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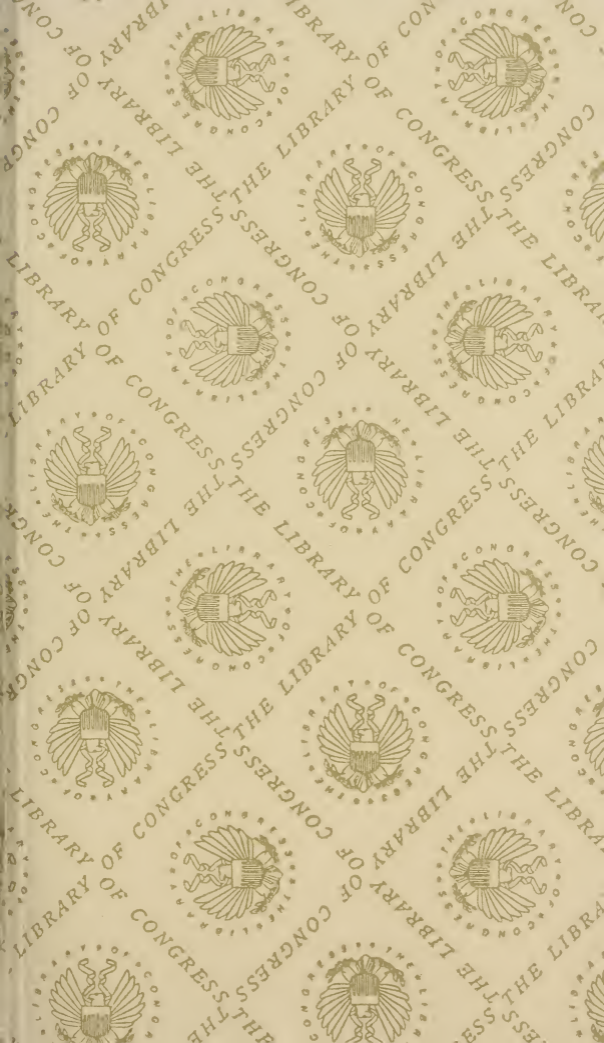
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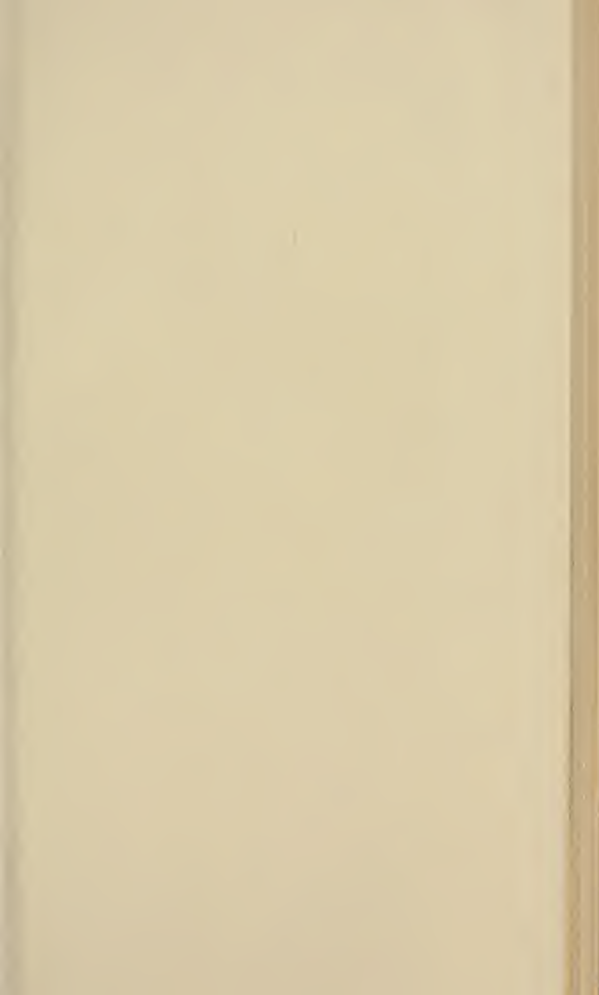
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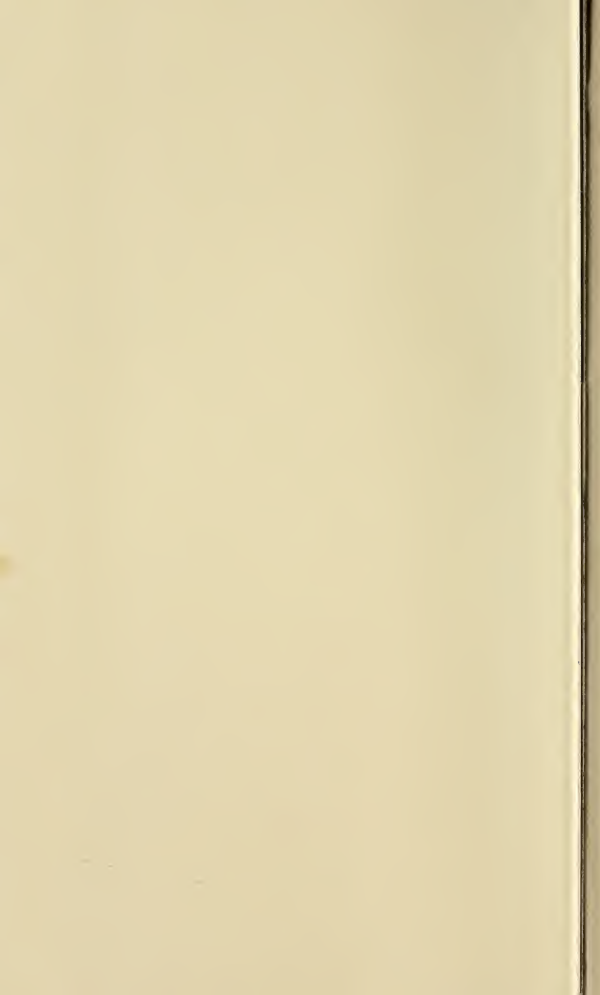


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J. Flaxman Del.

Agamemnon. Copysandra.

Chorus.

E. P. Fisher. Sculp.

My royal lord, by whose victorious hand
The tow'rs of Troy are fall'n.

Agamemnon. 3

POPULAR
ENGLISH SPECIMENS

OF THE

GREEK DRAMATIC POETS;

WITH

INTRODUCTORY ESSAYS,

AND

EXPLANATORY NOTES.

✓
ÆSCHYLUS.



LONDON:

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.

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“ THENCE WHAT THE LOFTY, GRAVE TRAGEDIANS TAUGHT
IN CHORUS OR IAMBIC, TEACHERS BEST
OF MORAL PRUDENCE, WITH DELIGHT RECEIVED
IN BRIEF, SENTENTIOUS PRECEPTS, WHILE THEY TREAT
OF FATE, AND CHANCE AND CHANGE IN HUMAN LIFE;
HIGH ACTIONS AND HIGH PASSIONS BEST DESCRIBING.”

PARADISE REGAINED.

G. Woodfall,
Angel Court, Skinner Street.

UNK 92-87548

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INTRODUCTION.

On the Nature and Origin of Poetry, and the distinguishing Characteristics of Greek Tragedy—Design of the present Work.

MILTON, in his letter to Master Hartlib, ranks it among the last literary attainments and delights of a complete and generous education, to master “the Attic tragedies of stateliest and most regal argument,” which, with a due proficiency in that art which Aristotle and Horace in their Poetics teach, and after them Italian poets and commentators both declare and practise, may serve to shew us “what religious, what glorious and magnificent use might be made of poetry, both in divine and human things.” Yet it is certain, that to a vast majority of readers, those poets of whom Milton speaks,

“Who were the fountains and first springs of wisdom,”

are but as “a spring shut up, a fountain sealed”; and even of those who do attain to some acquaintance with the language in which they wrote, not a few peruse them with feelings of apathy, or only as an irksome task. Doubtless the difficulty of the language, which is indeed great, is one principal reason why the Greek drama is so little known or relished; an intuitive perception both of the pe-

cular force of each particular word, and of the felicitous union of the whole in connexion, is generally indispensable to the enjoyment of the subtle and delicate beauty of poetry. Hence the mere student is seldom able, and not always disposed, to surrender himself to his author, so as to co-operate with him in producing on his own mind the requisite illusion. Without this, poetry is but a barren study, for its appeals are always made *immediately* to the imagination, though in the last resort it must submit to be tried by the severer rules of reason; that is, it must be natural and consistent with itself, which is all that is required or meant by "truth" in poetry.

It has been long established as a sound critical canon, (notwithstanding the eloquent dissent of Horace, who yet acknowledges its truth in the case of Greece,) that the most ancient poets of every country are commonly the best. It is observed, that the earliest authors are masters of nature, while later writers excel only in art. The first surpass in vigour and originality of invention, their successors in refinement, in elegance, and in taste. Homer and Virgil, Dante and Tasso, Chaucer and Pope, afford pregnant examples. The reason seems to be, that as the gift of poetry is a natural endowment, and in its highest sense, at least, not an object of art or acquisition, it cannot be extended and improved by successive degrees, like pure science or ordinary knowledge. It must be conversant with *new* ideas, and these are more likely to be numerous and beautiful in the infancy of society, than when men's understandings are informed and their reasoning powers matured. Poetry, then, regarded as simply ideal, is the antithesis to fact, and as

such we can easily apprehend why the ideas of poetry should shoot most freely in the earlier stages of society ; it is perhaps more difficult to account for their immediate accommodation to that internal law of order and beauty which constitutes verse.

Lucretius ascribes the origin of poetry, (by which he means verse,) to man's observation of the pleasing effects of the song of birds. Man's instinctive love of imitation would dispose him to mimic the sounds which pleased him in birds, and though failing to produce similar sounds with his voice or rustic pipe, or by repeated strokes on hollow bodies, he would yet observe the pleasing effects of the recurrence of corresponding tones at stated intervals, and this perception might suggest the construction of various rude instruments, and at length give birth to some simple sort of music. The adaptation of words to this measured sound, would be an easy, obvious improvement, and spontaneous effusions of passion, whether excited by mirth or love, by war or by enthusiasm, would speedily be "married to immortal verse," and poetry be complete. At all events we know that poetry and music were at first uniformly united together ; it was only after the lapse of ages and the progress of art that they came to be disjoined. Mr. Mitford observes, that even in our own language the word *song* is still a generic name for all metrical composition.

Poetry, as well as music and dancing, is the delight of untutored minds ; it is only philosophy that requires civilization. Those subjects which were most likely to influence rude, uneducated men to attempt the labour of composition, are of that

spirit-stirring kind (as war and conquest, or the worship of the gods) which would naturally lead them on to indulge exaggeration and their love of the marvellous, while the very poverty of their language would compel them to clothe such thoughts in metaphor and imagery, and thus they would unconsciously be moulded both to the ideas and the diction, which, quickened by the breath of genius, constitute poetry. Accordingly, we find the first literary records of every country "submitting the shows of things," as Lord Bacon observes, "to the desires of the mind," and both partaking of the essence of poetry, which is fiction, and clad in its garb, which is verse. Hesiod and Homer afford the first elements of Grecian history; and we learn from Strabo, that even her professed historians originally wrote in verse, and grew gradually less poetical till the time of Herodotus. The *annosa volumina vatum* of the Latins, the Runic songs of the north of Europe, the historical ballads of the Arabs and Peruvians, and, not to multiply examples, the Anglo-Saxon and Irish chronicles of our own ancestors, confirm this hypothesis. The facility of remembrance afforded by metre, so especially desirable before the use of letters, as well as the extreme difficulty of imparting interest and gracefulness to a prose narrative in any rude and uncultivated language *, may be mentioned as affording additional reasons for the facts.

It is time however to consider the dramatic poetry of Greece, as distinguished from the other species of that class of composition to which it belongs.

* "Il faut beaucoup plus de finesse et de correction dans une langue, pour bien écrire en prose, que pour bien écrire en vers." Staël de la Littérature, Tom. ii. p. 9.

Poetry considered in itself, as an intellectual faculty, an undefinable power of conjuring up novel images and exquisite emotions on every topic that it touches, must be of the same nature in all ages, however it may differ in degree; but the materials of poetry, as of every other mental faculty, must vary according to the plenty and variety of ideas with which the mind of him who possesses and employs the faculty is conversant. Imagination itself, however fertile, cannot invent any new simple idea, nor form complex ones of any other than those elementary perceptions with which it has been previously furnished by external objects, or by the observation of its own internal operations. Hence we shall look in vain among the poets of Pagan antiquity for all that large class of thoughts and feelings which revelation has made known to man, and which have their well-spring in the Christian religion. To them moral sentiment, in its best and highest sense, was unknown*. Charity, benevolence, compassion, are no where dwelt upon as requisite features of human character, and men who had never been taught to believe that the Author of this vast and magnificent universe looked down with more favour upon lowliness and humility than on pomp and greatness, upon long-suffering and meekness rather than on daring and heroic achievements, were necessarily strangers to all those dear and gentle affections which grow up among us, almost unconsciously, from the precepts and the hopes of the religion we profess, and which, from habit, if

* It is well remarked by Paley, that we have no record of the existence of an hospital, or any similar institution for the relief of such as were poor and in misery, anterior to Christianity.

not from piety, we connect with something more enduring than our mortal bodies, and superior to the accidents of chance and change.

