:
And, in this vision of the general law,
Hast laboured with the foremost, hast become
Laborious, persevering, serious, firm;
For this, thy track, across the fretful foam
Of vehement actions without scope or term,
Called History, keeps a splendour: due to wit,
Which saw *one* clue to life, and follow'd it.

Foolish heat rebuked

VII.—IN HARMONY WITH NATURE

TO A PREACHER

"In harmony with Nature?" Restless fool,
Who with such heat dost preach what were to thee,
When true, the last impossibility;
To be like Nature strong, like Nature cool:—
Know, man hath all which Nature hath, but more,
And in that *more* lie all his hopes of good.
Nature is cruel; man is sick of blood:
Nature is stubborn; man would fain adore:
Nature is fickle; man hath need of rest:
Nature forgives no debt, and fears no grave:
Man would be mild, and with safe conscience blest.
Man must begin, know this, where Nature ends;
Nature and man can never be fast friends.
Fool, if thou canst not pass her, rest her slave!

VIII.—TO GEORGE CRUIKSHANK

ON SEEING, IN THE COUNTRY, HIS PICTURE OF "THE BOTTLE"

Artist, whose hand, with horror wing'd, hath torn
From the rank life of towns this leaf: and flung
The prodigy of full-blown crime among
Valleys and men to middle fortune born,
Not innocent, indeed, yet not forlorn:
Say, what shall calm us, when such guests intrude,
Like comets on the heavenly solitude?
Shall breathless glades, cheered by shy Dian's horn,

Cold-bubbling springs, or caves? Not so! The Soul
Breasts her own griefs: and, urged too fiercely, says:
"Why tremble? True, the nobleness of man
May be by man effaced: man can controul
To pain, to death, the bent of his own days.
Know thou the worst. So much, not more, he *can*."

Cruikshank shows the worst

IX.—TO A REPUBLICAN FRIEND, 1848

God knows it, I am with you. If to prize
Those virtues, prized and practised by too few,
But prized, but loved, but eminent in you,
Man's fundamental life: if to despise
The barren optimistic sophistries
Of comfortable moles, whom what they do
Teaches the limit of the just and true—
And for such doing have no need of eyes:
If sadness at the long heart-wasting show
Wherein earth's great ones are disquieted:
If thoughts, not idle, while before me flow
The armies of the homeless and unfed:—
If these are yours, if this is what you are,
Then am I yours, and what you feel, I share.

X.—CONTINUED

Yet, when I muse on what life is, I seem
Rather to patience prompted, than that proud
Prospect of hope which France proclaims so loud.
France, famed in all great arts, in none supreme.

Republicanism. Religious isolation

Seeing this Vale, this Earth, whereon we dream,
Is on all sides o'ershadowed by the high
Uno'erleap'd Mountains of Necessity,
Sparing us narrower margin than we deem.
Nor will that day dawn at a human nod,
When, bursting through the network superposed
By selfish occupation—plot and plan,
Lust, avarice, envy—liberated man,
All difference with his fellow-man composed,
Shall be left standing face to face with God.

XI.—RELIGIOUS ISOLATION

TO THE SAME FRIEND

Children (as such forgive them) have I known,
Ever in their own eager pastime bent
To make the incurious bystander, intent
On his own swarming thoughts, an interest own;
Too fearful or too fond to play alone.
Do thou, whom light in thine own inmost soul
(Not less thy boast) illuminates, controul
Wishes unworthy of a man full-grown.
What though the holy secret which moulds thee
Moulds not the solid Earth? though never Winds
Have whisper'd it to the complaining Sea,
Nature's great law, and law of all men's minds?
To its own impulse every creature stirs:
Live by thy light, and Earth will live by hers.

XII.—TO THE HUNGARIAN NATION.

Not in sunk Spain's prolong'd death agony;
Not in rich England, bent but to make pour

The flood of the world's commerce on her shore;
Not in that madhouse, France, from whence the cry
Afflicts grave Heaven with its long senseless roar;
Not in American vulgarity,
Nor wordy German imbecility—
Lies any hope of heroism more.
Hungarians! Save the world! Renew the stories
Of men who against hope repell'd the chain,
And make the world's dead spirit leap again!
On land renew that Greek exploit, whose glories
Hallow the Salaminian promontories,
And the Armada flung to the fierce main.

The Hungarians invoked

XIII.—YOUTH'S AGITATIONS

When I shall be divorced some ten years hence,
From this poor present self which I am now;
When youth has done its tedious vain expense
Of passions that for ever ebb and flow;
Shall I not joy youth's heats are left behind,
And breathe more happy in an even clime?
Ah no, for then I shall begin to find
A thousand virtues in this hated time.
Then I shall wish its agitations back,
And all its thwarting currents of desire;
Then I shall praise the heat which then I lack,
And call this hurrying fever, generous fire,
And sigh that one thing only has been lent
To youth and age in common—discontent.

The world's rebuke

XIV.—THE WORLD'S TRIUMPHS

So far as I conceive the World's rebuke
To him address'd who would recast her new,
Not from herself her fame of strength she took,
But from their weakness, who would work her rue.
"Behold, she cries, so many rages lull'd,
So many fiery spirits quite cool'd down:
Look how so many valours, long undull'd,
After short commerce with me, fear my frown.
Thou too, when thou against my crimes wouldst cry,
Let thy foreboded homage check thy tongue."—
The World speaks well: yet might her foe reply—
"Are wills so weak? then let not mine wait long.
Hast thou so rare a poison? let me be
Keener to slay thee, lest thou poison me."

MYCERINUS[1]

"Nor by the justice that my father spurn'd,
Not for the thousands whom my father slew,
Altars unfed and temples overturn'd,
Cold hearts and thankless tongues, where thanks were due;
Fell this late voice from lips that cannot lie,
Stern sentence of the Powers of Destiny.

[1] Herodotus, II. 133.

I will unfold my sentence and my crime. Injustice allowed by the Gods
My crime, that, rapt in reverential awe,
I sate obedient, in the fiery prime
Of youth, self-governed, at the feet of Law;
Ennobling this dull pomp, the life of kings,
By contemplation of diviner things.

My father lov'd injustice, and liv'd long;
Crowned with grey hairs he died, and full of sway.
I loved the good he scorn'd, and hated wrong:
The Gods declare my recompense to-day.
I looked for life more lasting, rule more high;
And when six years are measur'd, lo, I die!

Yet surely, O my people, did I deem
Man's justice from the all-just Gods was given:
A light that from some upper fount did beam,
Some better archetype, whose seat was heaven;
A light that, shining from the blest abodes,
Did shadow somewhat of the life of Gods.

Mere phantoms of man's self-tormenting heart,
Which on the sweets that woo it dares not feed:
Vain dreams, that quench our pleasures, then depart,
When the duped soul, self-mastered, claims its meed:
When, on the strenuous just man, Heaven bestows,
Crown of his struggling life, an unjust close.

Seems it so light a thing then, austere Powers,
To spurn man's common lure, life's pleasant things?
Seems there no joy in dances crown'd with flowers,
Love, free to range, and regal banquetings?
Bend ye on these, indeed, an unmoved eye,
Not Gods but ghosts, in frozen apathy?

Six years for joy

Or is it that some Power, too wise, too strong,
Even for yourselves to conquer or beguile,
Whirls earth, and heaven, and men, and gods along,
Like the broad rushing of the column'd Nile?
And the great powers we serve, themselves may be
Slaves of a tyrannous Necessity?

Or in mid-heaven, perhaps, your golden cars,
Where earthly voice climbs never, wing their flight,
And in wild hunt, through mazy tracts of stars,
Sweep in the sounding stillness of the night?
Or in deaf ease, on thrones of dazzling sheen,
Drinking deep draughts of joy, ye dwell serene.

Oh wherefore cheat our youth, if thus it be,
Of one short joy, one lust, one pleasant dream?
Stringing vain words of powers we cannot see,
Blind divinations of a will supreme;
Lost labour: when the circumambient gloom
But hides, if Gods, Gods careless of our doom?

The rest I give to joy. Even while I speak
My sand runs short; and as yon star-shot ray,
Hemmed by two banks of cloud, peers pale and weak,
Now, as the barrier closes, dies away;
Even so do past and future intertwine,
Blotting this six years' space, which yet is mine.

Six years—six little years—six drops of time—
Yet suns shall rise, and many moons shall wane,
And old men die, and young men pass their prime,
And languid Pleasure fade and flower again;
And the dull Gods behold, ere these are flown,
Revels more deep, joy keener than their own.

Into the silence of the groves and woods
I will go forth; but something would I say—
Something—yet what I know not: for the Gods
The doom they pass revoke not, nor delay;
And prayers, and gifts, and tears, are fruitless all,
And the night waxes, and the shadows fall.

From grove to grove

Ye men of Egypt, ye have heard your king.
I go, and I return not. But the will
Of the great Gods is plain; and ye must bring
Ill deeds, ill passions, zealous to fulfil
Their pleasure, to their feet; and reap their praise,
The praise of Gods, rich boon! and length of days."

—So spake he, half in anger, half in scorn;
And one loud cry of grief and of amaze
Broke from his sorrowing people: so he spake;
And turning, left them there; and with brief pause,
Girt with a throng of revellers, bent his way
To the cool region of the groves he loved.

There by the river banks he wander'd on,
From palm-grove on to palm-grove, happy trees,
Their smooth tops shining sunwards, and beneath
Burying their unsunn'd stems in grass and flowers:
Where in one dream the feverish time of Youth
Might fade in slumber, and the feet of Joy
Might wander all day long and never tire:
Here came the king, holding high feast, at morn
Rose-crown'd; and ever, when the sun went down,
A hundred lamps beam'd in the tranquil gloom,
From tree to tree, all through the twinkling grove,
Revealing all the tumult of the feast,

Revels night and day

Flush'd guests, and golden goblets, foam'd with wine;
While the deep-burnish'd foliage overhead
Splinter'd the silver arrows of the moon.
It may be that sometimes his wondering soul
From the loud joyful laughter of his lips
Might shrink half startled, like a guilty man
Who wrestles with his dream; as some pale Shape,
Gliding half hidden through the dusky stems,
Would thrust a hand before the lifted bowl,
Whispering, "A little space, and thou art mine."
It may be on that joyless feast his eye
Dwelt with mere outward seeming; he, within,
Took measure of his soul, and knew its strength,
And by that silent knowledge, day by day,
Was calmed, ennobled, comforted, sustain'd.
It may be; but not less his brow was smooth,
And his clear laugh fled ringing through the gloom,
And his mirth quail'd not at the mild reproof
Sigh'd out by Winter's sad tranquillity;
Nor, pall'd with its own fulness, ebb'd and died
In the rich languor of long summer days;
Nor wither'd, when the palm-tree plumes that roof'd
With their mild dark his grassy banquet-hall,
Bent to the cold winds of the showerless Spring;
No, nor grew dark when Autumn brought the clouds.
So six long years he revell'd, night and day;
And when the mirth wax'd loudest, with dull sound
Sometimes from the grove's centre echoes came,
To tell his wondering people of their king;
In the still night, across the streaming flats,
Mix'd with the murmur of the moving Nile.

To the boar-hunt!

THE CHURCH OF BROU

I.—THE CASTLE

Down the Savoy valleys sounding,
Echoing round this castle old,
'Mid the distant mountain chalets
Hark! what bell for church is toll'd?

In the bright October morning
Savoy's Duke had left his bride.
From the Castle, past the drawbridge,
Flow'd the hunters' merry tide.

Steeds are neighing, gallants glittering.
Gay, her smiling lord to greet,
From her mullioned chamber casement
Smiles the Duchess Marguerite.

From Vienna by the Danube
Here she came, a bride, in spring.
Now the autumn crisps the forest;
Hunters gather, bugles ring.

Hounds are pulling, prickers swearing,
Horses fret, and boar-spears glance:
Off!—they sweep the marshy forests,
Westward, on the side of France.

Hark! the game 's on foot; they scatter—
Down the forest ridings lone,
Furious, single horsemen gallop.
Hark! a shout—a crash—a groan!

The dead Duke

Pale and breathless, came the hunters.
On the turf dead lies the boar.
God! the Duke lies stretch'd beside him—
Senseless, weltering in his gore.

* * * *

In the dull October evening,
Down the leaf-strewn forest road,
To the Castle, past the drawbridge,
Came the hunters with their load.

In the hall, with sconces blazing,
Ladies waiting round her seat,
Clothed in smiles, beneath the dais,
Sate the Duchess Marguerite.

Hark! below the gates unbarring!
Tramp of men and quick commands!
"—'Tis my lord come back from hunting,"—
And the Duchess claps her hands.

Slow and tired came the hunters;
Stopp'd in darkness in the court.
"—Ho, this way, ye laggard hunters!
To the hall! What sport, what sport?"—

Slow they enter'd with their Master;
In the hall they laid him down.
On his coat were leaves and bloodstains:
On his brow an angry frown.

Dead her princely youthful husband
Lay before his youthful wife;
Bloody, 'neath the flaring sconces:
And the sight froze all her life.

* * * *

Finishing the Church

In Vienna by the Danube
Kings hold revel, gallants meet.
Gay of old amid the gayest
Was the Duchess Marguerite.

In Vienna by the Danube
Feast and dance her youth beguiled.
Till that hour she never sorrow'd;
But from then she never smiled.

'Mid the Savoy mountain valleys
Far from town or haunt of man,
Stands a lonely Church, unfinished,
Which the Duchess Maud began:

Old, that Duchess stern began it;
In grey age, with palsied hands,
But she died as it was building,
And the Church unfinish'd stands;

Stands as erst the builders left it,
When she sunk into her grave.
Mountain greensward paves the chancel;
Harebells flower in the nave.

"In my Castle all is sorrow,"—
Said the Duchess Marguerite then.
"Guide me, vassals, to the mountains!
We will build the Church again."—

Sandalled palmers, faring homeward,
Austrian knights from Syria came.
"Austrian wanderers bring, O warders,
Homage to your Austrian dame."—

The statues on the tomb

From the gate the warders answered;
"Gone, O knights, is she you knew.
Dead our Duke, and gone his Duchess.
Seek her at the Church of Brou."—

Austrian knights and march-worn palmers
Climb the winding mountain way.
Reach the valley, where the Fabric
Rises higher day by day.

Stones are sawing, hammers ringing;
On the work the bright sun shines:
In the Savoy mountain meadows,
By the stream, below the pines.

On her palfrey white the Duchess
Sate and watch'd her working train;
Flemish carvers, Lombard gilders,
German masons, smiths from Spain.

Clad in black, on her white palfrey;
Her old architect beside—
There they found her in the mountains,
Morn and noon and eventide.

There she sate, and watch'd the builders,
'Till the Church was roof'd and done.
Last of all, the builders rear'd her
In the nave a tomb of stone.

On the tomb two Forms they sculptured,
Lifelike in the marble pale.
One, the Duke in helm and armour;
One, the Duchess in her veil.

Round the tomb the carved stone fretwork
  Was at Easter tide put on.
Then the Duchess closed her labours;
  And she died at the St. John.

The Duchess dies

II.—THE CHURCH

Upon the glistening leaden roof
  Of the new Pile, the sunlight shines
    The streams go leaping by.
The hills are clothed with pines sun-proof.
  Mid bright green fields, below the pines,
    Stands the Church on high.
What Church is this, from men aloof?
'Tis the Church of Brou.

At sunrise, from their dewy lair
  Crossing the stream, the kine are seen
    Round the wall to stray;
The churchyard wall that clips the square
  Of shaven hill-sward trim and green
    Where last year they lay.
But all things now are order'd fair
Round the Church of Brou.

On Sundays, at the matin chime,
  The Alpine peasants, two and three,
    Climb up here to pray.
Burghers and dames, at summer's prime,
  Ride out to church from Chambery,
    Dight with mantles gay.
But else it is a lonely time
Round the Church of Brou.

Duke and Duchess alone

On Sundays too, a priest doth come
From the wall'd town beyond the pass,
Down the mountain way.
And then you hear the organ's hum,
You hear the white-rob'd priest say mass,
And the people pray.
But else the woods and fields are dumb
Round the Church of Brou.

And after church, when mass is done,
The people to the nave repair
Round the Tomb to stray.
And marvel at the Forms of stone,
And praise the chisell'd broideries rare.
Then they drop away.
The Princely Pair are left alone
In the Church of Brou.

III.—THE TOMB

So rest, for ever rest, O Princely Pair!
In your high Church, 'mid the still mountain air,
Where horn, and hound, and vassals, never come.
Only the blessed Saints are smiling dumb
From the rich painted windows of the nave
On aisle, and transept, and your marble grave:
Where thou, young Prince, shalt never more arise
From the fringed mattress where thy Duchess lies,
On autumn mornings, when the bugle sounds,
And ride across the drawbridge with thy hounds
To hunt the boar in the crisp woods till eve.
And thou, O Princess, shalt no more receive,
Thou and thy ladies, in the hall of state,
The jaded hunters with their bloody freight,
Coming benighted to the castle gate.

So sleep, for ever sleep, O Marble Pair! Heaven and Love
Or if ye wake, let it be then, when fair
On the carved Western Front a flood of light
Streams from the setting sun, and colours bright
Prophets, transfigured Saints, and Martyrs brave,
In the vast western window of the nave;
And on the pavement round the Tomb there glints
A chequer-work of glowing sapphire tints,
And amethyst, and ruby;—then unclose
Your eyelids on the stone where ye repose,
And from your broider'd pillows lift your heads,
And rise upon your cold white marble beds,
And looking down on the warm rosy tints
That chequer, at your feet, the illumined flints,
Say—"*What is this? we are in bliss—forgiven—*
Behold the pavement of the courts of Heaven!"—
Or let it be on autumn nights, when rain
Doth rustlingly above your heads complain
On the smooth leaden roof, and on the walls
Shedding her pensive light at intervals
The Moon through the clere-story windows shines,
And the wind wails among the mountain pines.
Then, gazing up through the dim pillars high,
The foliaged marble forest where ye lie,
"*Hush*"—ye will say—"*it is eternity.*
This is the glimmering verge of Heaven, and these
The columns of the Heavenly Palaces."—
And in the sweeping of the wind your ear
The passage of the Angels' wings will hear,
And on the lichen-crusted leads above
The rustle of the eternal rain of Love.

Rivals

A MODERN SAPPHO

They are gone: all is still: Foolish heart, dost thou quiver?
Nothing moves on the lawn but the quick lilac shade.
Far up gleams the house, and beneath flows the river.
Here lean, my head, on this cool balustrade.

Ere he come: ere the boat, by the shining-branch'd border
Of dark elms come round, dropping down the proud stream;
Let me pause, let me strive, in myself find some order,
Ere their boat-music sound, ere their broider'd flags gleam.

Is it hope makes me linger? the dim thought, that sorrow
Means parting? that only in absence lies pain?
It was well with me once if I saw him: to-morrow
May bring one of the old happy moments again.

Last night we stood earnestly talking together—
She enter'd—that moment his eyes turn'd from me.
Fasten'd on her dark hair and her wreath of white heather—
As yesterday was, so to-morrow will be.

Their love, let me know, must grow strong and yet stronger, The future
Their passion burn more, ere it ceases to burn:
They must love—while they must: But the hearts that love longer
Are rare: ah! most loves but flow once, and return.

I shall suffer; but they will outlive their affection
I shall weep; but their love will be cooling: and he,
As he drifts to fatigue, discontent, and dejection,
Will be brought, thou poor heart! how much nearer to thee!

For cold is his eye to mere beauty, who, breaking
The strong band which beauty around him hath furl'd,
Disenchanted by habit, and newly awaking,
Looks languidly round on a gloom-buried world.

Through that gloom he will see but a shadow appearing,
Perceive but a voice as I come to his side:
But deeper their voice grows, and nobler their bearing,
Whose youth in the fires of anguish hath died.

Then—to wait. But what notes down the wind, hark! are driving?
'Tis he! 'tis the boat, shooting round by the trees!
Let my turn, if it will come, be swift in arriving!
Ah! hope cannot long lighten torments like these.

"Strew on her roses"

Hast thou yet dealt him, O Life, thy full measure?
World, have thy children yet bow'd at his knee?
Hast thou with myrtle-leaf crown'd him, O Pleasure?
Crown, crown him quickly, and leave him for me.

REQUIESCAT

Strew on her roses, roses,
And never a spray of yew.
In quiet she reposes:
Ah! would that I did too.

Her mirth the world required:
She bathed it in smiles of glee.
But her heart was tired, tired,
And now they let her be.

Her life was turning, turning,
In mazes of heat and sound.
But for peace her soul was yearning,
And now peace laps her round.

Her cabin'd, ample Spirit,
It flutter'd and fail'd for breath.
To-night it doth inherit
The vasty Hall of Death.

LINES WRITTEN BY A DEATH-BED

A healing quiet

Yes, now the longing is o'erpast.
Which, dogg'd by fear and fought by shame,
Shook her weak bosom day and night,
Consumed her beauty like a flame,
And dimm'd it like the desert blast.
And though the curtains hide her face,
Yet were it lifted to the light
The sweet expression of her brow
Would charm the gazer, till his thought
Erased the ravages of time,
Fill'd up the hollow cheek, and brought
A freshness back as of her prime—
So healing is her quiet now.
So perfectly the lines express
A placid, settled loveliness;
Her youngest rival's freshest grace.

But ah, though peace indeed is here,
And ease from shame, and rest from fear;
Though nothing can dismarble now
The smoothness of that limpid brow;
Yet is a calm like this, in truth,
The crowning end of life and youth?
And when this boon rewards the dead,
Are all debts paid, has all been said?
And is the heart of youth so light,
Its step so firm, its eye so bright,
Because on its hot brow there blows
A wind of promise and repose
From the far grave, to which it goes?

Calm not life's crown

Because it has the hope to come,
One day, to harbour in the tomb?
Ah no, the bliss youth dreams is one
For daylight, for the cheerful sun,
For feeling nerves and living breath—
Youth dreams a bliss on this side death.
It dreams a rest, if not more deep,
More grateful than this marble sleep.
It hears a voice within it tell—
"Calm 's not life's crown, though calm is well."
'Tis all perhaps which man acquires:
But 'tis not what our youth desires.

A MEMORY PICTURE

TO MY FRIENDS, WHO RIDICULED A TENDER LEAVE-TAKING

Laugh, my Friends, and without blame
Lightly quit what lightly came:
Rich to-morrow as to-day
Spend as madly as you may.
I, with little land to stir,
Am the exacter labourer.
Ere the parting hour go by,
Quick, thy tablets, Memory!

But my youth reminds me—"Thou
Hast lived light as these live now:
As these are, thou too wert such;
Much hast had, hast squander'd much."
Fortune's now less frequent heir,
Ah! I husband what 's grown rare.

Ere the parting hour go by,
Quick, thy tablets, Memory! Quick, thy tablets, Memory!

Young, I said: "A face is gone
If too hotly mused upon:
And our best impressions are
Those that do themselves repair."
Many a face I then let by,
Ah! is faded utterly.
Ere the parting hour go by,
Quick, thy tablets, Memory!