Bred up, again, as the component member of a community, rather than as the branch of a separate family, of a community too, where, from the established usages of society, man was comparatively every thing, and woman nothing, the feelings of the modern hearth were almost as little known to the ancient Greek as the feelings of the modern altar. Hence those endearing charities, which are evinced in the 'thousand decencies' of social and domestic life, and those numberless varieties of feeling, situation, and character, which grow out of the equal and unrestrained intercourse between the sexes, and which form the business and the charm of the modern drama, are among the attractions least to be looked for or expected in that of the ancients.

Called into existence by a mighty imagination, the conceptions of Greek tragedy are indeed of colossal magnitude, but, like the masks of its own actors, though embodying all the features of majesty and beauty, and finished with scrupulous accuracy and consummate skill, the touch of pathetic nature is too often wanting, and all seems cold, studied, and artificial. There is a want of the "inner man of the heart", the simple reality of mere ordinary humanity, and a straining after something beyond it, in Greek tragedy, which often prevents us from being deeply and permanently affected. The secret depths of *our* hearts can rarely be stirred by writers who seldom dip very profoundly into their own.

Greek tragedy, in truth, rose, as we shall presently

see, out of the choral ode, and it never wholly lost its lyric character. Addressed to a seeing and a listening rather than a reading people, it depended for its most powerful charm on the combination of graceful and majestic gesture, accompanied by melodious symphonies, with its own exquisite poetry in the choral parts, which were essentially undramatic. The very fertility of the Greek dramatic poets, so far surpassing the most prolific even of our own writers, is an argument (notwithstanding the extraordinary facility of expression afforded by the rich variety and melody of their language) of the extreme simplicity of their fables. Some single grand and affecting action, relating to regal persons of their mythology or history, and easily brought about by the sure operation of an over-ruling necessity, usually constitutes all that is really dramatic in the piece. In a word, it was simply a fictitious and embellished imitation of some great transaction already familiar to the minds of the spectators, addressed chiefly to the imagination, through the medium of measured and highly ornamented language.

The opposition of divine fate to human will, relieved the author from the difficult task of marking and blending all the slight circumstances and the delicate shades of character, by which the fine and almost imperceptible links of human agency are formed and developed in the gradual accomplishment of real events. Yet these very touches, which we require to connect and give an air of probability to the details of the action, are usually those which also impart interest and individuality to the persons of the drama.

But numerous, as to general readers, must appear

the imperfections of Greek dramatic literature, and growing out of causes which we have but imperfectly traced, to those who have the power of reading these noble productions of antiquity in the original language, and to those who possess the still rarer faculty of being able to abstract themselves from modern usages and feelings, and of throwing themselves back into the times from which these intellectual banquets were derived, Milton's high commendation of its uses and delights will seem little, if at all overcharged. Such persons find themselves at once thrown back upon a state of things, for which modern compositions can furnish no equivalent. Lofty figures stalk before their eyes; visions of heroic greatness and superhuman dignity become familiar to their thoughts; they hold converse with majestic minds, which the storms of fate might shake but could not subdue; and if they come out of this intercourse without experiencing those feverish excitements and gusts of passion, by which the modern drama at once delights and enervates the mind, they feel in themselves that calm repose or chastened emotion, which were the legitimate and wiser aims of the ancient drama, and of which the one will be found the best relief against the cares, as the other will be the surest preservative against the pains of life.

To enlarge the sphere of our sensibility, and to augment whilst it regulates the force of that quality, ought to be the aim of poetry; and nowhere has this been better effected than in those noble remains which antiquity has handed down to us. In the ancient works of imagination, there reigns a dignified tranquillity which resembles the calm

magnificence of a noble statue*, while the glow of unnatural fervour and the glitter of fanciful ornament which pervade much of our modern poetry, have been compared to the more warm colouring of a picture †. It requires a more accurate examination, and a more refined and exquisite judgement, to appreciate the solemn beauty of sculpture than to relish the sprightlier charms of painting, and possibly the same analogy may extend to ancient and modern fiction; but as the regulations of society wisely require that a large portion of the time and attention devoted to the attainment of a liberal education, should be appropriated to the perusal of ancient poetry ‡, it seems very desirable that stu-

* "The whole appearance of their tragic poems," says Schlegel, speaking of the Greek stage, "was beautiful and dignified to a degree which we cannot easily conceive. We shall do well always to think of them in conjunction with ancient sculpture; and, perhaps, the most faithful representation of them is to consider them as living and moving statues of the highest order." There cannot be a finer commentary on this noble remark, than the designs which have been inserted for the purpose of embellishing this volume. When the true feeling and high relish of antiquity are concerned, the pen and the graver were never certainly in such hands as those of Schlegel and Flaxman.

† Madame de Staël has completed this illustration very happily, by observing that the simple German dramas, such as those of Lessing, which contain little more than natural and obvious sentiments, expressed in the dramatic form of dialogue, bear the same relation to tragedy, that figures of wax do to statues. Too like nature for works of art, and yet but a sorry substitute for nature herself.

‡ "L'étude des langues est beaucoup plus favorable aux progrès des facultés dans l'enfance que celle des mathématiques ou des sciences physiques. Pascal, ce grand géomètre, dont la pensée profonde planoit sur les sciences dont il s'occupoit spécialement, comme sur toutes les autres, a reconnu lui-même les défauts inséparables des esprits formés d'abord par les mathématiques: cette étude dans le premier âge n'exerce que le mécanisme de l'intelli-

dents should be taught to derive from works of this class all the pleasure and advantage they are so well capable of affording, and in no way perhaps can this be done so easily and effectually, as by storing their minds with useful and pleasant information upon the subject, and interesting them heartily in it by a previous and agreeable acquaintance with its origin and nature. They will then probably repair to the classic fountains themselves, with a more ardent thirst for their purer streams and a keener relish for their more elevating draughts.

To the English reader, for whom this work is more immediately designed, the trains of new ideas which an acquaintance with the Greek stage will open to his thoughts, and the opportunity of thus becoming more intimately acquainted with so interesting a people, by sharing in the intellectual part of their most favourite amusement, can hardly fail, it is hoped, of amply repaying the time devoted to a perusal of some of their choicest productions, in the most becoming garb which they admit of being presented to him. Above all,

—“The dread strife
Of poor humanity’s afflicted will,
Struggling in vain with ruthless destiny !”

gence ; les enfans que l’on occupe de si bonne heure à calculer, perdent toute cette sève de l’imagination, alors si belle et si féconde, et n’acquierent point à la place une justesse d’esprit transcendante : car l’arithmétique et l’algèbre se bornent à nous apprendre de mille manières des propositions toujours identiques. *Les problèmes de la vie sont plus compliqués* ; aucun n’est positif, aucun n’est absolu ; il faut deviner, il faut choisir, à l’aide d’aperçus et des suppositions qui n’ont rapport avec la marche infallible du calcul. . . . Ce n’est donc pas sans raison que l’étude des langues anciennes et modernes a été la base de tous les établissemens d’éducation qui ont formés les hommes les plus capables en Europe.”—L’Allemagne par Madame de Staël. Tom. 1.

of which examples are here set before him, divested of all that was thought uncongenial to an English taste, may serve to inculcate a higher lesson. Our brighter light has shewn us, that to be good or *truly* great, we must substitute for the mere animal courage and ostentatious daring of the heroes of antiquity, the peaceful unobtrusive moral fortitude, the fearless mastery over ourselves, of the Christian religion; but if the exhibition of firm mental endurance of the necessary ills of life, impress more deeply on us the all-important lesson to reconcile ourselves cheerfully to the dispensations of the Divine will, to bow humbly before the Chastener, and to feel that by this willing service we attain to perfect freedom, then will the moral teaching of the ancient drama be rendered indeed efficacious, in a far nobler and more exalted sense than ever was or could have been contemplated by those who gave it birth.

As to the translation, the reader may remember that the Knight of La Mancha compares every such attempt to looking at the wrong side of an Arras hanging, where, though the shape and semblance of the figures can be traced, their smoothness, fulness of contour and brilliancy of colouring are obscured by the thread-ends which darken them, or destroyed by the stiffness and hardness of the outline. It would however be doing less than justice to Mr. Potter's English *Æschylus*, which, with some slight occasional alterations, has been made the basis of the present volume, were not the Editor to declare his conviction, that it is faithful, spirited, and poetical throughout, and in the lyric parts, certainly those most trying to a translator, eminently felicitous.

It may not be unnecessary to add, that the Editor has purposely refrained from loading his pages with lists of authorities for the various facts adduced; to the scholar such notices would be superfluous, to the English reader tiresome. The nature of the undertaking precludes the possibility of its affording much original information. Almost the highest praise to which it can aspire, is that of judicious selection and combination from the wide field of materials which lies open to every scholar. It will save repetition to make once for all a suitable acknowledgment of the assistance derived from the works of Barthélemy, Schlegel, Tyrwhitt, and Twining. To these, and other similar sources, the Editor is largely indebted; there is likewise a work on the Greek theatre published some time ago, by Grant, Cambridge, containing a vast store of valuable classical information loosely heaped together, of which the Editor has freely availed himself wherever it suggested the propriety of any alteration or addition, for his essay was nearly completed before the work fell into his hands. Indeed his first impression on a hasty perusal of it, was, that he had taken some pains to little purpose, as this book seemed to have anticipated his design, which was originally limited to an introduction to the study of the Greek drama. On consideration however, it appeared to him, that as the Cambridge work was purely didactic, and intended only for the use of students actually engaged in the perusal of the Greek plays, it did not at all clash with a publication of the unpretending and more popular character of the present.

POPULAR

ENGLISH SPECIMENS

OF

THE GREEK DRAMATIC POETS,

ETC.

CHAPTER I.

*Of the Rise and Progress of Greek Tragedy to the time of
Phrynichus.*

IN the reign of Cyrus the Great, King of Persia, and of Pisistratus tyrant of Athens, lived Thespis, a native, as Athenæus and Diogenes Laertius inform us, of Icaria, a mountain district of Attica, famous for its vines. He was the inventor of a rude kind of drama, which he first exhibited about the year 536 B.C.

It was customary among the ancient Greeks, to meet together annually in their villages, at the close of their harvest, or vintage, to thank the gods that their corn and wine were increased, as well as to enjoy festivity and relaxation after their fatigue, according to the intention of our own harvests home. Their praises and thanks were offered chiefly to Bacchus, as the giver of wine and promoter of mirth. In honour of him they instituted at these yearly meetings, a festival called Ascolia, which was thus observed: they sacrificed a goat to the god, (that ani-

mal being deemed the most inveterate enemy of the vine,) and having formed a bottle of its skin with the fleshy side out, they filled it with wine*, oiling the outside, so as to render it as slippery as possible; they then amused themselves with hopping on it, having placed it loosely on the smooth green sward; and he who first succeeded in keeping his footing on the skin, was declared victor in the game, and gained it with its contents for his prize. Virgil describes the festival in his second Georgic:

“For this the malefactor goat was laid
On Bacchus’ altar, and his forfeit paid.
At Athens thus old Comedy began,
When round the streets the reeling actors ran,
In country villages and crossing ways
Contending for the prizes of their plays;
And glad with Bacchus, on the grassy soil
Leapt o’er the skins of goats besmeared with oil.”

DRYDEN.

To heighten the sport, they smeared their own faces with lees of the wine, and mixed up the joyous songs in which they “thanked the gods amiss,” with wanton jests and taunting gibes on one another in satirical verse. The hymns in honour of the gods, from their peculiar celebration of Bacchus, soon came to be called *Dithyrambic*, in allusion to his double birth, first from Semele and afterwards from the thigh of Jupiter †. From these Dithyrambics,

* At this day, Sherry, or the wine of Xerez, is said to owe much of its peculiar flavour, to the goat-skin bottles in which it is carried over the mountains of Andalusia.

† Euripides in the *Bacchæ* gives both this story and an exposition of it by Teiresias:

When wing’d from heaven the rapid lightnings came,
The mother an abortive infant bore

Tragedy, as we shall presently see, subsequently arose.

The Egyptians had a festival called Phallica, in honour of Osiris, which owed its institution to a circumstance familiar to the classical reader, but which does not admit of explanation here. The procession of the Phallus, or emblem of the first generating principle, was introduced into Europe by the inhabitants of Attica, and by them made a part of the ritual of the Dionysia, or festival in honour of the wine-god, who indeed appears to have been identical with the Osiris of Egypt. However impure the celebration of this rite may have subsequently become, both in Greece and Italy, it appears to have been originally a religious ceremony, free from any thought of lasciviousness. The wooden image was borne by men who chanted songs composed for the occasion, called phallic strains; these gradually superseded the ludicrous sarcastic verses with which the shepherds were at first accustomed to banter each other, and ultimately gave birth to Comedy.

On the introduction of the Dithyrambic hymns, as a regular and stated part of the *rustic** *Dionysia*,

And died; o'ercome by that celestial flame.

But Jove in such distressful state

Did for his son another womb supply,

And safe within his fostering thigh

Concealed him from Saturnia's hate.

Which Teiresias afterwards thus expounds to Pentheus :

— From the lightning's blaze

When Jove had snatch'd and to Olympus borne

The tender infant, Juno from the realms

Of heaven would have expelled him. But Jove framed

This stratagem to foil her: breaking off

A portion of the ether which enwraps

The world, he placed him there. *κ. τ. λ.*

* See p. 25.

the prize of the skin of wine* was transferred from dexterity of heel to acuteness of head in the "keen encounter of their wits." It was placed at the disposal of that poet whose verses pleased the assembly most. The prize of the Phallic song was a cask of wine and a basket of figs.