Marguerite says: "As last year went,
So the coming year 'll be spent:
Some day next year, I shall be,
Entering heedless, kiss'd by thee."
Ah! I hope—yet, once away,
What may chain us, who can say?
Ere the parting hour go by,
Quick, thy tablets, Memory!

Paint that lilac kerchief, bound
Her soft face, her hair around:
Tied under the archest chin
Mockery ever ambush'd in.
Let the fluttering fringes streak
All her pale, sweet-rounded cheek.
Ere the parting hour go by,
Quick, thy tablets, Memory!

Paint that figure's pliant grace
As she towards me lean'd her face,
Half-refused and half resign'd,
Murmuring, "Art thou still unkind?"

A fruitless cry

Many a broken promise then
Was new made—to break again.
Ere the parting hour go by,
Quick, thy tablets, Memory!

Paint those eyes, so blue, so kind,
Eager tell-tales of her mind:
Paint, with their impetuous stress
Of inquiring tenderness,
Those frank eyes, where deep doth lie
An angelic gravity.
Ere the parting hour go by,
Quick, thy tablets, Memory!

What, my Friends, these feeble lines
Show, you say, my love declines?
To paint ill as I have done,
Proves forgetfulness begun?
Time's gay minions, pleased you see,
Time, your master, governs me.
Pleased, you mock the fruitless cry
"Quick, thy tablets, Memory!"

Ah! too true. Time's current strong
Leaves us true to nothing long.
Yet, if little stays with man,
Ah! retain we all we can!
If the clear impression dies,
Ah! the dim remembrance prize!
Ere the parting hour go by,
Quick, thy tablets, Memory!

Olivia and Marguerite

A DREAM

Was it a dream? We sail'd, I thought we sail'd,
Martin and I, down a green Alpine stream,
Under o'erhanging pines; the morning sun,
On the wet umbrage of their glossy tops,
On the red pinings of their forest floor,
Drew a warm scent abroad; behind the pines
The mountain skirts, with all their sylvan change
Of bright-leaf'd chestnuts, and moss'd walnut-trees,
And the frail scarlet-berried ash, began.
Swiss chalets glitter'd on the dewy slopes,
And from some swarded shelf high up, there came
Notes of wild pastoral music: over all
Ranged, diamond-bright, the eternal wall of snow.
Upon the mossy rocks at the stream's edge,
Back'd by the pines, a plank-built cottage stood,
Bright in the sun; the climbing gourd-plant's leaves
Muffled its walls, and on the stone-strewn roof
Lay the warm golden gourds; golden, within,
Under the eaves, peer'd rows of Indian corn.
We shot beneath the cottage with the stream.
On the brown rude-carved balcony two Forms
Came forth—Olivia's, Marguerite! and thine.
Clad were they both in white, flowers in their breasts;
Straw hats bedeck'd their heads, with ribbons blue
Which waved, and on their shoulders fluttering play'd.
They saw us, they conferr'd; their bosoms heaved,
And more than mortal impulse fill'd their eyes.
Their lips mov'd; their white arms, waved eagerly,

The River of Life

Flash'd once, like falling streams:—we rose, we gazed:
One moment, on the rapid's top, our boat
Hung poised—and then the darting River of Life,
Loud thundering, bore us by: swift, swift it foam'd;
Black under cliffs it raced, round headlands shone.
Soon the plank'd cottage 'mid the sun-warm'd pines
Faded, the moss, the rocks; us burning Plains
Bristled with cities, us the Sea received.

THE NEW SIRENS

A PALINODE

In the cedar shadow sleeping,
Where cool grass and fragrant glooms
Oft at noon have lured me, creeping
From your darken'd palace rooms:
I, who in your train at morning
Stroll'd and sang with joyful mind,
Heard, at evening, sounds of warning;
Heard the hoarse boughs labour in the wind.

Who are they, O pensive Graces,
—For I dream'd they wore your forms—
Who on shores and sea-wash'd places
Scoop the shelves and fret the storms?
Who, when ships are that way tending,
Troop across the flushing sands,
To all reefs and narrows wending,
With blown tresses, and with beckoning hands?

Yet I see, the howling levels Poet-exiles
Of the deep are not your lair;
And your tragic-vaunted revels
Are less lonely than they were.
In a Tyrian galley steering
From the golden springs of dawn,
Troops, like Eastern kings, appearing,
Stream all day through your enchanted lawn.

And we too, from upland valleys,
Where some Muse, with half-curved frown,
Leans her ear to your mad sallies
Which the charm'd winds never drown;
By faint music guided, ranging
The scared glens, we wander'd on:
Left our awful laurels hanging,
And came heap'd with myrtles to your throne.

From the dragon-warder'd fountains
Where the springs of knowledge are:
From the watchers on the mountains,
And the bright and morning star:
We are exiles, we are falling,
We have lost them at your call—
O ye false ones, at your calling
Seeking ceiléd chambers and a palace hall.

Are the accents of your luring
More melodious than of yore?
Are those frail forms more enduring
Than the charms Ulysses bore?
That we sought you with rejoicings
Till at evening we descry
At a pause of Siren voicings
These vext branches and this howling sky? . . .

Pleasure *versus* Pain

* * * * *

Oh! your pardon. The uncouthness
Of that primal age is gone:
And the skin of dazzling smoothness
Screens not now a heart of stone.
Love has flush'd those cruel faces;
And your slacken'd arms forego
The delight of fierce embraces:
And those whitening bone-mounds do not grow.

"Come," you say; "the large appearance
Of man's labour is but vain:
And we plead as firm adherence
Due to pleasure as to pain."
Pointing to some world-worn creatures,
"Come," you murmur with a sigh:
"Ah! we own diviner features,
Loftier bearing, and a prouder eye.

"Come," you say, "the hours are dreary:
Life is long, and will not fade:
Time is lame, and we grow weary
In this slumbrous cedarn shade,
Round our hearts, with long caresses,
With low sighs hath Silence stole;
And her load of steaming tresses
Weighs, like Ossa, on the aery soul.

"Come," you say, "the Soul is fainting
Till she search, and learn her own:
And the wisdom of man's painting
Leaves her riddle half unknown.
Come," you say, "the brain is seeking,
When the princely heart is dead:

Yet this glean'd, when Gods were speaking, Thoughts of sunrise
Rarer secrets than the toiling head.

"Come," you say, "opinion trembles,
Judgment shifts, convictions go:
Life dries up, the heart dissembles:
Only, what we feel, we know.
Hath your wisdom known emotions?
Will it weep our burning tears?
Hath it drunk of our love-potions
Crowning moments with the weight of years?"

I am dumb. Alas! too soon, all
Man's grave reasons disappear:
Yet, I think, at God's tribunal
Some large answer you shall hear.
But for me, my thoughts are straying
Where at sunrise, through the vines,
On these lawns I saw you playing,
Hanging garlands on the odorous pines.

When your showering locks enwound you,
And your heavenly eyes shone through:
When the pine-boughs yielded round you,
And your brows were starr'd with dew.
And immortal forms to meet you
Down the statued alleys came:
And through golden horns, to greet you,
Blew such music as a God may frame.

Yes—I muse:—And, if the dawning
Into daylight never grew—
If the glistering wings of morning
On the dry noon shook their dew—

Calms after raptures

If the fits of joy were longer—
Or the day were sooner done—
Or, perhaps, if Hope were stronger—
No weak nursling of an earthly sun . . .
Pluck, pluck cypress, O pale maidens,
Dusk the hall with yew!

* * * *

But a bound was set to meetings,
And the sombre day dragg'd on:
And the burst of joyful greetings,
And the joyful dawn, were gone:
For the eye was fill'd with gazing,
And on raptures follow calms:—
And those warm locks men were praising
Droop'd, unbraided, on your listless arms.

Storms unsmooth'd your folded valleys,
And made all your cedars frown.
Leaves are whirling in the alleys
Which your lovers wander'd down.
—Sitting cheerless in your bowers,
The hands propping the sunk head,
Do they gall you, the long hours?
And the hungry thought, that must be fed?

Is the pleasure that is tasted
Patient of a long review?
Will the fire joy hath wasted,
Mus'd on, warm the heart anew?
—Or, are those old thoughts returning,
Guests the dull sense never knew,
Stars, set deep, yet inly burning,
Germs, your untrimm'd Passion overgrew?

Once, like me, you took your station
Watchers for a purer fire:
But you droop'd in expectation,
And you wearied in desire.
When the first rose flush was steeping
All the frore peak's awful crown,
Shepherds say, they found you sleeping
In a windless valley, further down.

Then you wept, and slowly raising
Your dozed eyelids, sought again,
Half in doubt, they say, and gazing
Sadly back, the seats of men.
Snatch'd an earthly inspiration
From some transient human Sun,
And proclaim'd your vain ovation
For the mimic raptures you had won.
Pluck, pluck cypress, O pale maidens,
Dusk the hall with yew!

* * * *

With a sad, majestic motion—
With a stately, slow surprise—
From their earthward-bound devotion
Lifting up your languid eyes:
Would you freeze my louder boldness
Dumbly smiling as you go?
One faint frown of distant coldness
Flitting fast across each marble brow?

Do I brighten at your sorrow
O sweet Pleaders? doth my lot
Find assurance in to-morrow
Of one joy, which you have not?

Watching for a purer fire

This sobbing Phrygian strain

O speak once! and let my sadness,
And this sobbing Phrygian strain,
Sham'd and baffled by your gladness,
Blame the music of your feasts in vain.

Scent, and song, and light, and flowers—
Gust on gust, the hoarse winds blow.
Come, bind up those ringlet showers!
Roses for that dreaming brow!
Come, once more that ancient lightness,
Glancing feet, and eager eyes!
Let your broad lamps flash the brightness
Which the sorrow-stricken day denies!

Through black depths of serried shadows,
Up cold aisles of buried glade;
In the mist of river meadows
Where the looming kine are laid;
From your dazzled windows streaming,
From the humming festal room,
Deep and far, a broken gleaming
Reels and shivers on the ruffled gloom.

Where I stand, the grass is glowing:
Doubtless, you are passing fair:
But I hear the north wind blowing;
And I feel the cold night-air.
Can I look on your sweet faces,
And your proud heads backward thrown,
From this dusk of leaf-strewn places
With the dumb woods and the night alone?

But, indeed, this flux of guesses—
Mad delight, and frozen calms—

Mirth to-day and vine-bound tresses,
And to-morrow—folded palms—
Is this all? this balanc'd measure?
Could life run no easier way?
Happy at the noon of pleasure,
Passive, at the midnight of dismay?

A dreary light

But, indeed, this proud possession—
This far-reaching magic chain,
Linking in a mad succession
Fits of joy and fits of pain:
Have you seen it at the closing?
Have you track'd its clouded ways?
Can your eyes, while fools are dozing,
Drop, with mine, adown life's latter days?

When a dreary light is wading
Through this waste of sunless greens—
When the flashing lights are fading
On the peerless cheek of queens—
When the mean shall no more sorrow,
And the proudest no more smile—
While the dawning of the morrow
Widens slowly westward all that while?

Then, when change itself is over,
When the slow tide sets one way,
Shall you find the radiant lover,
Even by moments, of to-day?
The eye wanders, faith is failing:
O, loose hands, and let it be!
Proudly, like a king bewailing,
O, let fall one tear, and set us free!

Weeping graces and Gods dismayed

All true speech and large avowal
Which the jealous soul concedes:
All man's heart—which brooks bestowal:
All frank faith—which passion breeds:
These we had, and we gave truly:
Doubt not, what we had, we gave:
False we were not, nor unruly:
Lodgers in the forest and the cave.

Long we wander'd with you, feeding
Our sad souls on your replies:
In a wistful silence reading
All the meaning of your eyes:
By moss-border'd statues sitting,
By well-heads, in summer days.
But we turn, our eyes are flitting.
See, the white east, and the morning rays!