The first step towards the introduction of dramatic poetry was the formation of the chorus, originally consisting of fifty men who danced round the altar of Bacchus in a ring, and sang the Dithyrambus. Of the subsequent composition of the Tragic chorus, as distinguished from this Cyclian choir, we shall have occasion to speak at length hereafter. The next advance was the adoption of a minor chorus of persons fantastically dressed up like Satyrs, the supposed attendants of Bacchus, who skipped about like monkeys, and uttered wild effusions of the moment, in honour of the god, or in ridicule of each other; with ludicrous grimaces to give greater zest to their jokes. Then came the improvement of Thespis, who first delighted the spectators by performing the additional part of Bacchus himself, or some other god or hero, and conversing with the Chorus, or relating some suitable mythological narrative, with appropriate gesticulation.

These dramatic interludes or recitations were called *Episodes*, from their introduction between the choral songs, and in progress of time displaced

* Dr. Bentley affirms, on the authority of the Arundelian marble, that the goat itself was the prize of Tragedy, whence the name, which signifies *goat's song*, and that the wine, as well as the figs, were the peculiar premium for success in Comedy. There is a passage in the 13th Olympic ode of Pindar, (line 25 et seq.) which seems to intimate that the reward of the Dithyramb at least, if not of Tragedy, was raised to the gift of an ox.

those odes of the chorus which they were originally intended only to relieve and diversify. Besides this important addition of an actor and a story, Thespis diligently drilled his chorus in all the niceties of pantomimic gesture, and taking up the new profession of an itinerant player, was drawn about from village to village, with his trained chorus, in the waggon which served him for a stage, and gratified the inhabitants of the different districts with the exhibition of this novel performance at their various local festivals.

Some years after this, the poems of Homer were first arranged and introduced to public regard in a collective form, by Hippias and Hipparchus, sons of Pisistratus. They had not long become an object of general attention, when Phrynichus, son of Polyphradmon, invented mournful tragedy; at least he first recited solemn and elevated narratives, when he mounted the rostrum, to spout to the audience between the choral songs. He was the scholar of Thespis, and did not exhibit till a quarter of a century after the appearance of his instructor. It is of a play of his, composed, however, twenty years after he first came forward, that Herodotus relates the remarkable anecdote of the Athenians heavily fining an author for affecting them too deeply. "On seeing the capture of Miletus represented in a dramatic piece by Phrynichus, the whole audience burst into tears. The poet, for thus reminding them too forcibly of a domestic calamity, was fined a thousand drachmæ, and the piece was forbidden to be repeated."*

* Herod. Erato, §. 21.

He too is said to have been the first who introduced a female character as interlocutor with the chorus. Thus then, as Aristotle observes, both Tragedy and Comedy having arisen in a simple unpremeditated manner, the first from the Dithyrambic hymns, the other from those Phallic songs, which in many cities long remained in use, each advanced gradually towards perfection, by such successive improvements as were most obvious. Until the time of Phrynichus, Tragedy appears to have resembled the Satyric drama, which was ultimately brought forward as a distinct species by Pratinas, and of which the only specimen now remaining, is the Cyclops of Euripides. The quips and cranks of the merry Satyrs were so popular with the common people, that even in a more refined age, so long as the poets contended against each other for the prize with a series of plays, a Satyric drama was appended to every tragic trilogy*. Indeed there is a well known anecdote related by Plutarch, that on the first adoption of an episode, with a melancholy catastrophe, the people, accustomed only to songs and stories relating to Bacchus, exclaimed in displeasure, "what has all this to do with Bacchus?" Whence arose the proverb of "That's nothing to Bacchus", applied to whatever was deemed irrelevant, or nothing to the purpose in any matter.

The crowning improvements, or rather the new inventions of Æschylus, must be the subject of another chapter.

* The meaning of this expression will be seen at p. 26.

CHAPTER II.

Of the Life and Works of Æschylus, his Improvements in Greek Tragedy, and the Character of his Style.

ÆSCHYLUS, son of Euphorion, was born of an illustrious family in Attica, ten years after the first exhibition of Thespis, and 525 years before our era. The early enthusiasm of his disposition, may be conjectured from a circumstance mentioned by Pausanias as related by the poet himself. When a boy, he fell asleep one night in a vineyard, which was given him in charge, and Bacchus, appearing to him in a vision, commanded him to compose Tragedy. Awaking, and wishing to obey the injunction of the god, he made the attempt, and easily succeeded. He was an early and ardent admirer of Homer, and used modestly to say, in allusion to the great benefit he derived from his works to his own tragedies, that he had been to a great feast of poetry, and had brought away some of the scraps. It is supposed that his conviction of the impossibility of rivalling Homer in the Epos, was what first instigated him to strike out the novel and till then almost untried path of elevated dramatic poetry. So early as the age of twenty-five, he contended with Pratinas and Chœrilus for the tragic prize. Ten years after this, he fought at Marathon, where a band of ten thousand Athenians, under the command of Miltiades, defeated the army of Darius, king of Persia, which exceeded twenty times their number, and had now advanced, under Datis and

Artaphernes, within ten miles of Athens. Æschylus, with his brothers Cynægeirus and Ameinias, were honoured with the highest marks of distinction for valour and conduct in the battle. Of Cynægeirus Herodotus relates, that having pursued the Persians to their ships, he seized one of the vessels by the poop to board it, but his hand was lopped off by one of the crew, and he died of his wounds*.

In the intervals of his military campaigns, which were not like the long-protracted struggles of modern warfare, Æschylus continued to direct his attention to poetical composition. In the forty-first year of his age, he gained the Tragic prize, B.C. 484, the same year in which Herodotus was born. Four years after this he was wounded at the battle of Salamis, when the reward of extraordinary valour was conferred upon his brother Ameinias, who lost an arm in the engagement. Next year he fought at Plataea, where of two hundred thousand Asiatics, the lowest computed number of the Persian force, scarcely three thousand men escaped with life by flight. Æschylus was thus well qualified from actual observation to sing the pæan of the Greeks, which, seven years afterwards, he celebrated accordingly in the drama of the Persians. This was the first piece of the trilogy which gained the prize, and the only one still extant; the other two were named Phineus and Glaucus. The drama of the Persians preserves a faithful record, and presents a living picture of the sea-fight of rocky Salamis, to which the battle of Plataea was the final and conclusive supplement. Greece had no longer aught to fear

* Herod. Erato.

from Eastern invasions. From that time forward, the Persian princes never dared to cross the Hellespont with a hostile armament.

Late in life, Æschylus retired into Sicily, to the court of Hiero, king of Syracuse, who in his latter days became the munificent patron of learning and genius, and whom Pindar has celebrated as victor in the Olympic games, where he had gained three several crowns. The motives which influenced Æschylus to depart from Athens are little known. By some he is said to have repaired to Sicily on account of Sophocles having gained the victory in tragedy, by others, because he was surpassed by Simonides in an elegy on those who fell in Marathon; while a third part assign a charge of profanation, contained in an allusion to the Eleusinian mysteries, and from which he narrowly escaped with his life, as the cause of this voluntary exile. While in Sicily, he composed a tragedy entitled *Ætna*, predicting prosperity to the inhabitants of that city, which had been recently founded by Hiero. It is supposed that it was on the death of this prince he fixed his residence at Gela, on the south-west coast of Sicily, where he died. Some think that it was here also he composed the *Orestean* trilogy, which is presented to the reader first in the present volume, and which gained the prize, B.C. 458.

The singular story of the poet's death, which happened B.C. 456, in the sixty-ninth year of his age, is sufficiently known, whatever may be the opinion as to its truth. It had been foretold that he was not to die until a house should fall on him. Being, like Horace, a bald old man, who loved to sit in the sun, he wandered forth one summer's morning into the

fields, and sat him down to meditate and compose. He uncovered his head to bathe his temples freely in the balmy air, when a towering eagle soared with a tortoise in his bill exactly over the spot in which the bard sat silent and motionless, enjoying the sunshine and the breeze, and the freshness of nature. The bird of Jove, mistaking the bald head of the old man for a round white stone, let fall his prey to break its shell upon that hard substance. The tortoise dropped plumb from the zenith, and a fractured skull was the unfortunate result to the father of Tragedy; for so the Athenians justly styled our poet.

An elegiac quatrain written by himself, and which only records that "there lay Æschylus of Athens, son of Euphorion, who died in fertile Gela, and whose prowess the long-haired Mede experienced on the illustrious field of Marathon," was the epitaph engraven on his tomb.

Æschylus accomplished for the Grecian drama what Shakspeare, according to common parlance*, did for that of England. Each introduced order and beauty into the rude and indigested mass where chaos reigned before. Æschylus abridged the office of the chorus, and by the addition of a second actor, established a regular dramatic dialogue, which he made the principal part of the play, rendering the odes of the chorus subservient to the main interest of the action. He it was who first brought into use the spacious decorated theatre with its fixed and regular stage; he

* The praise of introducing order and regularity into the English drama more properly belongs to Ben Jonson.

also introduced the robe, the buskin, and the mask*. The learned Bishop of London, Dr. Blomfield, is of opinion †, that Æschylus was even the first who composed tragedy on a serious subject, and that Phrynichus only copied his invention: it is certain that the tragedy on the fall of Miletus, which is the first mournful play distinctly recorded to have been composed by Phrynichus, was not presented for some years after Æschylus had first contended for the tragic prize.

It is an observation of Porson ‡, that though Æschylus may have been a greater poet than Sophocles or Euripides, yet that the two latter composed better plots, and consequently were more skilful dramatists than he. The fables of Æschylus are certainly simple to a fault, but there is a naked vastness about both his conceptions and his imagery, which often seems to reach a strain of eastern magnificence. Perhaps there is no more striking example of this than the Prometheus, a character which, for gloomy majesty and haughty heroism, has been compared to Milton's Satan §.

* So Horace, De A. P. 275.

“Thespis, inventor of the tragic art,
Carried his vagrant actors in a cart;
High o'er the crowd the mimic tribe appeared,
And played and sang, with lees of wine besmeared.
Then Æschylus a decent vizard used,
Built a low stage, the flowing robe diffused;
In language more sublime his actors rage,
And in the graceful buskin tread the stage.”

FRANCIS.

† Præf. ad Pers.

‡ Prælec. in Eurip.

§ By no one have the genius and style of our poet been more admirably characterized, than by the German critic Schlegel. “The buskin of Æschylus,” says that eloquent writer, “has

Cicero observes, that in philosophy our poet was a Pythagorean, and of this we find many traces in the sentiments of his dramas, as a deep veneration in what concerns the gods; high regard for the sanctity of an oath and the nuptial bond; the future existence of the soul; the sacred character of suppliants; the science of physiognomy; the importance of proper names, of numbers, and other things. If Pythagoras derived the higher of these doctrines and sentiments, as we believe he did, from his travels in Egypt and the East, and from some acquaintance with the sacred books of the Hebrews, we shall be at no loss to account for their appearance in the dramas of his pupil, and for the almost scriptural language which occasionally crosses us in the writings of Æschylus.

Some authorities ascribe ninety plays to Æschylus, others above a hundred; but of these, seven only are now extant; and these are, by his recent editor (the Bishop of London), arranged in the following chronological order:

1. The Suppliants; 2. The Persians; 3. Pro-

as it were the weight of brass; on it none but gigantic figures stalk before us. It almost seems to cost him an effort to paint mere men; he frequently brings gods on the stage, particularly the Titans, those ancient gods who shadow forth the dark primeval powers of nature, and who had long been driven into Tartarus, beneath a world governed in tranquillity. In conformity with the standard of his dramatis personæ, he seeks to swell out the language which they employ to a colossal size; hence there arise rugged compound words, an over-multitude of epithets, and often an extreme intricacy of syntax in the chorusses, which is the cause of great obscurity. He is similar to Dante and Shakspeare in the peculiar strangeness of his images and expressions; yet these images are not deficient in that terrible grace which the ancients particularly praise in Æschylus."

metheus ; 4. The Seven Chiefs against Thebes ; 5. 6. and 7. The Agamemnon, Choëphoræ, and Eumenides, produced together.

CHAPTER III.

Of the Dramatic Festivals at Athens.

THERE were three yearly festivals among the Athenians in honour of Bacchus, all bearing the common name of *Dionysia*, but with other adjuncts, significant of the place or time in which they were held. The *rural Dionysia*, as their name imports, took place in all the country towns and villages throughout Attica, and were celebrated about the beginning of January. The second *Dionysia* were held in the eighth Attic month, answering to part of February and March, and bore various appellations ; while the third and more important festival was commonly distinguished by the titles of the *greater* or the *city Dionysia*. It was at the second of these festivals, that the comic contests were more particularly, though not exclusively held. The representations lasted but a single day, and none but the inhabitants of Attica itself were permitted to be present at them. Hence the tragic poets almost always reserved their *new* pieces for the greater Dionysia, which were solemnized a month after the former, and continued several days ; there being at that time also a great concourse of strangers to Athens, who eagerly flocked to witness this imposing spectacle, which in-

deed was expected with the most intense interest by natives as well as foreigners.

The prize of the successful candidate no longer consisted of either goat or ox, or even of a flask of wine, but was simply an ivy wreath or crown, in token of his victory, as ivy was peculiarly consecrated to Bacchus. Nor was this honorary reward conferred by the voice of the whole audience; the presiding archon caused a certain number of judges, usually five, to be chosen by lot, who were then sworn to decide impartially, according to the best of their judgment, and their award was final. The clamour of the people is said, however, to have been frequently influential in the decision. Besides the name of the successful candidate, they returned those of the second and third best, and the number of competitors seems rarely to have exceeded three. No piece that had gained the prize could be a second time admitted to the competition, nor could even a rejected piece, unless important alterations had been made previously to bringing it forward again.

So much honour however was done to the dramas of Æschylus, that the people permitted any poet to aspire to the tragic crown who presented one of the pieces of that author, retouched and prepared for the occasion, and furnished him with the necessary charges of representation at the state expense.

During one period in the history of the Athenian stage, it was the custom for each tragic candidate to produce three serious and one satyric drama, together entitled a Tetralogy; otherwise, omitting the satyric drama, the three tragedies taken by themselves were called a Trilogy. In the only instance of a complete trilogy now remaining, we find them

composed on a kindred argument: the Agamemnon, Choëphoræ, and Eumenides of Æschylus were comprised in the same trilogy, and with his Proteus, a satyric play, were entitled his Orestean tetralogy. The subject of the first is the murder of Agamemnon by Clytemnestra, on his return from Troy. In the second, Orestes avenges his father by putting Clytemnestra and her paramour Ægisthus to death; and in the Eumenides we find him haunted by the Furies for this alleged crime: he is, however, put upon his trial before a sacred council of the Areopagus, selected by Minerva, to whose temple he had fled, a suppliant for mercy, and the votes of the judges for and against him proving equal, he is acquitted of the charge by the goddess of wisdom herself, who gives her casting voice in his favour.

Whether or not all the pieces of the same tetralogy were represented consecutively, cannot now be ascertained, but it seems most probable that they were, and that the productions of different authors were brought forward on different days. On this supposition the three plays of the trilogy, when connected, resemble so many acts of the modern drama, nor will the three taken together much exceed the length of some of our plays, especially if the dramatic part alone be considered, apart from the lyrical chorusses; while the satyric which followed, occupied the place, and served the purpose of our farce.

Another opinion as to the order in which the productions of the different dramatists were exhibited is, that one play of each was presented on the same day, and that there were four separate decisions on the merits of the authors. M. Dacier supports the monstrous proposition, that the several tetralogies

of all the contending authors were produced in succession, in one continued representation, but this is incredible from the mere length of time it would have occupied. That the whole tetralogy of some one poet was performed on the same day, is rendered probable from the circumstance that the custom of presenting one instead of four plays, is ascribed to Sophocles as an improvement; and this practice, which had always obtained with respect to comedy, was soon established respecting tragedy also.

The pieces were first submitted to the principal magistrate of Athens, who presided at the greater Dionysia, and who might accept or summarily reject them, as he thought proper: if he approved, lots were cast for the actors, and his part assigned to each, according as he was deemed a first, second, or third rate performer. Sometimes, however, the privilege of selecting his actors was granted to the poet who had gained the prize in the preceding contest. The number of actors, in addition to the persons of the chorus, was limited to three, so that one performer must frequently have supported different characters in the same piece; to this there are several allusions in the classic authors. At first, as we have seen, there was but one, then two, and lastly three*; but as this limitation of their number appears in no way conducive to the perfection of the art, it is usually ascribed to the necessity of curtailing in some measure the extraordinary expenses of the

* It is to be observed that the numerical limitation did not extend to the exclusion of *mutes*, and that Julius Pollux affirms that sometimes even a fourth actor spoke, and that this transgression of the general rule was known by a technical name, *parachoregema*: he cites the *Agamemnon* of *Æschylus* as an instance, but neither in this nor in any other extant tragedy, is such a necessity apparent.

choragus, that is, the person selected from among the wealthier citizens of Athens to defray the charges of a theatrical exhibition, which was one of the heaviest burdens of the Athenian state. Actors of celebrity were paid extravagantly; sometimes half a talent a day, or nearly a hundred pounds of our money, nor did any infamy attach to the employment, as at Rome. Lysias the orator mentions that he had to furnish a tragic chorus, B.C. 410, and that it cost him thirty minæ, about £97 of our money; the chorus, like the actors, were allotted to each poet by the presiding archon. Both actors and choristers took incredible pains to perfect themselves in their art; there were frequent rehearsals before the long expected day of the contest arrived, and at these the poet himself usually drilled them in their parts. From the nature of their writing materials it would have cost more time and trouble to write out the several copies requisite for all the persons of the drama, including the chorus, than to teach the parts *vivâ voce*, and they were studied accordingly from the repeated delivery of the author. This process was called "teaching a play", from which phrase several expressions grew into use, both in Greek and Latin, that have sometimes been erroneously supposed to refer to the moral teaching of the drama.

The assertion of Lord Kaims, whose information on this as well as on some other subjects of which he has treated, appears to have been almost as superficial as it was multifarious, that each Greek tragedy is divided into five acts, is without any foundation. Many of the continental critics, however, have affirmed this likewise; there is a precept of Horace

to that effect with respect to *Roman* drama, which perhaps gave birth to the error, but from the nature of the chorus the Greek play must have been one uninterrupted piece of acting from beginning to end. The stage is never empty, or but for a moment: if the chorus be not present at the opening, it usually makes its appearance in the first scene, and rarely leaves its place till the play is ended.

CHAPTER IV.

Of the Greek Theatre.

THE reader must now be pleased to divest himself of all the associations which the modern name of theatre or opera-house conjures up to his imagination, the covered and curtained box, the crowded motley-looking pit, and the general glare of artificial lights, and must picture to his mind's eye a colossal structure of Parian marble, open at top *, but decorated

* The theatre at Athens was built at first of wood, but having fallen down and killed many spectators during the performance of a piece by Pratinas, (that ancient author who, as has been mentioned, on one occasion gained the prize from Æschylus,) this splendid edifice of stone was constructed, which was likewise furnished with spacious porticos supported by pillars, surrounding the whole building, to which the audience retreated in case of a sudden shower. For this however there was seldom need. "The climate of Athens," says Lord Byron, "to me at least, appeared a perpetual spring; during eight months I never passed a day without being as many hours on horseback: rain is extremely rare, snow never lies in the plains, and a cloudy day is an agreeable rarity." The theatre appears to have been constructed without a roof, not

with the most gorgeous magnificence and exquisite taste. In this noble building let him imagine thirty thousand Greeks assembled to witness what with them partook of the solemnity of a religious rite, seated on cool commodious seats of semicircular shape, rising over each other with a rapid elevation as they recede, so as to preserve the view unobstructed towards the stage, with the cloudless sky for their canopy, and the blue hills of their country, descried over the walls of the theatre, closing the distant view. Carrying the eye down the prodigious flight of marble benches which formed the audience part of the theatre, it perceives between the lowest and the stage, which are on the same level, a comparatively small sunken semicircular space, nearly in the situation of the pit of the English theatres, set apart for the chorus, when it sits inactive, and having a broad staircase at either end, by which to ascend upon the stage itself; a division of the sunken space between these two staircases, like the modern orchestra immediately adjoining the stage, and therefore called the *hyposcenium*, contained the musicians. In front of this,

only for the sake of light and free circulation, but that from its religious character it might be more in accordance with the ancient Greek temples which also appear to have been roofless, like those of Egypt, it being deemed requisite that sacrifices, or any proceeding intended to call specially for the observance and attention of the gods, should be performed in the open air. That theatrical representations partook of the nature of a religious ceremony among the Greeks, is evident from the circumstance that the theatre was purified before the commencement of the pieces, and libations to Bacchus made on his altar, the *thymele*, at the close of the performance. It was for this cause, no doubt, among others, that the earlier Christians were forbidden to be present at scenical representations, as it was almost the same as to be present at pagan sacrifices.

and opposite to the middle of the stage, that is, nearly in the place occupied by the box for the prompter's head in our Italian theatre, but in the orchestra, so as not to rise above the level of the stage, there was an elevation with steps, in shape resembling an altar, and thence called *thymele*, on the top of which the *coryphæus* sat between the choral dances, and conversed with the actors, when as *leader and spokesman of the chorus* he took a part in the dialogue. The *thymele* was placed as nearly as possible in the middle of the building, and round this centre the semicircle of the amphitheatre was described. The shape of the stage or scene itself, was rectangular, but its breadth, stretching across the whole building, was enormous compared with its depth. This shallow strip was called the *logeum*, the middle part of it however receded much further than the rest, but still with rectilinear sides; this quadrangular recess was called the *proscenium*, and was furnished with a curtain, which, when not withdrawn, formed the continuation of the back of the *logeum*. The vast dimensions of this stately edifice, as well as the religious solemnity of the exhibition, obliged the Greeks to have recourse to every possible expedient for increasing the effect produced by the actors, both to the eye and to the ear. For this purpose the figure and the voice were artificially magnified: this was effected by the mask and the buskin or cothurnus. The mask was either of leather or of very thin wood, stuffed inside; it covered the entire of the head, and was exquisitely wrought by the best artists of Athens, in imitation of the marble statue of the person represented, or under the immediate direction of the poet himself.

The mechanism of the joinings, and whatever else could improve the beauty and expression of the features, was attended to with the nicest accuracy* ; the opening for the mouth was so contrived as to increase the sound of the voice exceedingly, and besides this, there were brazen vessels, constructed on acoustical principles, and extending under the seats of the spectators, which, in some manner unintelligible to us, enabled the articulation on the stage to be distinctly heard in the remotest benches of the amphitheatre. The increased size of the head, produced by the mask, was proportionate to the increase of height caused by the cothurnus, or buskin, the sole of which was composed of several layers of cork or other light wood, so as to raise its wearer four or five inches ; gauntlets lengthened their arms, and the dress, a rich and flowing habit with a train, was so managed as to conceal the want

* "We may learn", says Schlegel, "the forms of the mask by the imitations in stone which have come down to us. They are equally beautiful and various. We must be convinced, by the rich stock of technical terms, which the Greek language affords for all the gradations of age and character in a mask, that there was a great variety of them, even in the tragic department ; it is perfectly clear that there was in the comic. But what we cannot see in marble masks, is their thinness, their elegant colouring, and their neat way of fastening on. The profusion of excellent workmanship at Athens, in every thing that concerned the graphic arts, allows us to suppose that in these respects they were not to be surpassed. He who has seen, during the Carnival at Rome, the wax masks of the grave sort which have lately come into vogue, which also partly surround the head, may form a tolerable idea of the theatrical masks of the ancients. Those that I have mentioned imitate life, even to motion, in the most exquisite manner, and deceive one perfectly at the distance at which the ancient actors were seen."

of corresponding magnitude in the rest of the limbs, so that the actors, as has been already observed, more resembled colossal statues of the finest sculpture, waked into life and motion, than imitators of mere ordinary humanity. Their robes, however, necessarily varied, as they were scrupulously adapted to the character represented. The actor who played the part of a king, appeared with a diadem and an eagle-crowned sceptre, and gorgeously vested in a robe of purple, ornamented with gold. Heroes were clad in armour, and a mantle of skin, of a lion or tiger, or some other fierce wild animal. The unfortunate exhibited themselves in sad-coloured and sometimes torn garments; so that the rank and situation of each person of the drama might be indicated at the first glance by his dress. The masks of the female characters represented the head-dress, as well as the head; these parts also were played by men; as well because the privacy in which the Greek women lived, rendered it inconsistent with their notions of propriety to appear on the stage, as also because the voice, "gentle and low", and the other feminine characteristics of the sex, were deemed insufficient to convey an adequate idea of the energy of their tragic heroines. Besides, as the number of performers was limited to three, each must frequently have represented both a male and a female character in the same performance, which could not have been done with any propriety by a woman*. Whether women were

* It is worth observing, that in our England also the female parts were at first played by boys, and all women, who even attended the representation as part of the audience, wore masks. This offers some apology for the indelicacies, neither slight nor

permitted to be even spectators of theatrical representations, is a question yet agitated among antiquaries; more than one passage might be quoted from Plato *, to shew that they were not excluded, at all events, from the tragic representations; but for the sake of even Greek female delicacy, let us be allowed to hope, that they were not suffered to witness the exhibitions of what is usually termed the Old Comedy.

With respect to the instrumental accompaniment of the voice in ancient tragedy, it is clearly demonstrable, from the harmonic problems of Aristotle and many other authorities, that the music was not confined to the choral odes, but pervaded most of the dialogue also, so that their declamation must have somewhat resembled the recitative of our modern opera. Metastasio argues that music must have been employed throughout the whole piece, because it is reckoned by Aristotle among the parts of quality, and the quality necessarily pervades the whole piece, and its parts are not confined to particular portions of the tragedy, as the parts of quantity are. Aristotle expressly says, however, that in some parts the language of tragedy is embellished by metre only; from these therefore music was excluded. The quick repartee, where the dialogue is regularly carried on in amoebæan or alternate verses, as it is the least elevated and most prosaic part of tragedy, was probably that which was unaccompanied by

occasional, we regret to say, of Shakspeare and his contemporaries, though no palliation of the grossness of too many of his successors, at a time when the respective characters of the drama were performed by the respective sexes.

* See his *Gorgias*, 502, D. De Legg. B. 2. 658, D. 7. 817, C.

music; indeed its frequent recurrence and continuance seems to have been one of the "vestigia ruris," the remains of primitive rusticity, some of which continued to cling to the Greek as well as to the Roman tragedies. As far as one can judge from ancient writers on the stage, the voice of the chorus was guided by the flute, and that of the actors in recitation usually by a peculiar lyre, called the lyre of Mercury, which pitched and sustained the voice at the requisite elevation. Each ode was preceded by a symphony, or prelude, on two flutes.