And you too, O weeping graces,
Sylvan Gods of this fair shade!
Is there doubt on divine faces?
Are the happy Gods dismay'd?
Can men worship the wan features,
The sunk eyes, the wailing tone,
Of unsphered discrownéd creatures,
Souls as little godlike as their own?

Come, loose hands! The winged fleetness
Of immortal feet is gone.
And your scents have shed their sweetness,
And your flowers are overblown.
And your jewell'd gauds surrender
Half their glories to the day:
Freely did they flash their splendour,
Freely gave it—but it dies away.

Cypress and yew

In the pines the thrush is waking—
Lo, yon orient hill in flames:
Scores of true love-knots are breaking
At divorce which it proclaims.
When the lamps are paled at morning,
Heart quits heart, and hand quits hand.
—Cold in that unlovely dawning,
Loveless, rayless, joyless you shall stand.

Strew no more red roses, maidens,
Leave the lilies in their dew:
Pluck, pluck cypress, O pale maidens!
Dusk, O dusk the hall with yew!
—Shall I seek, that I may scorn her,
Her I loved at eventide?
Shall I ask, what faded mourner
Stands, at daybreak, weeping by my side? . .
Pluck, pluck cypress, O pale maidens!
Dusk the hall with yew!

THE VOICE

As the kindling glances,
Queen-like and clear,
Which the bright moon lances
From her tranquil sphere
At the sleepless waters
Of a lonely mere,
On the wild whirling waves, mournfully, mournfully,
Shiver and die.

Intolerable change

As the tears of sorrow
Mothers have shed—
Prayers that to-morrow
Shall in vain be sped
When the flower they flow for
Lies frozen and dead—
Fall on the throbbing brow, fall on the burning breast,
Bringing no rest.

Like bright waves that fall
With a lifelike motion
On the lifeless margin of the sparkling Ocean.
A wild rose climbing up a mould'ring wall—
A gush of sunbeams through a ruin'd hall—
Strains of glad music at a funeral:—
So sad, and with so wild a start
To this long sober'd heart,
So anxiously and painfully,
So dreamily and doubtfully,
And, oh, with such intolerable change
Of thought, such contrast strange,
O unforgotten Voice, thy whispers come,
Like wanderers from the world's extremity,
Unto their ancient home.

In vain, all, all in vain,
They beat upon mine ear again,
Those melancholy tones so sweet and still.
Those lute-like tones which in long distant years
Did steal into mine ears:
Blew such a thrilling summons to my will;
Yet could not shake it.
Drain'd all the life my full heart had to spill;
Yet could not break it.

Save, oh, save!

STAGIRIUS

Thou, who dost dwell alone—
Thou, who dost know thine own—
Thou, to whom all are known
From the cradle to the grave—
Save, oh, save.
From the world's temptations,
From tribulations;
From that fierce anguish
Wherein we languish;
From that torpor deep
Wherein we lie asleep,
Heavy as death, cold as the grave;
Save, oh, save.

When the Soul, growing clearer,
Sees God no nearer:
When the Soul, mounting higher,
To God comes no nigher:
But the arch-fiend Pride
Mounts at her side,
Foiling her high emprize,
Sealing her eagle eyes,
And, when she fain would soar,
Makes idols to adore;
Changing the pure emotion
Of her high devotion,
To a skin-deep sense
Of her own eloquence:
Strong to deceive, strong to enslave—
Save, oh, save.

Oh, set us free

From the ingrain'd fashion
Of this earthly nature
That mars thy creature.
From grief, that is but passion;
From mirth, that is but feigning;
From tears, that bring no healing;
From wild and weak complaining;
Thine old strength revealing,
Save, oh, save.
From doubt, where all is double:
Where wise men are not strong:
Where comfort turns to trouble:
Where just men suffer wrong.
Where sorrow treads on joy:
Where sweet things soonest cloy:
Where faiths are built on dust:
Where Love is half mistrust,
Hungry, and barren, and sharp as the sea;
Oh, set us free.
O let the false dream fly
Where our sick souls do lie
Tossing continually.
O where thy voice doth come
Let all doubts be dumb:
Let all words be mild:
All strifes be reconciled:
All pains beguiled.
Light bring no blindness;
Love no unkindness;
Knowledge no ruin!
Fear no undoing.
From the cradle to the grave,
Save, oh! save.

HUMAN LIFE

Who has kept the Law?

What mortal, when he saw,
Life's voyage done, his Heavenly Friend,
Could ever yet dare tell him fearlessly,
"I have kept uninfringed my nature's law.
The inly-written chart thou gavest me
To guide me, I have steer'd by to the end?"

Ah! let us make no claim
On life's incognisable sea
To too exact a steering of our way.
Let us not fret and fear to miss our aim
If some fair coast has lured us to make stay,
Or some friend hail'd us to keep company.

Ay, we would each fain drive
At random, and not steer by rule.
Weakness! and worse, weakness bestow'd in vain!
Winds from our side the unsuiting consort rive:
We rush by coasts where we had lief remain.
Man cannot, though he would, live Chance's fool.

No! as the foaming swathe
Of torn-up water, on the main,
Falls heavily away with long-drawn roar
On either side the black deep-furrow'd path
Cut by an onward-labouring vessel's prore,
And never touches the ship-side again;

Even so we leave behind,
As, charter'd by some unknown Powers,
We stem across the sea of life by night,
The joys which were not for our use design'd.
The friends to whom we had no natural right:
The homes that were not destined to be ours.

An infant's gloom

TO A GIPSY CHILD BY THE SEA-SHORE

DOUGLAS, ISLE OF MAN

Who taught this pleading to unpractised eyes?
Who hid such import in an infant's gloom?
Who lent thee, child, this meditative guise?
Who mass'd, round that slight brow, these clouds of doom?

Lo! sails that gleam a moment and are gone;
The swinging waters, and the cluster'd pier.
Not idly Earth and Ocean labour on,
Nor idly do these sea-birds hover near.

But thou, whom superfluity of joy
Wafts not from thine own thoughts, nor longings vain,
Nor weariness, the full-fed soul's annoy;
Remaining in thy hunger and thy pain:

Thou, drugging pain by patience; half averse
From thine own mother's breast that knows not thee;
With eyes that sought thine eyes thou didst converse,
And that soul-searching vision fell on me.

Glooms that go deep as thine I have not known:
Moods of fantastic sadness, nothing worth.
Thy sorrow and thy calmness are thine own:
Glooms that enhance and glorify this earth.

What mood wears like complexion to thy woe? Anticipation of pain
His, who in mountain glens, at noon of day,
Sits rapt, and hears the battle break below?
Ah! thine was not the shelter, but the fray.

What exile's, changing bitter thoughts with glad?
What seraph's, in some alien planet born?
No exile's dream was ever half so sad,
Nor any angel's sorrow so forlorn.

Is the calm thine of stoic souls, who weigh
Life well, and find it wanting, nor deplore:
But in disdainful silence turn away,
Stand mute, self-centred, stern, and dream no more?

Or do I wait, to hear some grey-haired king
Unravel all his many-colour'd lore:
Whose mind hath known all arts of governing,
Mused much, loved life a little, loathed it more?

Down the pale cheek long lines of shadow slope,
Which years, and curious thought, and suffering give——
Thou hast foreknown the vanity of hope,
Foreseen thy harvest—yet proceed'st to live.

O meek anticipant of that sure pain
Whose sureness grey-hair'd scholars hardly learn!
What wonder shall time breed, to swell thy strain?
What heavens, what earth, what suns shalt thou discern?

Ere the long night, whose stillness brooks no star,
Match that funereal aspect with her pall,
I think, thou wilt have fathom'd life too far,
Have known too much——or else forgotten all.

Majesty of grief

The Guide of our dark steps a triple veil
Betwixt our senses and our sorrow keeps:
Hath sown, with cloudless passages, the tale
Of grief, and eased us with a thousand sleeps.

Ah! not the nectarous poppy lovers use,
Not daily labour's dull, Lethæan spring,
Oblivion in lost angels can infuse
Of the soil'd glory, and the trailing wing.

And though thou glean, what strenuous gleaners may,
In the throng'd fields where winning comes by strife;
And though the just sun gild, as all men pray,
Some reaches of thy storm-vex'd stream of life:

Though that blank sunshine blind thee: though the cloud
That sever'd the world's march and thine, is gone:
Though ease dulls grace, and Wisdom be too proud
To halve a lodging that was all her own:

Once, ere the day decline, thou shalt discern,
Oh once, ere night, in thy success, thy chain.
Ere the long evening close, thou shalt return,
And wear this majesty of grief again.

THE HAYSWATER BOAT

A region desolate and wild.
Black, chafing water: and afloat,
And lonely as a truant child
In a waste wood, a single boat:

No mast, no sails are set thereon ; A lonely boat
It moves, but never moveth on :
And welters like a human thing
Amid the wild waves weltering.

Behind, a buried vale doth sleep,
Far down the torrent cleaves its way :
In front the dumb rock rises steep,
A fretted wall of blue and grey ;
Of shooting cliff and crumbled stone
With many a wild weed overgrown :
All else, black water : and afloat,
One rood from shore, that single boat.

Last night the wind was up and strong ;
The grey-streak'd waters labour still :
The strong blast brought a pigmy throng
From that mild hollow in the hill ;
From those twin brooks, that beached strand
So featly strewn with drifted sand ;
From those weird domes of mounded green
That spot the solitary scene.

This boat they found against the shore :
The glossy rushes nodded by.
One rood from land they push'd, no more ;
Then rested, listening silently.
The loud rains lash'd the mountain's crown,
The grating shingle straggled down :
All night they sate ; then stole away,
And left it rocking in the bay.

Last night ?—I looked, the sky was clear.
The boat was old, a batter'd boat.
In sooth, it seems a hundred year
Since that strange crew did ride afloat.

How came it there?

The boat hath drifted in the bay—
The oars have moulder'd as they lay—
The rudder swings—yet none doth steer.
What living hand hath brought it here?

A QUESTION: TO FAUSTA

Joy comes and goes: hope ebbs and flows,
Like the wave.
Change doth unknit the tranquil strength of men.
Love lends life a little grace,
A few sad smiles: and then,
Both are laid in one cold place,
In the grave.

Dreams dawn and fly: friends smile and die,
Like spring flowers.
Our vaunted life is one long funeral.
Men dig graves, with bitter tears,
For their dead hopes; and all,
Mazed with doubts, and sick with fears,
Count the hours.

We count the hours: these dreams of ours,
False and hollow,
Shall we go hence and find they are not dead?
Joys we dimly apprehend
Faces that smiled and fled,
Hopes born here, and born to end,
Shall we follow?

IN UTRUMQUE PARATUS

The sacred world

If, in the silent mind of One all-pure
At first imagin'd lay
The sacred world; and by procession sure
From those still deeps, in form and colour drest,
Seasons alternating, and night and day,
The long-mused thought to north, south, east and west
Took then its all-seen way:

O waking on a world which thus-wise springs!
Whether it needs thee count
Betwixt thy waking and the birth of things
Ages or hours: O waking on Life's stream!
By lonely pureness to the all-pure Fount
(Only by this thou canst) the colour'd dream
Of Life remount.

Thin, thin the pleasant human noises grow;
And faint the city gleams;
Rare the lone pastoral huts: marvel not thou!
The solemn peaks but to the stars are known,
But to the stars, and the cold lunar beams:
Alone the sun arises, and alone
Spring the great streams.

But, if the wild unfather'd mass no birth
In divine seats hath known:
In the blank, echoing solitude, if Earth,
Rocking her obscure body to and fro,
Ceases not from all time to heave and groan,
Unfruitful oft, and, at her happiest throe,
Forms, what she forms, alone:

"I too but seem"

O seeming sole to awake, thy sun-bathed head
Piercing the solemn cloud
Round thy still dreaming brother-world outspread!
O man, whom Earth, thy long-vex'd mother, bare
Not without joy; so radiant, so endow'd—
(Such happy issue crown'd her painful care)
Be not too proud!

O when most self-exalted most alone,
Chief dreamer, own thy dream!
Thy brother-world stirs at thy feet unknown;
Who hath a monarch's hath no brother's part;
Yet doth thine inmost soul with yearning teem.
O what a spasm shakes the dreamer's heart——
"*I too but seem!*"

THE WORLD AND THE QUIETIST

TO CRITIAS

"WHY, when the world's great mind
Hath finally inclined,
Why," you say, Critias, "be debating still?
Why, with these mournful rhymes
Learn'd in more languid climes,
Blame our activity,
Who, with such passionate will,
Are, what we mean to be?"

Critias, long since, I know,
(For Fate decreed it so,)
Long since the World hath set its heart to live.

Long since, with credulous zeal
  It turns Life's mighty wheel.
Still doth for labourers send.
  Who still their labour give.
And still expects an end.

The world's will

Yet, as the wheel flies round,
With no ungrateful sound
Do adverse voices fall on the World's ear.
Deafen'd by his own stir
The rugged Labourer
Caught not till then a sense
So glowing and so near
  Of his omnipotence.

So, when the feast grew loud
In Susa's palace proud,
A white-rob'd slave stole to the Monarch's side.
He spoke: the Monarch heard:
Felt the slow-rolling word
Swell his attentive soul;
Breathed deeply as it died,
  And drained his mighty bowl.

THE SECOND BEST

Moderate tasks and moderate leisure;
Quiet living, strict-kept measure
Both in suffering and in pleasure,
  'Tis for this thy nature yearns.

Hope, Light, Persistance

But so many books thou readest,
But so many schemes thou breedest,
But so many wishes feedest,
That thy poor head almost turns.

And, (the world 's so madly jangled,
Human things so fast entangled)
Nature's wish must now be strangled
For that best which she discerns.

So it must be: yet, while leading
A strain'd life, while overfeeding,
Like the rest, his wit with reading,
No small profit that man earns,

Who through all he meets can steer him,
Can reject what cannot clear him,
Cling to what can truly cheer him:
Who each day more surely learns

That an impulse, from the distance
Of his deepest, best existence,
To the words "Hope, Light, Persistance,"
Strongly stirs and truly burns.

CONSOLATION

Mist clogs the sunshine.
Smoky dwarf houses
Hem me round everywhere.
A vague dejection
Weighs down my soul.

Yet, while I languish, Countless prospects
Everywhere, countless
Prospects unroll themselves
And countless beings
Pass countless moods.

Far hence, in Asia,
On the smooth convent-roofs,
On the gold terraces
Of holy Lassa,
Bright shines the sun.

Grey time-worn marbles
Hold the pure Muses.
In their cool gallery,
By yellow Tiber,
They still look fair.

Strange unloved uproar[1]
Shrills round their portal.
Yet not on Helicon
Kept they more cloudless
Their noble calm.

Through sun-proof alleys,
In a lone, sand-hemm'd
City of Africa,
A blind, led beggar,
Age-bow'd, asks alms.

No bolder Robber
Erst abode ambush'd
Deep in the sandy waste:
No clearer eyesight
Spied prey afar.

[1] Written during the siege of Rome by the French.

Compensations

Saharan sand-winds
Sear'd his keen eyeballs.
Spent is the spoil he won,
For him the present
Holds only pain.

Two young, fair lovers,
Where the warm June wind,
Fresh from the summer fields,
Plays fondly round them,
Stand, tranced in joy.

With sweet, join'd voices,
And with eyes brimming—
"Ah," they cry, "Destiny!
Prolong the present!
Time! stand still here!"

The prompt stern Goddess
Shakes her head, frowning.
Time gives his hour-glass
Its due reversal.
Their hour is gone.

With weak indulgence
Did the just Goddess
Lengthen their happiness,
She lengthened also
Distress elsewhere.

The hour, whose happy
Unalloy'd moments
I would eternalise,
Ten thousand mourners
Well pleased see end.

The bleak stern hour, To die or attain!
Whose severe moments
I would annihilate,
Is pass'd by others
In warmth, light, joy.

Time, so complain'd of,
Who to no one man
Shows partiality,
Brings round to all men
Some undimm'd hours.

RESIGNATION

TO FAUSTA

"To die be given us, or attain!
Fierce work it were, to do again."
So pilgrims, bound for Mecca, pray'd
At burning noon: so warriors said,
Scarf'd with the cross, who watch'd the miles
Of dust that wreathed their struggling files
Down Lydian mountains; so, when snows
Round Alpine summits eddying rose,
The Goth, bound Rome-wards: so the Hun,
Crouch'd on his saddle, when the sun
Went lurid down o'er flooded plains
Through which the groaning Danube strains
To the drear Euxine: so pray all,
Whom labours, self-ordain'd, enthrall;
Because they to themselves propose
On this side the all-common close
A goal which, gain'd, may give repose.

Ten years since

So pray they: and to stand again
Where they stood once, to them were pain;
Pain to thread back and to renew
Past straits, and currents long steer'd through.

But milder natures, and more free;
Whom an unblamed serenity
Hath freed from passions, and the state
Of struggle these necessitate;
Whose schooling of the stubborn mind
Hath made, or birth hath found, resign'd;
These mourn not, that their goings pay
Obedience to the passing day.
These claim not every laughing Hour
For handmaid to their striding power;
Each in her turn, with torch uprear'd,
To await their march; and when appear'd,
Through the cold gloom, with measured race,
To usher for a destined space,
(Her own sweet errands all foregone)
The too imperious Traveller on.
These, Fausta, ask not this: nor thou,
Time's chafing prisoner, ask it now.

We left, just ten years since, you say,
That wayside inn we left to-day:
Our jovial host, as forth we fare,
Shouts greeting from his easy chair;
High on a bank our leader stands,
Reviews and ranks his motley bands;
Makes clear our goal to every eye,
The valley's western boundary.
A gate swings to: our tide hath flow'd
Already from the silent road.

The valley pastures, one by one, Over the Fells
Are threaded, quiet in the sun:
And now beyond the rude stone bridge
Slopes gracious up the western ridge.
Its woody border, and the last
Of its dark upland farms is past:
Lone farms, with open-lying stores,
Under their burnish'd sycamores.
All past: and through the trees we glide
Emerging on the green hill-side.
There climbing hangs, a far-seen sign,
Our wavering, many-colour'd line;
There winds, upstreaming slowly still
Over the summit of the hill.
And now, in front, behold outspread
Those upper regions we must tread;
Mild hollows, and clear heathy swells,
The cheerful silence of the fells.
Some two hours' march, with serious air,
Through the deep noontide heats we fare:
The red-grouse, springing at our sound,
Skims, now and then, the shining ground;
No life, save his and ours, intrudes
Upon these breathless solitudes.
O joy! again the farms appear;
Cool shade is there, and rustic cheer:
There springs the brook will guide us down,
Bright comrade, to the noisy town.
Lingering, we follow down: we gain
The town, the highway, and the plain.
And many a mile of dusty way,
Parch'd and road-worn, we made that day;
But, Fausta, I remember well
That, as the balmy darkness fell,

The Fells again and the Gipsies

We bathed our hands, with speechless glee,
That night, in the wide-glimmering Sea.

Once more we tread this self-same road,
Fausta, which ten years since we trod:
Alone we tread it, you and I;
Ghosts of that boisterous company.
Here, where the brook shines, near its head,
In its clear, shallow, turf-fringed bed;
Here, whence the eye first sees, far down,
Capp'd with faint smoke, the noisy town;
Here sit we, and again unroll,
Though slowly, the familiar whole.
The solemn wastes of heathy hill
Sleep in the July sunshine still:
The self-same shadows now, as then,
Play through this grassy upland glen:
The loose dark stones on the green way
Lie strewn, it seems, where then they lay:
On this mild bank above the stream,
(You crush them) the blue gentians gleam.
Still this wild brook, the rushes cool,
The sailing foam, the shining pool.—
These are not changed: and we, you say,
Are scarce more changed, in truth, than they.

The Gipsies, whom we met below,
They too have long roam'd to and fro.
They ramble, leaving, where they pass,
Their fragments on the cumber'd grass.
And often to some kindly place,
Chance guides the migratory race
Where, though long wanderings intervene,
They recognise a former scene.

The dingy tents are pitch'd: the fires
Give to the wind their wavering spires;
In dark knots crouch round the wild flame
Their children, as when first they came;
They see their shackled beasts again
Move, browsing, up the gray-wall'd lane.
Signs are not wanting, which might raise
The ghosts in them of former days:
Signs are not wanting, if they would;
Suggestions to disquietude.
For them, for all, Time's busy touch,
While it mends little, troubles much:
Their joints grow stiffer; but the year
Runs his old round of dubious cheer:
Chilly they grow; yet winds in March
Still, sharp as ever, freeze and parch:
They must live still; and yet, God knows,
Crowded and keen the country grows.
It seems as if, in their decay,
The Law grew stronger every day.
So might they reason; so compare,
Fausta, times past with times that are.
But no:—they rubb'd through yesterday
In their hereditary way;
And they will rub through, if they can,
To-morrow on the self-same plan;
Till death arrives to supersede,
For them, vicissitude and need.

Time mends little

The Poet, to whose mighty heart
Heaven doth a quicker pulse impart,
Subdues that energy to scan
Not his own course, but that of Man.

The Poet

Though he moves mountains; though his day
Be pass'd on the proud heights of sway;
Though he had loosed a thousand chains;
Though he had borne immortal pains;
Action and suffering though he know;
—He hath not lived, if he lives so.
He sees, in some great-historied land,
A ruler of the people stand;
Sees his strong thought in fiery flood
Roll through the heaving multitude;
Exults: yet for no moment's space
Envies the all-regarded place.
Beautiful eyes meet his; and he
Bears to admire uncravingly:
They pass; he, mingled with the crowd,
Is in their far-off triumphs proud.
From some high station he looks down,
At sunset, on a populous town;
Surveys each happy group that fleets,
Toil ended, through the shining streets;
Each with some errand of its own;—
And does not say, "I am alone."
He sees the gentle stir of birth
When Morning purifies the earth;
He leans upon a gate, and sees
The pastures, and the quiet trees.
Low woody hill, with gracious bound,
Folds the still valley almost round;
The cuckoo, loud on some high lawn,
Is answer'd from the depth of dawn;
In the hedge straggling to the stream,
Pale, dew-drench'd, half-shut roses gleam:
But where the further side slopes down
He sees the drowsy new-waked clown

In his white quaint-embroidered frock
Make, whistling, towards his mist-wreathed flock;
Slowly, behind the heavy tread,
The wet flower'd grass heaves up its head.—
Lean'd on his gate, he gazes: tears
Are in his eyes, and in his ears
The murmur of a thousand years:
Before him he sees Life unroll,
A placid and continuous whole;
That general Life, which does not cease,
Whose secret is not joy, but peace;
That Life, whose dumb wish is not miss'd
If birth proceeds, if things subsist;
The Life of plants, and stones, and rain:
The Life he craves; if not in vain
Fate gave, what Chance shall not controul,
His sad lucidity of soul.