As to scenery, the action usually passes in the vestibule of a palace or temple placed directly opposite the spectators, with streets, or the sea-beach, or the open country, seen in perspective, going off at each side. Hence the front scene was generally architectural; sometimes, however, it too was a landscape-painting, as in the *Prometheus* for example, where it represents the bare and rugged aspect of Mount Caucasus. The side scenes were composed of triangles, which moved on pivots, and opened, so as to discover the inside of a house or tent, if necessary. A number of machines, ropes, wires, and other paraphernalia, were also used for flights through the air in the descent of divinities and the appearance of ghosts; cloud-enveloped platforms for the gods to stand on when they came down; contrivances to produce lightning and thunder, &c. These, when unemployed, were kept out of view behind the side scenes. Ghosts usually ascended by a ladder, called "Charon's stair," from the vaults beneath, into the orchestra, and thence upon the stage.

As the theatre of Athens was built at the public expense, and the cost of each exhibition defrayed

by some wealthy individual, it was originally open to every one, and no price was demanded for admission. The crushing and quarrelling for places that ensued, occasioned a law to be passed, establishing a payment to be made at entrance, and fixing it at a drachma each, about eight-pence of our money. Pericles, to ingratiate himself with the common people, brought in a decree reducing the price to one-third of a drachma, or two oboli, and enacting that every applicant should be furnished with this sum by the public treasurer, out of the national funds.

The money thus heedlessly squandered was drawn from the contributions which had been set apart, as an almost sacred deposit, for carrying on any future Persian war, and soon engrossed them almost wholly. So eager were the Athenian multitude about this privilege, that they made it by their law a capital offence for any man to propose the restoration of these funds to their original and only legitimate object, or to endeavour to dissuade them from a misapplication of the national resources, so palpably ruinous to their own best interests. The money paid at the theatre seems to have gone to the machinist, or general manager of scenes and machinery, who probably defrayed all the expenses except those of the Choragus, on whom devolved the furnishing of the dresses and equipment of the chorus.

The people hastened to the theatre at day-light in the morning, for the performances began very early, and continued all day long. Between each exhibition, however, the audience retired, and the house was cleared for a short interval: it does not appear whether the same persons usually returned; the judges of the performances must have done so of course; but it is more probable that the majority

of the spectators did not, and that there were three or four successive audiences each day. We learn from Athenæus that they occasionally regaled themselves with cakes, wine, and nuts, within the theatre, and during the performance.

As to the chorus, which formed so prominent a part of the ancient drama, the beauty and sublimity, both lyrical and moral, of the poetry it has preserved to us, render it very difficult to censure the Greek tragedians for continuing to retain it, even after their compositions had assumed a regularly dramatic form, but the impropriety of introducing it on our stage can scarcely admit of question. At Athens, the singing and dancing conveyed to the spectators no idea of merriment, but on the contrary inspired them with a degree of awe, as being that which their minds had been accustomed to associate with every religious rite and festival; this was an essential advantage. In the modern theatre a chorus would obstruct the action materially, because there is no place provided for its reception, and on the stage itself it would be in the way. It must be recollected, too, that the subjects of almost all the Greek tragedies related to kings, or to great public affairs, which therefore required, according to their notions of propriety, the presence of a considerable number of persons, while our writers have frequently descended to an humbler sphere, where less of pomp and circumstance is necessary. How far, however, it might be practicable and advisable to introduce between the acts of modern tragedy, music adapted to the subject, commencing in the strain of the preceding passion, and gradually varying, till it accorded with the tone of that which

is to follow, according to the suggestion of Lord Kaimes, the writer leaves to be determined by those who are more intimately versed than he in the arcanæ of our theatre.

Greek tragedy, as we have seen, was originally but an episode added to the chorus, whose song and dance at first comprised the whole performance. By progressive improvements in the structure and connexion of the dramatic fable, the choral part became subordinate to the dialogue, and gradually growing digressive, and unconnected with what was now considered the business of the play, at length it disappeared altogether. Previously to the representation of the *Eumenides* of Æschylus, the number of persons in the chorus was probably indeterminate: on that occasion it is said to have amounted to fifty persons, but as these represented Furies, the frightful appearance of so many hideous looking personages on the scene at once, produced so bad an effect, that a law was passed limiting the number to twelve*, but Sophocles afterwards succeeded in extending the limitation to fifteen.

On its first entry, the chorus took its position either in three rows of five each, or in five rows of three. Preserving this order, they danced across the orchestra or *dancing space*, from right to left, singing the first portion of their ode, called *Strophe*, or *Turn*; then, keeping the same time and the same step, they moved from left to right, repeating the

* Such is the common story, but it is argued with great force by the learned Bishop of London, that the number on this occasion could not have even exceeded the well known three, without such an outrageous and uncalled for violation of the received mythology, as would have shocked an Athenian audience.

Antistrophe, or Counter-turn; hence the antistrophe always answers to the strophe, not only in the number of the lines, but also in the isochronal measure of the corresponding verses, because it was sung and danced to a repetition of the same musical strain; indeed for the most part the corresponding feet of the two are identical. When the strophes and antistrophes were completed, the chorus stood still, in the middle of the stage, and sang the Epode, or Stand*. Some choral odes, however, have no epode, while others have a prosode preceding the first strophe, as well as an epode at the close, as in the second choral song of the Agamemnon. Some also consist of dissimilar verses not formed into corresponding collections, and were probably sung by the chorus advancing and retiring simply, without the usual lateral movements: such odes are called monostrophic, and the parodos, or first song of the whole chorus, is commonly of this sort.

The person who led the chorus and acted as their prolocutor was called the Coryphæus, and not only in the dialogue did he speak for all, but as some

* These evolutions are conjectured, (Dr. Francklin, the translator of Sophocles, thinks whimsically,) to have had a secret reference to the motions of the sphere and of the planets. Père Brumoy, copying from Vossius, writes, “le chœur alloit de droite à gauche, pour exprimer le cours journalier du firmament, d’orient en occident; ce tour s’appelloit *strophe*; il déclinait ensuite de gauche à droite, par égard aux planètes, qui outre le mouvement commun ont encore le leur particulier d’occident vers l’orient. C’étoit l’*antistrophe*, ou le retour; enfin le chœur s’arrêtoit au milieu du théâtre, pour y chanter un morceau qu’on nommoit *epode*, et pour marquer par cette situation la stabilité de la terre.” It is curious that Triclinius states exactly the converse of these movements for the strophe and antistrophe, though he assigns precisely the same reasons for them as those of Vossius.

have imagined, this practice was also carried into the lyric part; the chorus, when it has occasion to allude to itself, usually doing so in the singular number*. When the chorus was parted into two semi-chorusses, as for example in the *Ajax* of Sophocles, when, immediately after the death of the hero, the two divisions of the chorus enter at opposite extremities of the stage, and advance searching along till they meet in the middle of it, a second coryphæus was appointed. The two halves of the chorus, answering to each other, were called *Hemichoria*. The person next the coryphæus was called *parastates*, and the one next to him *tritostates*; these were selected for their excellence in singing, but they pitched their voice in a lower key than that of the coryphæus himself. It appears, from a fragment of Menander, that in his time it was customary to admit two or three mutes into the hindmost row of the chorus, when the number of singers was deficient. That graceful and majestic movement which we call the choral dance, and which, in tra-

* That this however is an improbable supposition, is pretty evident from what follows respecting the offices of the *parastates* and *tritostates*. It may be added, that the practice of German scholars and poets (and none have investigated the Greek drama more deeply or successfully) is decidedly against such a notion;—and from the results produced, it may be added, most wisely. The writer of this note remembers witnessing some years ago in the beautiful theatre at Stutgard a representation of Schiller's '*Bride of Messina*', a drama confessedly formed on the model of the Greek stage, with a chorus attached to it, and the effect of its lyrical effusions, delivered as they were by a body of men, all using the same intonation, and all apparently actuated by the same volitions and expression of opinion, created an impression on his mind, which can never be erased. From the above explanation it is evident that the chorus, though pouring forth its strains collectively, might still with propriety speak of itself in the singular number.

gedy, the Greeks named *Emmeleia*, a peculiar and distinguishing epithet expressive of the union of dignity, elegance, and musical regularity of motion, was, like the vocal part, led by the *coryphæus*.

With respect to the character which the chorus should support in the play, Aristotle says it should be considered as one of the persons of the drama, should be a part of the whole, and a sharer in the action; rather as it is in Sophocles than in Euripides, and not at all as in the poets subsequent to them, who have neglected this rule. The scholiast too has censured the chorusses of Euripides, and with apparent reason, as being irrelevant. Horace, following Aristotle, thus describes the office of the chorus ;

“ The chorus must support an actor’s part,
Side with the virtuous and advise with art ;
Bridle wild rage, the arrogant appease,
And short repasts of frugal tables praise.
Applaud the justice of well governed states,
And peace triumphant with her open gates.
Intrusted secrets let them ne’er betray,
But to the righteous gods with ardour pray
That fortune with returning smiles may bless
Afflicted worth, and impious pride depress :
Yet let their songs with apt coherence join,
Promote the plot and aid the main design.”

ART OF POETRY, 193.

It is not however by any means intended, by either Aristotle or Horace, that the chorus should take as important a share in the play as one of the persons of the drama ; they only mean that it should feel and express a lively interest in the progress of the action, that it should be sufficiently concerned in the events to make its presence natural and proper, yet not so deeply interested as to prevent it

from making apposite general reflections of a moral and instructive kind, which were well suited to the genius and simplicity of the time.

The dialect of the chorus was chiefly Doric, probably a remnant of its Doric origin and primitive rusticity; for the Dorians, shut out by their situation from much intercourse with other nations, longest retained the original customs and language of Greece, and they claimed the invention of both Tragedy and Comedy, alleging certain etymological reasons from the very names of the art, and Aristotle seems to think their claim well founded.

At first, as has been observed, the dramatic chorus represented frisking Satyrs, the companions of Bacchus, who was himself the inventor of the choral dance, at least he is styled so by Anacreon*. Horace, too, characterizes the persons of the primitive chorus thus :

“ The first tragedians found the serious style
Too grave for their uncultivated age,
And so brought wanton naked Satyrs in,
Whose motions, words, and shape, were all a farce ;
Because the mad ungovernable rout
Full of confusion and the fumes of wine,
Loved such variety and antic tricks.”

As then their ludicrous verses bade farewell to gravity, the Trochaic or galloping metre was the one chiefly employed, as best adapted to the saltatorial and jocular nature of the subject : afterwards, with the episode and dialogue, the Iambic measure was introduced, as being of all metres the most colloquial and dramatic :

“ Numbers for dialogue and action fit,
And whose peculiar province is the stage.”

HORACE. ART OF POETRY.

* Τὸν Ἐφευρετὰν χορείας. (Ode 41.)

Subsequently, for the sake of variety, and for the greater ease of writing, the Anapæstic metre also was admitted.

It may amuse the English reader to know what are the kinds of English verse answering to the Iambic trimeter, Anapæstic dimeter, and Trochaic tetrameter of the Greek tragedies. The twelve-syllabled iambic, or Alexandrine of our standard heroic, as

“They warmed their frozen feet, and dried their wet attire,”
corresponds to the first; the Anapæstic we retain under the same name, as

“May I govern my passions with absolute sway,
And grow wiser and better as life wears away,”

while the first verse of the drinking song instanced by Mr. Twining, affords a familiar example of the trochaic tetrameter catalectic:

“Jolly mortals, fill your glasses, noble deeds are done by wine.”

CHAPTER V.

On Aristotle's treatise of Poetics.

ARISTOTLE, the disciple of Plato, the disciple of Socrates, was the first who carried philosophical investigation into the regions of poetic fiction. After his death, his works unfortunately fell into the hands of illiterate persons, by whom they were neglected and defaced. At length, when Attalus was forming the Pergamenian library, which was subsequently transferred to the Alexandrian collection, and burnt with it by the Caliph Omar, A.D. 642., the manuscripts

of the Stagirite were offered for sale, and being purchased by Apellicon of Teos, were removed, in a very mutilated condition, from a damp cellar under ground, in which they had long lain mouldering to decay.

The treatise of poetics is very imperfect, so much so, that by many it is deemed not even the fragment of Aristotle's original work, but only of a summary of that treatise, made by some scholar or admirer of the philosopher. Such as it is, however, it contains much very valuable matter; to it, and to the multifarious learning it has called forth, in the form of commentary and explanation, the editor is chiefly indebted for the preliminary information here presented to the reader. In this work, Aristotle ascribes the origin of dramatic, and indeed of all poetry, to man's instinctive love of imitation, of melody and of rhythm. The indulgence and the cultivation of these tastes naturally gave birth to poetry, first of a rude historical or epic kind, and subsequently, in a more advanced stage, to tragedy and comedy. The *Margites* of Homer, a satirical work, of which only a few lines are now extant, he considers as bearing the same analogy to comedy, as the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* do to tragedy. He defines tragedy to be "*an imitation of some action that is important, entire, and of a proper magnitude, by language embellished and rendered pleasurable, but by different means in different parts;—in the way not of narration, but of action, effecting through pity and terror the correction and refinement of such passions.*"* It consists, therefore, of six parts, by

* Schlegel has remarked, with reason, that interpreters are by no means agreed as to the meaning of this latter position, and have taken shelter under the most forced and discordant exp-

which its *quality* is determined, namely; 1. Fable, or plot; 2. Manners, or character; 3. Sentiments; 4. Diction; 5. Music; and 6. Decoration, which last includes scenery, dresses, &c.

Of these he ranks the fable first in importance, and the rest in the order in which they are here placed; the first three relate to the objects of imitation, namely men, and their actions and characters: the fourth and fifth to the means of imitation, which are words, melody, and rhythm; and the last to the manner of imitation, which is by actual representation.

The distinct parts requisite to constitute the *quantity* of tragedy are four in number; the propositions. It may, perhaps, contribute to the right understanding of the manner in which Aristotle thought pity and terror would tend to effect their own amelioration, to subjoin a passage from his treatise of government, on the power of music to allay mental excitement: "Whatever passions have a strong effect on any minds, will have some effect on all, and they will therefore differ only in degree; such passions, for example, as *pity* and *terror*, to which we may add enthusiasm, a mood of mind wherewith some men are violently affected. Now we see that this last, when those sacred melodies which accompany the celebration of the mystic rites are performed, is soothed and quieted as if by medicine or purgation; and the same thing will happen to those who are liable to the impressions of pity or terror, or whose passions in general are easily excited. *They will feel a kind of unburthening, or purification of the mind, accompanied by a degree of pleasure.*"

It may be added, that by the word *entire* in the definition, Aristotle afterwards explains himself to mean, "that which has a beginning, a middle, and an end. A beginning is that which does not necessarily suppose any thing before it, but which requires something to follow. An end, on the contrary, is that which supposes something to precede it, either necessarily or probably, but which nothing is required to follow. A middle is that which both supposes something to precede and requires something to follow. The poet, therefore, who would construct his fable properly, is not at liberty to begin or end where he pleases, but must conform to these definitions."

logue, episode, exode, and the chorus. The last is subdivided into parode, stasimon, and kommoi. The prologue is all that part which precedes the parode, or first song of the whole chorus; the episode comprises all between whole choral songs, the exode is whatsoever follows the last song of the chorus.

The prologue should contain whatever preliminary information is necessary for the right understanding of the plot, and awaken the interest of the spectator, without too far gratifying his curiosity as to the catastrophe: the episode, the complication of the fable by the intervention of new circumstances, which yet insensibly lead and contribute to the denouement. The exode unfolds the catastrophe.

In modern plays the first act is supposed to occupy the place of the ancient prologue, the second, third, and fourth, of the episode, and the fifth that of the exode. The prologue of the *Roman* drama resembled our own, and consisted merely of an address of the poet to the audience.

Of the Choric odes, the parodos is that first sung by the whole chorus after its entrance; the stasimon includes all those without anapæsts or trochees, which were sung by the chorus without varying its position. Kommoi are properly a general lamentation of actors and chorus together; but many tragedies are without this part, which is not essential.

But of all the parts the most important is the combination of incidents, or the fable: because tragedy is an imitation not of characters, but of actions; for the proper end of tragedy is to affect, but it is by their actions that men are made happy or the contrary, therefore tragedy imitates manners, or human character, only so far as that is necessarily involved in the imitation of human action, which is

the end, and therefore chief. Further, this fable, or connexion of circumstances which we call plot, should be probable rather than true in its incidents, and single rather than double in its structure. The catastrophe should be unhappy, and result not from the vice but from the error and frailty of some great and flourishing character, as in the case of *Œdipus**. With respect to the measure of its length, Aristotle observes, that since beauty consists in magnitude and order, a certain length of fable is indispensable, but it must be such as to present a whole easily comprehended by the memory. The more extensive however this whole is, consistently with the clear and easy comprehension of it in one view, the more beautiful will the fable be with respect to magnitude. In general we may say that an action is sufficiently extended when it is long enough to admit of a change of fortune from happy to unhappy, or the reverse, brought about by a succession, necessary or probable, of well connected incidents. The change is best wrought finally by *Peripateia* or by *Anagnorisis*: by the former is meant a revolution, or a consequence the very reverse of that which is expected from the circumstances which lead to it; as when in the *Œdipus Tyrannus* of Sophocles, the messenger (l. 1014) meaning to make the king happy, and to relieve him from his fears respecting his parents, by making known to him his real birth, produces an effect directly contrary

* So also our Chaucer writes :

“Tragedie is to sayn a certain storie,
As olde bookes maken us memorie,
Of him that stode in gret prosperitee,
And is yfallen out of high degree
Into miserie, and endeth wretchedlie.”---CANT. TALES.

to his intention, because his information leads to a disclosure which confirms all that *Œdipus* had so much reason to dread. *Anagnorisis* or recognition, is when some principal person of the drama is discovered to be different from what had been before supposed, as when *Orestes* unexpectedly discovers the priestess of *Diana* at *Tauris*, to be his own sister *Iphigeneia*. That is the best sort of *anagnorisis* which is accompanied by *peripateia*, as in the instance of *Œdipus*, before cited.

The second part of tragedy, namely the manners, which mark and distinguish characters, and enable us to judge beforehand how such a person is likely to act in a given conjuncture of circumstances, should be good, becoming, like and uniform. It is not meant by this that the manners of every person in the piece should be absolutely good, but as much so as the description of character will admit of, without violating the other requisites. Sentiments, namely, the capacity of expressing actual and suitable thoughts, include whatever is the object of speech, as to prove, to confute, to move the passions, and the rest; and therefore is referred to the principles laid down in the books of rhetoric.

Under the head of diction, Aristotle enters into a somewhat minute analysis of language in general, but concludes, that the excellence of diction consists in being perspicuous without being mean; that poetic diction requires the use of foreign, uncommon, and ornamental words, but that the happy use of metaphor is most important of all, for this alone it is. (in the diction,) which cannot be acquired, and which, consisting in a quick discernment of resemblances, is a certain mark of genius. The intention

of foreign and uncommon terms is to raise and elevate the diction, which is also effected in some degree by the technical collocation of the words.

As modern critics usually class the Epopee in the highest rank of poetry, and Dr. Blair has not hesitated to preface his account of that species with a declaration that "the epic poem is universally allowed to be of all poetical works the most dignified, and at the same time the most difficult in execution," it is worth noting that Aristotle gives a decided preference to tragedy. Tragedy, he tells us, has the advantage in the following respects: it possesses all that is possessed by the epic, it might even adopt its metre; and it has, besides, the music and the decoration, peculiar to itself. It has greater clearness and distinctness of impression than the epic, as well in reading as in representation. It attains the end of its imitation in a shorter compass; for the effect is more pleasurable when produced by a short and close series of impressions, than when weakened by diffusion through a long extent of time. Farther, there is less strictness of unity in all epic imitation, as appears from this, that any the most perfect epic poem, (as the Iliad and Odyssey for example,) will furnish subject matter for several tragedies. If then, he concludes, tragedy be superior to the epic in all these respects, and also in the peculiar end at which it aims, namely, to give that pleasure which arises from terror and pity, through imitation, (for each species ought to afford, not any pleasure indiscriminately, but such only as has been pointed out,) it evidently follows that Tragedy, as it more effectually attains the end of the art itself, must deserve the preference.

THE
AGAMEMNON
OF
ÆSCHYLUS.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

HERALD.

AGAMEMNON.

CASSANDRA.

ÆGISTHUS.

CHORUS OF AGED ARGIVES.



INTRODUCTION.

THE last exhibition of dramas which Æschylus presented to an Athenian audience before he retired into Sicily, consisted of the Agamemnon, the Choëphoræ, and the Furies. These three plays are yet extant; and it is remarkable, that they form the only remaining example of the three connected pieces of the ancient trilogy. Hence, as well as for their intrinsic excellence, they have been placed first in the present volume, that the reader may at once more perfectly understand the usage of antiquity in this respect, and may form his own judgment of the suggestion previously thrown out, that the several pieces of the same trilogy might be regarded merely as distinct divisions of the same drama. The brothers, Agamemnon and Menelaus, married Clytemnestra and Helen, daughters of Leda. Helen's flight with Paris caused the war of Troy. When the Grecian fleet assembled under the command of Agamemnon king of Argos, to pursue the fugitive and avenge the outrage, it was long detained at Aulis by contrary winds. Calchas, the most skilful of their augurs, on consulting the omens, declared that this detention was owing to the influence of Diana, whose anger Agamemnon had kindled, by the death of a favourite white doe consecrated to her, which he had inadvertently pierced with an arrow while hunting. The seer pronounced the immolation of Iphigeneia, daughter of the king, to be the only means by which the resentment of the goddess could be appeased; and notwithstanding the an-

guish with which such a sacrifice could not fail to wring a father's heart, the clamours of the army prevailed; and after an agonizing conflict with his parental feelings, the fatal order was given which consigned Iphigeneia to death. We shall afterwards find this sacrifice the subject of one of the most exquisitely touching of the tragedies of Euripides.

Clytemnestra leagued with her paramour Ægisthus to assassinate her husband Agamemnon, on his triumphant return from the Trojan war, and she pleads his consent to the death of Iphigeneia as her excuse. Agamemnon also brought with him from Troy a captive concubine, Cassandra, daughter of Priam, on whom Apollo had bestowed the gift of prophecy, but being denied the reward he had expected for the boon, had touched her lips with his tongue, and willed her to be deemed insane, so that none of her predictions might ever be believed. She frequently foretold to Agamemnon the fate that awaited his return to Argos; but her solemn warnings, which form one of the most highly wrought scenes of the following tragedy, were wholly disregarded. On arriving at his palace, Agamemnon was welcomed with a sumptuous feast; and in coming out of the bath, the usual preparation for a banquet, he was presented by Clytemnestra with a tunic, the sleeves of which were sewed together to embarrass him. When his hands were entangled in the folds of the robe, Clytemnestra, assisted by Ægisthus, dispatched him with repeated blows of an axe.

It has already been observed that the plots of all the Greek tragedies which have come down to us, are mythological or historical, and not the offspring of pure invention. In the present instance, Æschylus has faithfully adhered to the received account of

the calamities which befel the house of Pelops. Tantalus, whose fabled fate must be familiar to every reader, was the father of Pelops. Atreus and Thyestes were his sons. Atreus deposed his brother from the throne which was his birthright, and he in turn seduced the wife of the usurper. Atreus, in revenge, killed the progeny of this adultery, and served them up at a banquet, so that Thyestes unconsciously ate of his own children. The perpetrator of this deed of horror then proclaimed his triumph, at which the sun is said to have shrunk back in his course appalled*. Ægisthus, whom Æschylus paints in the following play as the guilty avenger of this impious atrocity, was the offspring of an incestuous intercourse between Thyestes and Pelopea.

It would seem, from this relation, that the indignation of the gods of the heathen Pantheon was visited upon the descendants of the guilty, to the third and fourth generation. The crime of Tantalus caused the line of Pelops to be haunted and punished by the Furies, or the powers of darkness. It was they who, after a long series of previous persecutions, evinced in the crimes and calamities of Atreus and Thyestes, directed the shaft of Agamemnon against the sacred hind of Diana; this caused the anger of the goddess, and the consequent immolation of Iphigeneia, which, in turn, served as a pretext to Clytemnestra for the murder of her hus-

* Hence Milton, describing the dire effects of eating of the forbidden tree, writes,

—“ At that tasted fruit,
The sun, as from Thyestean banquet, turned
His course intended; else how had the world
Inhabited, though sinless, more than now
Avoided pinching cold and scorching heat?

band. Orestes avenges this murder by the death of her, his mother; and it is only on receiving expiation and forgiveness from the gods themselves, that even he escapes destruction. To those who are not familiarly versed in classic lore, it may be consoling to learn that the common supplement to the story of Iphigeneia's sacrifice is, that in the moment when Calchas had raised his knife to strike the fatal blow, Diana herself, touched with compassion for the innocence and beauty of the virgin victim, suddenly snatched her away to her temple in the Taurick Chersonesus, and substituted in her stead a goat of uncommon size and beauty. The striking resemblance of some of these circumstances to the facts recorded in sacred history of the intended sacrifice of Isaac, cannot escape the most cursory reader.

It is remarkable, that though the Tragic writers, and their illustrious lyric contemporary, Pindar, ascribe the existence of human sacrifice to the siege of Troy, we find no trace of this abomination in Homer or in Hesiod. On the contrary, the latter expressly notices the detention of the Grecian fleet at Aulis by tempestuous weather, but makes no mention of so extraordinary an event as this fate of Iphigeneia, and Homer seems plainly to contradict it; for in the ninth Iliad we learn, that among the peace-offerings proposed by Agamemnon to propitiate Achilles, one is the choice of his three daughters, Chrysothemis, Laodice, and Iphianassa, in marriage, with a princely dower. Of these two are generally admitted to be the Iphigeneia and Electra of the Tragic poets. Indeed Homer is wholly silent respecting those domestic feuds and atrocities which are said to have polluted the house of Pelops; and in the second Iliad he distinctly in-

timates the peaceable transmission of the regal power, from Pelops down to Agamemnon. What he says is this: "Mercury gave the sceptre which Vulcan had wrought with art, to Pelops, manager of steeds; but Pelops gave it to Atreus, shepherd of his people. Atreus at his death left it to Thyestes, rich in flocks, and lastly Thyestes left it to the charge of royal Agamemnon, to rule over all Argos and many islands."*

It is observed, however, that when the monarch first addresses Calchas in the Iliad, he denounces him as a prophet of evil, never predicting aught to glad his heart; and this is supposed by some to refer to his previous conduct at Aulis.