His sad lucidity of soul

You listen:—but that wandering smile,
Fausta, betrays you cold the while,
Your eyes pursue the bells of foam
Wash'd, eddying, from this bank, their home.
"Those Gipsies," so your thoughts I scan,
"Are less, the Poet more, than man.
They feel not, though they move and see:
Deeply the Poet feels; but he
Breathes, when he will, immortal air,
Where Orpheus and where Homer are.
In the day's life, whose iron round
Hems us all in, he is not bound.
He escapes thence, but we abide.
Not deep the Poet sees, but wide."

The World in which we live and move
Outlasts aversion, outlasts love.

The Poet's world

Outlasts each effort, interest, hope,
Remorse, grief, joy:—and were the scope
Of these affections wider made,
Man still would see, and see dismay'd,
Beyond his passion's widest range
Far regions of eternal change.
Nay, and since death, which wipes out man,
Finds him with many an unsolved plan,
With much unknown, and much untried,
Wonder not dead, and thirst not dried,
Still gazing on the ever full
Eternal mundane spectacle;
This world in which we draw our breath,
In some sense, Fausta, outlasts death.

Blame thou not therefore him, who dares
Judge vain beforehand human cares.
Whose natural insight can discern
What through experience others learn.
Who needs not love and power, to know
Love transient, power an unreal show.
Who treads at ease life's uncheer'd ways:—
Him blame not, Fausta, rather praise.
Rather thyself for some aim pray
Nobler than this—to fill the day.
Rather, that heart, which burns in thee,
Ask, not to amuse, but to set free.
Be passionate hopes not ill resign'd
For quiet, and a fearless mind.
And though Fate grudge to thee and me
The Poet's rapt security,
Yet they, believe me, who await
No gifts from Chance, have conquered Fate.

They, winning room to see and hear,
And to men's business not too near,
Through clouds of individual strife
Draw homewards to the general Life.
Like leaves by suns not yet uncurl'd:
To the wise, foolish; to the world,
Weak: yet not weak, I might reply,
Not foolish, Fausta, in His eye,
Each moment as it flies, to whom,
Crowd as we will its neutral room,
Is but a quiet watershed
Whence, equally, the Seas of Life and Death are fed.

Enough! we live

Enough, we live:—and if a life,
With large results so little rife,
Though bearable, seem hardly worth
This pomp of worlds, this pain of birth;
Yet, Fausta, the mute turf we tread,
The solemn hills around us spread,
This stream that falls incessantly,
The strange-scrawl'd rocks, the lonely sky,
If I might lend their life a voice,
Seem to bear rather than rejoice.
And even could the intemperate prayer
Man iterates, while these forbear,
For movement, for an ampler sphere,
Pierce Fate's impenetrable ear;
Not milder is the general lot
Because our spirits have forgot,
In action's dizzying eddy whirl'd,
The something that infects the world.

This collection of the dramatic and earlier poems of Matthew Arnold *has been edited and arranged by* Mr. H. Buxton Forman, *who has written the bibliographical epilogue and added the marginalia, notes, and index of first lines. The portrait is from a photograph by Messrs. Elliott and Fry, and represents the poet at the age of fifty-five.*

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL EPILOGUE

The Dramatic and Earlier Poems of Matthew Arnold consist mainly of two groups from his own classified editions, in which he starts with a number of miscellaneous pieces chiefly taken from *The Strayed Reveller and other Poems* (1849) and *Empedocles on Etna and other Poems* (1852). To these, which he himself classified as Early Poems, are here added four which he never reprinted among his works, but which, had he done so, he must needs have classed as early poems. These are *Alaric at Rome*, *Cromwell*, *The Hayswater Boat*, and the *Sonnet to the Hungarian Nation*. His dramatic group consisted, as in the present volume, solely of *Merope* and *Empedocles*, though some other pieces might have been classed as dramatic. His separate publications drawn on for the contents of this volume are six in number; and of these the bibliographical particulars follow in chronological order.

The Rugby prize poem *Alaric at Rome* is currently known in its original pamphlet form by an extremely small number of copies. Besides my own, which formerly belonged to Sir Theodore Walrond of the Civil Service Commission, I know of no more than half a dozen; and these are all in private collections. Walrond's copy was preserved with many other prize poems and essays, and was duly attributed by him (in writing) to "M. Arnold." "Literary circles," and booksellers and collectors of even the more enterprising type, remained unconscious of the existence of *Alaric at Rome* until near about the time of Arnold's death, when a London bookseller offered a copy for a trifle through his catalogue, and Mr. Edmund Gosse secured it. The print is anonymous, like that of any other Rugby prize poem of the period; but the authorship of these poems from about 1813 has been duly published year after year in the chronological lists of prizes for poems, essays, etc., appended to the

current lists of Rugby scholars. *Alaric at Rome* is a sightly pamphlet of six demy octavo leaves, which were originally enclosed in a pink paper wrapper and trimmed. When, therefore, a bound copy is described as "uncut," the expression merely implies that the binder has taken nothing off the edges that he found there, or that he has refolded it to give its edges a look of irregularity usually associated with the uncut state. The legend of the title-page is as follows :—

ALARIC AT ROME.

A PRIZE POEM,

RECITED IN RUGBY SCHOOL,

JUNE XII, MDCCCXL.

[WOOD-CUT]

RUGBY : COMBE AND CROSSLEY.

MDCCCXL.

The wood-cut represents the Rugby arms executed in relief in masonry—the same agreeable design that appears on the title-pages of *The Rugby Magazine*, edited by Clough. The title, wood-cut, and imprint are surrounded by a border of two thin lines and one thick line. The poem extends from page 3, which has a "dropped head" of tall heavy type, to page 11. Page 12 is blank. There are five stanzas to the normal page ; and they are numbered, quite against the poet's mature practice, in Roman capital numerals. The head-lines read "Alaric at Rome" throughout, in small Roman capitals ; and the pages are numbered in the usual way in the outer corners with Arabic figures. The publishers, Combe and Crossley, figure also as printers at the foot of page 11. The title is repeated on the first page of the wrapper, the rest of which is blank ; and the price is given as sixpence. Needless to say, as most of the known copies are from bound collections, the majority of the wrappers have not come down to posterity with the pamphlets. Mr. T. B. Smart, compiler of *A Bibliography of Matthew Arnold* (1892), knows of three copies of *Alaric* with the wrapper.

The Newdigate Prize Poem for 1843 written by Matthew Arnold, but not recited in the Sheldonian Theatre because of the noise which reigned supreme there on the 28th of June 1843, has the following legend on its title-page :—

CROMWELL :

A PRIZE POEM,

RECITED IN THE THEATRE, OXFORD;

JUNE 28, 1843.

BY

MATTHEW ARNOLD,

BALLIOL COLLEGE.

[WOOD-CUT]

OXFORD :

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY J. VINCENT.

MDCCCXLIII.

The wood-cut is the usual one of the Oxford arms. The pamphlet consists of a single post octavo sheet stitched into a drab wrapper, on the first page of which the title-page is repeated with the addition of a rectangular single-line border with two minute circles, one within the other, at each corner. There is no half-title. The synopsis of the poem is printed on the recto of the second leaf. The poem begins at page 5 with a dropped head reading "Cromwell" in Roman capitals and the motto from Schiller ; and it ends on page 15. The versos of the title-page, synopsis, and page 15, as well as pages 2, 3, and 4 of the wrapper, are blank. The head-lines read "Cromwell" in Roman capitals throughout ; and the numbering of the pages is in Arabic figures in the outer corners as usual. The pamphlet is an agreeable one, of which a clean copy in the original wrapper is a difficult thing to obtain at short notice, although it has by no means the attraction of extreme rarity that *Alaric* possesses for the collector. For the matter of that, too, the poem is less attractive though more mature ; and the poet

himself preferred his Rugby effort to his Oxford effort. A second edition of *Cromwell* was published by Messrs. T. & G. Shrimpton of Oxford in 1863 in a green wrapper, and a third in 1891 by their successors, in a blue wrapper.

Arnold's first book properly so called came out early in 1849 with the following title-page :—

THE

STRAYED REVELLER,

AND

OTHER POEMS.

By A.

LONDON :

B. FELLOWES, LUDGATE STREET.

1849.

This volume contained, beside *The Strayed Reveller* itself, *The Sick King in Bokhara*, the *Fragment of an Antigone*, eleven sonnets, and thirteen miscellaneous poems, including the short piece called *The Hayswater Boat* which the poet never reprinted. The book is a foolscap octavo of 136 pages. The title is preceded by a half-title reading "The Strayed Reveller, | and | Other Poems," on the verso of which is the imprint of Clay (Bread Street Hill). Next to the title is a leaf with four lines of Greek on the recto, and this is followed by the table of contents, pages vii and viii. Then, without preface, follow the 128 pages of text. The dropped head on page 1, and the head-lines, are in Roman capitals ; and, save where a new poem starts with a dropped head, the pages are numbered in the usual way with Arabic figures in the outer corners. The cloth cover is of a dark green, straight-grained, blocked blind with conventional corners within three thick rectangular rules : the flowers in the corners are forget-me-nots. The back is gilt-lettered "The | Strayed | Reveller," across ; and the end-papers are of primrose-coloured glazed paper. There are no advertizements of any kind.

The Greek verses, which were prefixed to this volume, and reappeared in the *Poems (First Series)* at the back of the third page of the table of contents, are part of a fragment

of that Chœrilus Samius whom Horace abused. They are as follows :—

> Ἆ μάκαρ, ὅστις ἔην κεῖνον χρόνον ἵδρις ἀοιδῆς
> Μουσάων θεράπων, ὅτ' ἀκείρατος ἦν ἔτι λειμών·
> νῦν δ', ὅτε πάντα δέδασται, ἔχουσι δὲ πείρατα τέχναι,
> ὕστατοι ὥστε δρόμου καταλειπόμεθ'—

It has been stated over and over again, especially by the booksellers, that *The Strayed Reveller* "is extremely rare," having been withdrawn before many copies were sold : but it must not be assumed from this that its author did not give it a fair chance to get sold or withdrew it immediately. Nor, as no fewer than 500 copies were printed, is the collector safe in assuming its scarcity in the absence of an authentic account of the holocaust of undistributed copies. The statement that it was withdrawn before many were sold is not incompatible with its continued sale in driblets and continued gratuitous distribution for some years ; and that is probably what happened to it.

Whatever may have happened to *The Strayed Reveller* volume in its early years, it was not till about the end of 1852 that *Empedocles on Etna and other Poems* followed it ; and of this second volume Arnold has recorded that it was withdrawn before fifty copies had been sold. It is uniform in all respects with its predecessor as described above ; but it is considerably thicker. The half-title reads "Empedocles on Etna, | and | Other Poems," and has Clay's imprint on the verso ; and the title is as follows —

EMPEDOCLES ON ETNA,

AND

OTHER POEMS.

By A.

LONDON :

B. FELLOWES, LUDGATE STREET.

1852.

A single-line Greek motto—

Σοφώτατον, χρόνος· ἀνευρίσκει γὰρ πάντα.

follows on the recto of a separate leaf, and then come the table of contents, pages vii and viii, and a half-title reading "Empedocles on Etna. | A Dramatic Poem," on the verso of which is the list of persons with description of the scene. The text extends to page 236, facing which is an advertizement displayed thus :—

BY THE SAME AUTHOR,

THE STRAYED REVELLER,

AND

OTHER POEMS

Small octavo, price 4s. 6d.

This is followed by a blank page and a blank leaf. It is safe to infer from the offer of the earlier volume that it had not then been withdrawn ; and it is likely enough that very few copies had been sold during the period of over three years and a half. Probably the suppression of the second book was the signal for that of the first. The "Other Poems" issued with *Empedocles* are thirty-two in number, and include *Tristram and Iseult*. The reasons given in the preface prefixed to Arnold's next volume for not republishing *Empedocles* in 1853 doubtless sufficed for its withdrawal before fifty copies had been sold. He had come to the conclusion that his choice of subject in *Empedocles* was faulty at the root ; and it was like him to sacrifice his whole volume of 236 pages to an artist's scruple as to the subject of a piece occupying no more than seventy of those pages. His early letters [1] to his relations and friends show that he was a serious aspirant to the bays, though of necessity much pre-occupied with cares for the material means of livelihood, —cares to which we doubtless owe it that his poetic output was, relatively, so small in bulk.

On the 22nd of October 1852, writing to Wyndham Slade

[1] *Letters of Matthew Arnold* 1848-1888. Collected and arranged by George W. E. Russell. (2 volumes, Macmillan, 1895.)

of the issue of *Empedocles on Etna*, he says: "I have published some poems, which, out of friendship, I forbear to send you; you shall, however, if you are weak enough to desire it, have them when we meet. Can you get from Heimann the address of one William Rossetti for me?—an ingenious youth, who used to write articles in a defunct review, the name of which I forget." The allusion to Mr. Rossetti's article in *The Germ* on *The Strayed Reveller*, while amusing the bibliographer, will indicate to the general reader that Mr. Rossetti was not to be treated with the same friendly leniency as Slade, and was to have a copy of *Empedocles* sent to him.

On the 14th of April 1853 Arnold writes to Mrs. Forster of an article on Alexander Smith in *The Examiner*; and, after dismissing Smith with *il fait son métier—faisons le nôtre*, he says: "I am occupied with a thing that gives me more pleasure than anything I have ever done yet, which is a good sign; but whether I shall not ultimately spoil it by being obliged to strike it off in fragments, instead of at one heat, I cannot quite say. I think of publishing it with the narrative poems of my first volume, *Tristram and Iseult* of my second, and one or two more, in February next, with my name and a preface." The "thing" was, of course, *Sohrab and Rustum*; *The Strayed Reveller*, and *The Forsaken Merman* were taken from the first volume; *Tristram and Iseult*, and several other poems, were taken from the *Empedocles* volume; and the preface scheme resulted in that admirable and compact confession of faith which stands at the front of the companion volume to the present. *Sohrab and Rustum* was finished in the course of May; for in a letter to his mother dated "Monday," and assigned to "May 1853," he says: "All my spare time has been spent on a poem which I have just finished, and which I think by far the best thing I have yet done, and that it will be generally liked, though one can never be sure of this. I have had the greatest pleasure in composing it—a rare thing with me, and, as I think, a good test of the pleasure what you write is likely to afford to others; but then the story is a very noble and excellent one." This clearly refers to *Sohrab and Rustum*; and a very sound judgment it is on that beautiful episode. Up to that time there did not aapear to be any notion of a change of publishers, for he says, "I have settled with Fellows to publish this,

and one or two more new ones, next winter or spring, with preface, and my name. I never felt so sure of myself or so really and truly at ease as to criticism, as I have done lately. There is an article on me in the last *North British* which I will send you. Can it be by Blackie? I think Froude's review will come sooner or later, but at *present* even about this I feel indifferent. Miss Blackett told Flu that Lord John Russell said, 'In his opinion Matthew Arnold was the one rising young poet of the present day.' This pleased me greatly from Lord John—if it is true."

The North British Review for May 1853 had dealt with both *The Strayed Reveller* and *Empedocles on Etna* in an article entitled "Glimpses of Poetry"; certainly the author's reference to the article gives no countenance to the assumption that the *The Strayed Reveller* had been withdrawn since it was offered for sale in the advertizement appended to *Empedocles on Etna*; and it is clear that the *Empedocles* volume had itself not yet been withdrawn. Arnold did not wait till February 1854 for the realisation of his scheme of fresh appeal to the public; for, while the preface is dated the 18th of October, his letters show that the book was in course of distribution before the end of November 1853. He was as good as his word, and gave his name this time; but now, after all, came a change of publisher and printer. The book is a foolscap octavo resembling in general appearance its two small predecessors, but thicker, for it contains 284 pages and a trade catalogue. The half-title reads "Poems," and has on the verso the imprint of Spottiswoode and Shaw. The title-page is as follows :—

POEMS

BY

MATTHEW ARNOLD.

A NEW EDITION.

LONDON :

LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN, AND LONGMANS.

MDCCCLIII.

The preface occupies pages v to xxxi, the table of contents pages xxxiii to xxxv. In the centre of page xxxvi is printed the Greek epigraph used in the *The Strayed Reveller* volume. The next leaf, which is pages 1 and 2, has the word "Poems" by way of half-title on the recto; and on the verso is the sonnet with which *The Strayed Reveller* volume had opened; but instead of the original—

> Two lessons, Nature, let me learn of thee,
> Two lessons that in every wind are blown;
> Two blending duties, harmonis'd in one,
> Though the loud world proclaim their enmity;

the first quatrain is

> One lesson, Nature, let me learn of thee,
> One lesson that in every wind is blown;
> One lesson of two duties served in one,
> Though the loud world proclaim their enmity;

the position that the two lessons are in fact but one having been adopted early. The revised sonnet is followed by a half-title reading "Sohrab and Rustum," and then come the fifty pages filled by the immortal episode, and the rest of the 248 pages of text including a few sectional half-titles. The dropped heads, head-lines, and paging follow the model of the earlier volumes; the catalogue is an alphabetical one of "General Literature" published by Longmans, dated March 31, 1853; the end-papers are primrose-coloured, like the earlier ones, but with printed lists on the paste-downs—of books on science inside the front cover, and of historical works inside the back cover. The cover itself is of the same dark green as the other two, but diced-grained. In the blind-blocked design the forget-me-not basis is maintained; but it is a floreated arch within a Harleian panel. The words "Poems | by | Matthew | Arnold" appear across the back, at the top, in gilt Roman capitals.

Many of Arnold's friends saw at once the value of the treasure now delivered into their hands: John F. B. Blackett, M.P., gave the poet great pleasure by his words of greeting; and, writing to him in reply, on the 26th of November 1853, Arnold said: "You knew, I am sure, what pleasure your letter would give me. I certainly was very anxious that

you should like 'Sohrab and Rustum.' Clough, as usual, remained in suspense whether he liked it or no. Lingen wrote me four sheets on behalf of sticking to modern subjects; but your letter, and one from Froude (which I must send you, in spite of the praise), came to reassure me."

Clough had, it seems, reviewed the two early volumes in *The North American Review*, to the number of which for July 1853 he had contributed the paper on Alexander Smith and Arnold, which is preserved in his Remains. How he decided about *Sohrab and Rustum* one would gladly know. Arnold himself had his doubts of its success; continuing his letter to Blackett, he said: "I still, however, think it very doubtful whether the book will succeed; the *Leader* and the *Spectator* are certain to disparage it; the *Examiner* may praise it, but will very likely take no notice at all. The great hope is that the *Times* may trumpet it once more." This refers to a notice in the *Times* of the two volumes of 1849 and 1852: and the poet proceeds: "Just imagine the effect of the last notice in that paper; it has brought *Empedocles* to the railway bookstall at Derby." Hence it is clear that, up to the 26th of November 1853, after the issue of the *Poems*, there had been no suppression of the *Empedocles* volume: and, as it was ultimately withdrawn before fifty copies were sold, the sales at the Derby railway bookstall and elsewhere must have been distinctly modest, enough so to account for the poet's doubts as to the success of the larger and better volume. He was doomed to be more or less agreeably disappointed; for by the 1st of June 1854 he was signing the short preface to a second edition, which follows the original preface in the companion volume of the Temple Classics to the present volume. All the poems forming Arnold's three books of 1849, 1852, and 1853, not given in the present volume, will also be found in the companion volume of *Poems, narrative, elegiac, and lyric.*

The Early Poems in the present collection taken from the *Strayed Reveller* volume are Sonnets I to XI, *Mycerinus*, *A Modern Sappho*, *To my Friends who ridiculed a tender Leave-taking* (afterwards called *A Memory Picture*), *The New Sirens*, *The Voice*, *Stagirius*, *To a Gipsy Child*, *The Haystwater Boat*, *A Question: to Fausta*, *In Utrumque Paratus*, *The World and the Quietist*, and *Resignation: to Fausta.* Those taken from the *Empedocles* volume are Sonnets XIII and XIV, *Youth and*

Calm, *Human Life*, *The Second Best*, and *Consolation*. The Sonnet to the Hungarian Nation is from *The Examiner* for the 21st of July 1849; and the rest, namely *The Church of Brou*, *Requiescat*, and *A Dream*, are from the *Poems* (a new edition, 1853).

Of this volume of Poems issued in 1853, a second edition was published in 1854, and a third is dated 1857. This book and the *Poems* (*Second Series*) published in 1855, were intended to supersede the earlier volumes, and contained, with important new poems, as much of the contents of the *Strayed Reveller* and *Empedocles* volumes as Arnold desired at that time to perpetuate. *Empedocles* itself he condemned and wished to suppress, although at the request of Robert Browning he revived it in 1867 in the volume called *New* Poems. Meantime his chief period of poetic production had closed with the year 1857 in which his largest work in verse was printed with the following title :—

MEROPE.

A TRADEGY.

BY

MATTHEW ARNOLD.

LONDON :

LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN, LONGMANS, & ROBERTS.

MDCCCLVIII.

This foolscap octavo volume, similar in appearance to the earlier volumes, has a half-title reading "Merope. | a Tragedy" with the imprint of Spottiswoode & Co. at the foot of the verso. The verso of the title-page is blank; so is that of the next leaf, which bears on its recto the epigraph from Thucydides (Pericles' Funeral Oration)—

φιλοκαλοῦμεν μετ' εὐτελείας.

The Preface occupies pages vii to xlviii, head-lined throughout "Preface" in small Roman capitals, and dated "London : December, 1857." Pages xlix to lii contain the "Historical Introduction," so headed and head-lined. The play begins with a fresh half-title, on the verso of which are recorded

the persons and the scene. The dialogue opens at page 3 with a dropped head, "Merope" in Roman capitals; and the tragedy extends to page 138, at the foot of which the printer's imprint is repeated. The normal page contains 20 lines; but, as the names of the speakers are set centrally over the speeches, in small Roman capitals, with a good deal of white, the average number of verses to a page is far less. The head-lines read "Merope" in small Roman capitals throughout; and the pages are numbered in the outer corners with Arabic figures. The signatures of the sheets are A, a, b, c, and B to K. Of these c consists of 2 leaves and K of 6 leaves, these signatures having doubtless been worked together. The rest have 8 leaves each. The 6th leaf of K bears advertizements of books in "general literature," opening with "Poems by Matthew Arnold." A separately printed 32 page catalogue of Longmans' publications follows. The green cloth cover is uniform with that of the *Poems*, and is gilt-lettered at the back "Merope | by | Matthew | Arnold." The end-papers are drab, without printed advertizements. The book was not the success that the *Poems* had been; and a few years ago remainder copies in a latter-day dark green cloth cover could be obtained from Messrs. Macmillan & Co.

NOTES

Preface and Historical Introduction to Merope.—Like every other substantive essay of Matthew Arnold's, the Preface to *Merope* is more than worthy of preservation. He never reprinted it himself; but when he included *Merope* in the collected editions of his works he prefixed to the poem the brief quotations from Hyginus and Apollodorus (see pages 10 and 11) and the "Historical Introduction," with its name changed to "Story of the Drama."

Merope.—It was not till 1885 that Arnold reprinted this poem, whether because the first edition was still "in stock," or because it had never received much public favour, who shall say? It has not, with all its learning and accomplishment, either the lyric beauty and vivid realization of character, or above all the wonderful atmosphere of *Empedocles*. In conception and form it is perhaps more like a Greek play than any other English attempt in that kind. But the very learnedness of the treatment, and the strenuousness of the endeavour to be Greek in form and conception, have absorbed much energy which would have found a more truly poetic expression if forms more suitable to the genius of the English language had been chosen; and thus this striking work is left too hard in its contours to give the highest pleasure communicable through a dramatic medium. Still, it must ever rank as a British classic.