Agamemnon and Menelaus are usually styled sons of Atreus, but incorrectly. If we may credit Hesiod, Apollodorus, and even Æschylus himself †, they were the sons of Plisthenes, son of Atreus, who died when his children were very young: their grandfather in consequence having brought them up in his house and instructed them, they were thence known by the surname of Atridæ.

In the original, the following play opens with the soliloquy of a sentry, whose office for the nine preceding years has been to watch, 'fixed, as a dog, on Agamemnon's roof,' for the beacon-fire by which the king at his departure had promised Clytemnestra to communicate to Argos the earliest intelligence of the capture of Troy. The watcher, after bewailing his hapless fate in being doomed to so tedious an occupation, complains

* Iliad, B. 104.

† See the imprecation of Ægisthus, exulting in the murder of Agamemnon:—

"Thus perish all the race of *Plisthenes!*"

that he no longer has spirits to cheer himself up with ends of verse and snatches of old tunes, while the dews of heaven nightly wet his sleepless couch. At this moment the blaze of the telegraphic beacon bursts upon his sight, and he hastens in ecstasy to acquaint the queen with the glad tidings.

The CHORUS, composed of aged inhabitants of Argos, now enter, bewailing the helplessness of their withered years, by which they are compelled to crawl listlessly through the streets of the city, while their king and countrymen are fighting gloriously at Troy, to avenge the wrongs of Menelaus. Presently they perceive the altars of their tutelary gods loaded with victims and offerings of thanksgiving, by order of the queen, and filled with a divine afflatus their spirits rise, as they celebrate in lyric strains the omen which appeared to the two Atridæ on their march against Troy. Two eagles, both of darkest plumage, but one having its dusky pinions fringed with white, were seen bearing a pregnant hare towards the palace at Argos. The seizure of the hare by the two eagles, is interpreted, by the augur Calchas, to signify the capture of the devoted city by the royal brothers; but because the hare was pregnant, he fears that the wrath of Diana is portended, under whose protection, as goddess of the chase, the young of all wild animals was specially placed. This part of the prediction points to the delay at Aulis.

The CHORUS, having detailed the augury of Calchas, now assumes its proper office, and commencing with a solemn invocation of the King of Gods and men, by whatsoever name they may "express him unblamed", proceeds with that solemn ode which in the following pages has been assumed as the opening of the drama.

SCENE.—The Area, or court before the royal palace at Argos.

CHORUS—singing.

STROPHE 1.

O thou, that sitt'st supreme above,
Whatever name thou deign'st to hear,
Unblam'd may I pronounce thee Jove!
Immers'd in deep and holy thought,
If rightly I conjecture aught,
Thy pow'r I must revere:
Else vainly tost the anxious mind
Nor truth, nor calm repose can find.
Feeble and helpless to the light
The proudest of man's race arose,
Though now, exulting in his might,
Dauntless he rushes on his foes;
Great as he is, in dust he lies;
He meets a greater, and he dies.

ANTISTROPHE 1.

He that when conquest brightens round,
Swells the triumphal strain to Jove,
Shall ever with success be crown'd;
Yet often, when to wisdom's seat
Jove deigns to guide man's erring feet,
His virtues to improve,
He to affliction gives command
To form him with her chast'ning hand:
The memory of her rigid lore,
On the sad heart imprinted deep,

Attends him through day's active hour,
 Nor in the night forsakes his sleep.
 Instructed thus thy grace we own,
 O thou, that sitt'st on heav'n's high throne!

STRO. 2. When now in Aulis' rolling bay

His course the reflux flood refus'd,
 And sick'ning with inaction lay
 In dead repose th' exhausted train,
 Did the firm chief of chance complain?

No prophet he accus'd;
 His eyes towards Chalcis bent, he stood,
 And silent mark'd the surging flood.
 Sullen the winds from Strymon sweep,
 Mischance and famine in the blast,
 Ceaseless torment the angry deep,
 The cordage rend, the vessels waste,
 With tedious and severe delay
 Wear the fresh flower of Greece away.

ANTIS. 2. When, in Diana's name, the seer

Pronounc'd the dreadful remedy
 More than the stormy sea severe,
 Each chieftain stood in grief profound,
 And smote his sceptre on the ground:

Then with a rising sigh
 The monarch, whilst the big tears roll,
 Express'd the anguish of his soul;
 "Dreadful the sentence: not t' obey,
 Vengeance and ruin close us round:
 Shall then the sire his daughter slay,
 In youth's fresh bloom with beauty crown'd?
 Shall on these hands her warm blood flow?
 Cruel alternative of woe!

STRO. 3. This royal fleet, this martial host,

The cause of Greece, shall I betray,

The monarch in the father lost ?
 To calm these winds, to smooth this flood,
 Diana's wrath a virgin's blood
 Demands: 'tis our's t' obey."
 Bound in fate's adamant chain
 Reluctant nature strives in vain:
 Impure, unholy thoughts succeed,
 And dark'ning o'er his bosom roll;
 Whilst madness prompts the ruthless deed,
 Tyrant of the misguided soul:
 Stern on the fleet he rolls his eyes,
 And dooms the hateful sacrifice.

ANTIS. 3. Arm'd in a woman's cause, around
 Fierce for the war the princes rose;
 No place affrighted pity found.
 In vain the virgin's streaming tear,
 Her cries in vain, her pleading pray'r,
 Her agonizing woes.
 Could the fond father hear unmov'd?
 The Fates decreed: the king approv'd:
 Then to th' attendants gave command
 Decent her flowing robes to bind;
 Prone on the altar with strong hand
 To place her, like a spotless hind;
 And check her sweet voice, that no sound
 Unhallow'd might the rites confound.

EPODE.

Rent on the earth her maiden veil she throws
 That emulates the rose;
 And on the sad attendants rolling
 The trembling lustre of her dewy eyes,
 Their grief-impassion'd souls controlling,

That ennobled, modest grace,
 Which the mimic pencil tries
 In the imag'd form to trace,
 The breathing picture shows :
 And as, amidst his festal pleasures,
 Her father oft rejoic'd to hear
 Her voice in soft mellifluous measures
 Warble the sprightly-fancied air—
 So now in act to speak the virgin stands ;
 But when, the third libation paid,
 She heard her father's dread commands
 Enjoining silence, she obey'd :
 And for her country's good,
 With patient, meek, submissive mind
 To her hard fate resign'd,
 Pour'd out the rich stream of her blood.
 What since hath past I know not, nor relate ;
 But never did the prophet speak in vain,
 Th' afflicted, anxious for his future fate,
 Looks forward, and with hope relieves his
 pain.
 But since th' inevitable ill will come,
 Much knowledge to much misery is allied ;
 Why strive we then t' anticipate the doom,
 Which happiness and wisdom wish to hide ?

Enter CLYTEMNESTRA.

CLYTEMNESTRA, CHORUS.

CHOR. With reverence, Clytemnestra, I approach
 Thy greatness ; honour due to her that fills
 The royal seat, yet vacant of its lord.
 If aught of glad import hath reach'd thy ear,

Or to fair hope the victim bleeds *, I wish,
But with submission to thy will, to hear.

CLYT. The joy-imparting morn springs, as they say,
From night, her mother. Thou shalt hear a joy
Beyond thy utmost hope : the town of Priam
Is fall'n beneath the conquering arms of Greece.

CHOR. How long hath ruin crush'd this haughty city?

CLYT. This night, that gave this infant morning
birth.

CHOR. What speed could be the herald of this news ?

CLYT. The fire, that from the height of Ida sent
Its streaming light, as from th' announcing flame
Torch blaz'd to torch. First Ida to the steep
Of Lemnos ; Athos' sacred height receiv'd
The mighty splendor ; from the surging back
Of Hellespont the vig'rous blaze held on
Its smiling way, and like the orient sun
Illumes with golden-gleaming rays the head
Of rocky Macetas ; nor lingers there,
Nor winks unheedful, but its warning flames
Darts to Euripus' fitful stream, and gives
Its glitt'ring signal to the guards that hold
Their high watch on Mesapius. These enkindle
The joy-announcing fires, that spread the blaze
To where Erica hoar its shaggy brow
Waves rudely. Unimpair'd the active flame
Bounds o'er the level of Asopus, like
The jocund Moon, and on Cithæron's steep
Wakes a successive flame ; the distant watch
Discern its gleam, and raise a brighter fire,
That o'er the lake Gorgopis streaming holds

* On hearing good tidings, even though the report was uncertain, it was usual among the Greeks to sacrifice to Good Hope, and to send a share of the victim to their friends.

Its rapid course, and on the mountainous heights
 Of Ægiplanctus huge, swift-shooting spreads
 The lengthen'd line of light. Thence onwards
 waves

Its fiery tresses, eager to ascend
 The crags of Prone, frowning in their pride
 O'er the Saronic gulf: it leaps, it mounts
 The summit of Arachne, whose high head
 Looks down on Argos: to this royal seat
 Thence darts the light that from th' Idæan fire
 Derives its birth. Rightly in order thus
 Each to the next consigns the torch, that fills
 The bright succession, whilst the first in speed
 Vies with the last: the promis'd signal this
 Giv'n by my lord t' announce the fall of Troy.

Clytemnestra proceeds, at the desire of the chorus, to detail the various calamities of the captured city, and concludes with a solemn wish, that the victorious Greeks may not be tempted by their conquest to indulge in any excess or violation of the sacred laws; while by her earnest deprecation of any ill befalling their return, she darkly intimates the "foregone conclusion" which was already working in the recesses of her guilty mind.

The chorus however ascribe all to her pious anxiety for the safety of her husband, and reply in the following noble hymn of thanksgiving.

PROSEDE.

Supreme of kings, Jove; and thou, friendly
 Night,
 That wide o'er heav'n's star-spangled plain
 Holdest thy awful reign—

Thou, that with resistless might
 O'er Troy's proud tow'rs, and destin'd state,
 Hast thrown the secret net of fate,
 In whose enormous sweep the young, the old,
 Without distinction roll'd,
 Are with unsparing fury dragg'd away
 To slavery and woe a prey :
 Thee, hospitable Jove, whose vengeful pow'r
 These terrors o'er the foe hath spread,
 Thy bow long bent at Paris' head,
 Whose arrows know their time to fly,
 Not hurtling aimless in the sky,
 Our pious strains adore.

STROPHE 1.

The hand of Jove will they not own ;
 And, as his marks they trace,
 Confess he will'd, and it was done ?
 Who now of earth-born race
 Shall dare contend that his high pow'r
 Deigns not with eye severe to view
 The wretch, that tramples on his law ?
 Hence with this impious lore :
 Learn that the sons accurs'd shall rue
 The madly daring father's pride,
 That furious drew th' unrighteous sword,
 High in his house the rich spoils stor'd,
 And the avenging Gods defied.
 But be it mine to draw
 From wisdom's fount, pure as it flows,
 That calm of soul, which virtue only knows.
 For vain the shield, that wealth shall spread,
 To guard the proud oppressor's head,

Who 'dares the rights of Justice to confound,
And spurn her altars to the ground.

ANTISTROPHE 1.

Seductive is the voice of vice

That spreads th' insidious snare :
She, not conceal'd, thro' her disguise
Emits a livid glare.

Her vot'ry, like adult'rate brass
Unfaithful to its use, unsound,
Proves the dark baseness of his soul ;
Fond as a boy to chase

The winged bird light-flitting round,
And bent on his pernicious play
Draws desolation on his state.

His vows no God regards, when Fate
In vengeance sweeps the wretch away.

With base intent and foul,
Each hospitable law defied,
From Sparta's king thus Paris stole his bride.
To Greece she left the shield, the spear,
The naval armament of war ;
And, bold in ill, to Troy's devoted shore
Destruction for her dow'ry bore.

STRO. 2. When through the gates her easy way
She took, his pensive breast
Each prophet smote in deep dismay,
And thus his grief exprest,
" What woes this royal mansion threat,
This mansion, and its mighty lord ?
Where now the chaste connubial bed ?
The traces of her feet,
By love to her blest consort led,
Where now ? Ah, silent, see, she stands ;

Each glowing tint, each radiant grace,
 That charm th' enraptur'd eye, we trace ;
 And still the blooming form commands,
 Still honour'd, still ador'd,
 Though careless of her former loves
 Far o'er the rolling sea the wanton roves :
 The husband, with a bursting sigh,
 Turns from the pictur'd fair his eye ;
 Whilst love, by absence fed, without control
 Tumultuous rushes on his soul.

ANTIS. 2. Oft as short slumbers close his eyes,
 His sad soul sooth'd to rest,
 The dream-created visions rise,
 With all her charms imprest :
 But vain th' ideal scene, that smiles
 With rapt'rous love and warm delight ;
 Vain his fond hopes : his eager arms
 The fleeting form beguiles,
 On sleep's quick pinions passing light."
 Such griefs, and more severe than these,
 Their sad gloom o'er the palace spread ;
 Thence stretch their melancholy shade,
 And darken o'er the realms of Greece.
 Struck with no false alarms
 Each house its home-felt sorrow knows,
 Each bleeding heart is pierc'd with keenest woes ;
 When for the hero, sent to share
 The glories of the crimson war,
 Nought, save his arms stain'd with their mas-
 ter's gore,
 And his cold ashes reach the shore.

STRO. 3. Thus in the dire exchange of war
 Does Mars the balance hold ;

Helms are the scales, the beam a spear,
 And blood is weigh'd for gold.