Empedocles on Etna.—It is right to quote the poet's own condemnation of this beautiful poem from his Preface of 1853:—

"I have, in the present collection, omitted the Poem from which the volume published in 1852 took its title. I have done so, not because the subject of it was a Sicilian Greek born between two and three thousand years ago, although many persons would think this a sufficient reason. Neither have I done so because I had, in my own opinion, failed in

the delineation which I intended to effect. I intended to delineate the feelings of one of the last of the Greek religious philosophers, one of the family of Orpheus and Musæus, having survived his fellows, living on into a time when the habits of Greek thought and feeling had begun fast to change, character to dwindle, the influence of the Sophists to prevail. Into the feelings of a man so situated there entered much that we are accustomed to consider as exclusively modern; how much, the fragments of Empedocles himself which remain to us are sufficient at least to indicate. What those who are familiar only with the great monuments of early Greek genius suppose to be its exclusive characteristics, have disappeared; the calm, the cheerfulness, the disinterested objectivity have disappeared: the dialogue of the mind with itself has commenced; modern problems have presented themselves; we hear already the doubts, we witness the discouragement, of Hamlet and of Faust.

"The representation of such a man's feelings must be interesting, if consistently drawn. We all naturally take pleasure, says Aristotle, in any imitation or representation whatever: this is the basis of our love of Poetry: and we take pleasure in them, he adds, because all knowledge is naturally agreeable to us; not to the philosopher only, but to mankind at large. Every representation therefore which is consistently drawn may be supposed to be interesting, inasmuch as it gratifies this natural interest in knowledge of all kinds. What is *not* interesting, is that which does not add to our knowledge of any kind; that which is vaguely conceived and loosely drawn; a representation which is general, indeterminate, and faint, instead of being particular, precise, and firm.

"Any accurate representation may therefore be expected to be interesting; but, if the representation be a poetical one, more than this is demanded. It is demanded, not only that it shall interest, but also that it shall inspirit and rejoice the reader: that it shall convey a charm, and infuse delight. For the Muses, as Hesiod says, were born that they might be 'a forgetfulness of evils, and a truce from cares': and it is not enough that the Poet should add to the knowledge of men, it is required of him also that he should add to their happiness. 'All Art,' says Schiller, 'is dedicated to Joy, and there is no higher and no more serious problem, than how to

make men happy. The right Art is that alone, which creates the highest enjoyment.'

"A poetical work, therefore, is not yet justified when it has been shown to be an accurate, and therefore interesting representation; it has to be shown also that it is a representation from which men can derive enjoyment. In presence of the most tragic circumstances, represented in a work of Art, the feeling of enjoyment, as is well known, may still subsist: the representation of the most utter calamity, of the liveliest anguish, is not sufficient to destroy it: the more tragic the situation, the deeper becomes the enjoyment; and the situation is more tragic in proportion as it becomes more terrible.

"What then are the situations, from the representation of which, though accurate, no poetical enjoyment can be derived? They are those in which the suffering finds no vent in action; in which a continuous state of mental distress is prolonged, unrelieved by incident, hope, or resistance; in which there is everything to be endured, nothing to be done. In such situations there is inevitably something morbid, in the description of them something monotonous. When they occur in actual life, they are painful, not tragic; the representation of them in poetry is painful also.

"To this class of situations, poetically faulty as it appears to me, that of Empedocles, as I have endeavoured to represent him, belongs; and I have therefore excluded the Poem from the present collection."

Alaric at Rome.—Writing to Mr. Gosse on his acquisition of a copy of the Rugby print of *Alaric*, Arnold said:—

"'Alaric at Rome' is my Rugby prize poem, and I think it is better than my Oxford one, 'Cromwell'; only you will see that I had been very much reading 'Childe Harold.'"

There are seven passages in *Alaric at Rome* to which the youthful poet seems to have thought foot-notes necessary. These passages, with their relative notes, are as follows:—

> Twice, ere that day of shame, the embattled foe
> Had gazed in wonder on that glorious sight.

The sieges of Rome by the Goths under Alaric were three in number. The first was commenced A.D. 408, and concluded A.D. 409, by Alaric's accepting a ransom. In the

second Alaric entered the city in triumph, and appointed Attalus Emperor. After again degrading this new monarch of his own creation, he finally captured and sacked the city, A.D. 410.

Famine and sorrow are no strangers here.

"That unfortunate city gradually experienced the distress of scarcity, and at length the horrid calamities of famine. The miseries of which were succeeded and aggravated by the contagion of a pestilential disease."—*Gibbon.*

Think ye it strikes too slow, the sword of fate,
Think ye the avenger loiters on his way,
That your own hands must open wide the gate,
And your own voices guide him to his prey?

"They (the Senate) were unable to guard against the secret conspiracy of their slaves and domestics." "At the hour of midnight the Salarian gate was silently opened and the inhabitants were awakened by the tremendous sound of the Gothic trumpet."—*Gibbon.*

The trumpet swells yet louder: they are here!

"Adest Alaricus, trepidam urbem obsidet, turbat, irrumpit."—*Orosius, Lib. vii. cap.* 39.

Unlike her ocean sister, gazing still
Smilingly forth upon her sunny bay.

Naples.

—"Stabiasque, et in otia natam
Parthenopen."—*Ovid, Metam. Lib. xv. vers.* 711-12.

One little year; that restless soul shall rest.

Alaric died after a sudden illness, while engaged in attempting the invasion of Sicily, A.D. 410, the very year of the third siege of Rome by his forces.

And tranquilly, above that troubled breast,
The sunny waters hold their joyous way.

For an account of the death and singular burial of the Gothic monarch, see Gibbon, vol. v. p. 329-30. "By the labour of a captive multitude the course of the Burentinus

was forcibly diverted, a small river that washes the walls of Consentia. The royal sepulchre, adorned with the splendid trophies of Rome, was constructed in the vacant bed, and the waters were then restored to their natural channel, and the secret spot where the remains of Alaric had been deposited was for ever concealed by the inhuman massacre of the prisoners who had been employed to execute the work."

Line 159 was printed thus :—

Unlike that ocean-city, gazing still,

but Walrond's copy, now in my possession, is corrected in the autograph of Arnold so as to read as shown at page 268 and in the text.

Cromwell.—The Newdigate prize poem, like the Rugby one, has several foot-notes. The passages annotated are given below, with the author's notes :—

High fate is theirs, who where the silent sky
Stoops to the soaring mountains, live and die.

This is an allusion to the idea expressed in the twelfth of Mr. Wordsworth's Sonnets to Liberty :—

Two voices are there : one is of the sea, etc.

contrasting it with the fact of Cromwell's birth-place having been the fen country of Huntingdonshire, where he lived till he was forty years old.

Sounds—such as erst the lone wayfaring man
Caught, as he journey'd, from the lips of Pan.

Herod. vi. 106.

Or that mysterious cry, that smote with fear,
Like sounds from other worlds, the Spartan's ear,
While, o'er the dusty plain, the murmurous throng,
Of Heaven's embattled myriads swept along.

The vision of Demaratus on the plain of Eleusis.—Herod. viii. 65.

Where rode the tall dark ships, whose loosen'd sail
All idly flutter'd in the eastern gale.

Eight ships, lying in the Thames, and ready to sail, were detained by order of Council.—*Hume*, vi. 309.

And the winds told his glory—and the wave
Sonorous witness to his empire gave !

"It is just to say, that the maritime glory of England may be first traced from the era of the Commonwealth in a track of continuous light."—*Hallam's Const. Hist.* ii.

There Hampden bent him o'er his saddle bow,
And death's cold dews bedimm'd his earnest brow.

"His head bending down, and his hands resting on his horse's neck, he was seen riding from the field."—*Lord Nugent's Memorials of Hampden*, ii. 435.

There Falkland eyed the strife that would not cease,
Shook back his tangled locks, and murmur'd—"Peace !"

"In his clothes and habit, which he had minded before always with more neatness and industry, he was now, not only incurious, but negligent."—*Clarendon.*

He, too, was there—it was the princely boy,
The child-companion of his childish joy !

Alluding to the stories of Cromwell's childish intimacy with Charles the First.

The gathering tempest, . . .

Clarendon mentions a great storm which attended the death of Cromwell.

His latest loftiest music, smote his ear !

"He was a great lover of music, and he entertained the most skilful in that science in his pay and family."—*Perfect Politician.*

That day that hail'd his triumphs, saw him die !

Cromwell died on his fortunate day, the anniversary of Dunbar and Worcester, September 3rd.

The imprisoning chains fell off, and all was clear!

here is a remarkable contrast between the perfect clear-ss of the celebrated prayer Cromwell is recorded to have tered on his deathbed, and the confusedness of the speeches hich are attributed to him.

Outside Clarendon's History of the Rebellion there is a nsiderable literature connected with Cromwell's death and e storm preceding it. Among the most distinguished the contemporary celebrations is Waller's poem *Upon the ate Storme and the Death of His Highnesse ensuing the same*, hich was published in 1659 in company with Dryden's *eroique Stanzas Consecrated to the Glorious memory of his ost Serene and Renowned Highnesse Oliver Late Lord Pro-ctor of this Common-Wealth, &c., Written after the Celebration his Funerall*, and with a "Pindarick Ode" on the same ubject "by Mr. Sprat, of Oxford," dedicated to the Warden Wadham College, the Rev. Dr. Wilkins. This trilogy ave rise to many compositions, including, on one side, a arious piece called *The Panegyric and the Storme*, and on the ther side, a dry but remarkable poem by George Wither ntitled *Salt upon Salt*.

It is to be recorded that line 222 of *Cromwell*,

Moulding itself in action, not in word!

as already been corrupted into

Moulding itself into action, not in word!

his reading is to be found in the second edition; but the ading of the first edition is obviously right.

The New Sirens.—This poem was not chosen by Arnold om the contents of the *Strayed Reveller* volume for incor-oration either in the First or in the Second Series of the *oems* (1853 and 1855). Indeed he abandoned it to its fate hen he withdrew his early anonymous volume, and only evived it in 1876 at the request of Mr. Swinburne. In December of that year it was reprinted in *Macmillan's Magazine* with the following note of *quasi*-apology:—

"I shall not, I hope, be supposed unconscious that in oherency and intelligibility the following poem leaves

much to be desired. It was published in 1849 in a small volume without my name, was withdrawn along with that volume, and until now has never been reprinted. But the departed poem had the honour of being followed by the regrets of a most distinguished mourner, Mr. Swinburne, who has more than once revived its memory, and asked for its republication. Mr. Swinburne's generosity towards contemporary verse is well known; and *The New Sirens* may have won his favour the more readily because it had something, perhaps, of that animation of movement and rhythm of which his own poems offer such splendid examples. In addition to Mr. Swinburne, the poem has had also several other friends, less distinguished, who desired its restoration. To a work of his youth, a work produced in long-past days of ardour and emotion, an author can never be very hard-hearted; and after a disappearance of more than twenty-five years, *The New Sirens*, therefore, is here reprinted."

Lines written by a Death-Bed.—Of this poem a portion was printed in the *New Poems* under the title of *Youth and Calm*. The sixteen lines beginning with

Yes, now the longing is o'erpast

were incorporated in *Tristram and Iseult* (part 2) in the two-volume edition of the Poems published in 1877.

INDEX OF FIRST LINES

Printed by T. and A. Constable, (late) Printers to Her Majesty at the Edinburgh University Press