Thus, for the warrior, to his friends

His sad remains, a poor return,
 Sav'd from the sullen fire that rose

On Troy's curst shore, he sends,
 Plac'd decent in the mournful urn.

With many a tear their dead they weep,
 Their names with many a praise resound ;

One for his skill in arms renown'd ;

One, that amidst the slaughter'd heap
 Of fierce conflicting foes

Glorious in beauty's cause he fell :

Yet 'gainst th' avenging chiefs their murmurs
 swell

In silence. Some in youth's fresh bloom

Beneath Troy's tow'rs possess a tomb ;

Their bodies buried on the distant strand,

Seizing in death the hostile land.

ANTIS. 3. How dreadful, when the people raise

Loud murmurs mix'd with hate !

Yet this the tribute greatness pays

For its exalted state.

E'en now some dark and horrid deed

By my presaging soul is fear'd ;

For never with unheedful eyes,

When slaughter'd thousands bleed,

Did the just powers of heav'n regard

The carnage of th' ensanguin'd plain.

The ruthless and oppressive pow'r

May triumph for its little hour ;

Full soon with all their vengeful train

The sullen Furies rise,

Break his fell force, and whirl him down
 Thro' life's dark path, unpitied, and unknown.
 And dangerous is the pride of fame,
 Like the red light'ning's dazzling flame.
 Nor envied wealth, nor conquest let me gain,
 Nor drag the conqueror's hateful chain.

EPODE.

But from these fires far streaming through the
 night
 Fame through the town her progress takes,
 And rapt'rous joy awakes ;
 If with truth's auspicious light
 They shine, who knows? Her sacred reign
 Nor fraud, nor falsehood dares profane.
 But who, in wisdom's school so lightly taught,
 Suffers his ardent thought
 From these informing flames to catch the fire,
 Full soon perchance in grief t' expire?
 Yet when a woman holds the sovereign sway,
 Obsequious wisdom learns to bow,
 And hails the joy it does not know ;
 Though, as the glitt'ring visions roll
 Before her easy, credulous soul,
 Their glories fade away.

CLYT. Whether these fires, that with successive sig-
 nals

Blaze through the night, be true, or like a dream
 Play with a sweet delusion on the soul,
 Soon shall we know. A herald from the shore
 I see ; branches of olive shade his brows.
 His dusty garb assures me whence he comes,
 And that with living voice, and not by flames
 Along the mountains kindled, he will signify

His message; yes; his tongue shall greet our
ears

With words of joy: far from my soul the
thought

Of other, than confirm these fav'ring signals.

Enter HERALD.

CLYTEMNESTRA, CHORUS, HERALD.

HER. Hail, thou paternal soil of Argive earth!

In the fair light of the tenth year to thee

Return'd, from the sad wreck of many hopes

This one I save; sav'd from despair e'en this;

For never thought I in this honour'd earth

To share in death the portion of a tomb.

Hail then, lov'd earth; hail, thou bright sun;
and thou,

Great guardian of my country, Jove supreme;

Thou, Pythian king, thy shafts no longer
wing'd

For our destruction*; on Scamander's banks
Enough we mourn'd thy wrath; propitious now

Come, king Apollo, our defence. And all

Ye Gods, that o'er the works of war preside,

I now invoke; thee, Mercury, my avenger,

Rever'd by heralds, that from thee derive

Their high employ; you heroes, to the war

That sent us, friendly now receive our troops,

The relics of the spear. Imperial walls,

Mansion of kings, ye seats revered; ye Gods,

That to the golden sun before these gates

Present your honour'd forms; if e'er of old

* In allusion to the pestilence inflicted by the death-bearing arrows of Apollo, as told in the 51st line of the first Iliad.

Those eyes with favour have beheld the king,
 Receive him now, after this length of time,
 With glory; for he comes, and with him brings
 To you, and all, a light that cheers this gloom:
 Then greet him well; such honour is his
 meed,

The mighty king, that with the mace of Jove
 Th' avenger, wherewith he subdues the earth,
 Hath levell'd with the dust the towers of
 Troy;

Their altars are o'erturn'd, their sacred shrines,
 And all the race destroy'd. This iron yoke
 Fix'd on the neck of Troy, victorious comes
 The great Atrides, of all mortal men
 Worthy of highest honours. Paris now,
 And the perfidious state, shall boast no more
 His proud deeds unreveng'd: stript of his
 spoils,

The debt of justice for his thefts, his rapines,
 Paid amply, o'er his father's house he spreads
 With twofold loss the wide-involving ruin.

CLYT. Hail to thee, herald of the Argive host!

HERALD. The conflict is well ended. In the tide
 Of so long time, if 'midst the easy flow
 Of wish'd events some tyrannous blast assail us,
 What marvel? Who, save the blest Gods, can
 claim

Through life's whole course an unmixed happi-
 ness?

Should I relate our toils, our wretched plight
 Wedg'd in our narrow ill-provided cabins,
 Each irksome hour was loaded with fatigues.

Yet these were slight assays to those worse
 hardships

We suffer'd on the shore : our lodging near
 The walls of the enemy, the dews of heav'n
 Fell on us from above, the damps beneath
 From the moist marsh annoy'd us, shrouded ill
 In shaggy cov'rings. Or should one relate
 The winter's keen blasts, which from Ida's
 snows

Breathe froze, that pierc'd through all their
 plumes the birds

Shiver and die ; or th' extreme heat that scalds,
 When in his mid-day caves the sea reclines,
 And not a breeze disturbs his calm repose.
 But why lament these sufferings? They are
 past ;

Past to the dead indeed ; they lie, no more
 Anxious to rise. What then avails to count
 Those, whom the wasteful war hath swept
 away,

And with their loss afflict the living? Rather
 Bid we farewell to misery : in our scale,
 Who haply of the Grecian host remain,
 The good preponderates, and in counterpoise
 Our loss is light : and, after all our toils
 By sea and land, before yon golden sun
 It is our glorious privilege to boast,

“ At length from vanquish'd Troy our warlike
 troops

Have to the Gods of Greece brought home
 these spoils,

And in their Temples, to record our con-
 quests,

Fix'd these proud trophies.” Those, that hear
 this boast,

It well becomes to gratulate the state,

And the brave chiefs; revering Jove's high
pow'r
That grac'd our conquering arms. Thou hast
my message.

CHOR. Thy words convince me; all my doubts are
vanished.

CLYT. Long since my voice raised high each note
of joy,

When through the night the streaming blaze
first came,

That told us Troy was taken:—not unblamed
The while:—"what! doth a mountain fire
transport

Thy soul with the fond hope that Ilion's tow'rs
Are humbled in the dust? O woman's heart,

Thus lightly credulous!" At this rebuke

Though somewhat shaken, yet I sacrificed;

And, as weak women wont, one voice of joy

Awoke another, till the city rang

Through all its streets; and at the hallow'd
shrines

Each raised the pious strains of gratitude,

And fann'd the altars' incense-breathing flame.

But it is needless to detain thee longer,

Soon from the king's own lips shall I learn all.

How best I may receive my honour'd lord,

And grace his wish'd return, now claims my
speed.

Can heav'n's fair beam shew a fond wife a
sight

More grateful than her husband from his wars

Return'd with glory, when she opes the gate,

And springs to welcome him? Tell my lord
this,

That he may hasten his desired return :
And tell him he will find his faithful wife,
Such as he left her, a domestic creature
To him all fondness, to his enemies
Irreconcilable ; and tell him too
That ten long years have not effaced the seal
Of constancy, that never knew delight
In guilty commerce with another man ;
More than the virgin metal in the mine
Knows an adulterate and debasing mixture.

Exit.

On Clytemnestra leaving the stage, the Chorus questions the herald more minutely concerning the safety and return of King Agamemnon, and learns that immediately on the departure of the fleet from Troy, a dreadful storm arose, which dispersed the vessels, but that the ship in which the herald sailed, providentially rode out the gale. At the dawn of light, the crew descry the surface of the chafed Ægean strewn with floating wrecks and corpses. Still they hope and trust that the gods had preserved their monarch, whom they deemed the peculiar care of Jove.

Accordingly, at the close of the succeeding ode, which the Chorus sings on hearing the narrative of the herald, Agamemnon enters ; his ship, guided by favouring fortune, having gained the port. The design of this incident of the tempest, seems to have been to account in some measure for the sudden appearance of Agamemnon at Argos, the very day after the fall of Troy. We shall however take occasion hereafter to shew, that the common opinion of a strict observance of the unities of time and

place being a characteristic of the Greek drama, is destitute of any foundation in truth.

CHORUS.

STRO. 1. Is there to names a charm profound
 Expressive of their fates assign'd,
 Mysterious potency of sound,
 And truth in wond'rous accord join'd?
 Why else this fatal name,
 That Helen and destruction are the same? *
 Affianced in contention, led,
 The spear her dow'ry, to the bridal bed;
 With desolation in her train,
 Fatal to martial hosts, to rampir'd towers,
 From the rich fragrance of her gorgeous
 bowers,
 Descending to the main,
 She hastes to spread her flying sails,
 And calls the earth-born zephyr's gales,
 Whilst heroes, breathing vengeance, snatch
 their shields,
 And trace her light oars o'er the pathless
 waves,
 To the thick shades fresh waving o'er those
 fields,
 Which Simöis with his silver windings laves.

ANTIS. 1.

To Troy the smiling mischief † came,
 Before her bright-eyed pleasures play,

* The name Helen signifies the Destroyer, and it was then a universal opinion that names contained in them some presage, or secret reference to the character of the individual who bore them. There is a curious instance of this in the Ajax of Sophocles.

† Helen.

But in the rear with stedfast aim

Grim visaged vengeance marks his prey,
Waiting the dreadful hour

The terrors of offended Heaven to pour

On those that dared, an impious train,

The rights of hospitable Jove profane ;

Nor revered that sacred song,

Whose melting strains the bride's approach de-
clare,

As Hymen wakes the rapture-breathing air,

Far other notes belong,

The voice of mirth now heard no more,

To Priam's state : its ruins o'er

Wailing instead, distress, and loud lament ;

Long sorrows sprung from that unholy bed,

And many a curse in heart-felt anguish sent

On its woe-wedded Paris' hated head.

STRO. 2. The woodman, from his thirsty lair,

Reft of his dam, a lion bore ;

Foster'd his future foe with care

To mischiefs he must soon deplore :

Gentle and tame, whilst young,

Harmless he frisk'd the fondling babes among ;

Oft in the father's bosom lay,

Oft lick'd his feeding hand in fawning play ;

Till, conscious of his firmer age,

His lion-race the lordly savage shows ;

No more his youth-protecting cottage knows ;

But with insatiate rage

Flies on the flocks, a baleful guest,

And riots in th' unbidden feast :

Whilst through his mangled folds the hapless
swain

With horror sees the unbounded carnage
spread ;

And learns too late from th' infernal reign
 A priest of Atè* in his house was bred.

ANTIS. 2. To Ilion's towers in wanton state
 With speed she wings her easy way ;
 Soft gales obedient round her wait,
 And pant on the delighted sea.

Attendant on her side

The richest ornaments of splendid pride :
 The darts, whose golden points inspire,
 Shot from her eyes, the flames of soft desire ;
 The youthful bloom of rosy love,
 That fills with ecstasy the willing soul ;
 With duteous zeal obey her sweet control.

But, such the doom of Jove,
 Vindictive round her nuptial bed,
 With threat'ning mien and footstep dread,
 Rushes, to Priam and his state severe,
 To rend the bleeding heart his stern delight,
 And from the bridal eye to force the tear,
 Erinnys †, rising from the realms of night.

EPOD. From every mouth we oft have heard
 This saying, for its age revered ;
 " With joy we see our offspring rise,
 And happy, who not childless dies :
 But fortune, when her flowerets blow,
 Oft bears the bitter fruit of woe."
 Though these saws are as truths allow'd,
 Thus I dare differ from the crowd,

* In the Greek mythology the goddess of all evil.

† The FURIES, or supposed ministers of the vengeance of the gods in the Greek mythology, were, in their sterner attributes, known by the name of *Erynies*, in their gentler, by that of the *Eumenides*. In the latter capacity they will appear as giving a name to one of the Tragedies in the present volume.

“ One base deed, with prolific power,
 Like its curst stock engenders more :
 But to the just, with blooming grace
 Still flourishes, a beauteous race.”

The old injustice joys to breed
 Her young, instinct with villainous deed ;
 The young her destined hour will find
 To rush in mischief on mankind :
 She too in Atè's murky cell,
 Brings forth the hideous child of hell,
 A burden to the offended sky,
 The power of bold impiety.

But Justice bids her ray divine
 E'en on the low-roof'd cottage shine ;
 And beams her glories on the life,
 That knows not fraud, nor ruffian strife.
 The gorgeous glare of gold, obtain'd
 By foul polluted hands, disdain'd
 She leaves, and with averted eyes
 To humbler, holier mansions flies ;
 And looking through the times to come
 Assigns each deed its righteous doom.

Enter AGAMEMNON.

CHORUS, AGAMEMNON.

CHOR. My royal lord, by whose victorious hand
 The towers of Troy are fall'n, illustrious son
 Of Atreus, with what words, what reverence
 Shall I address thee, not to o'erleap the bounds
 Of modest duty, nor to sink beneath
 An honourable welcome? Some there are,
 That form themselves to seem, more than to be,
 Transgressing honesty : to him that feels

Misfortune's rugged hand, full many a tongue
 Shall drop condolence, though th' unfeeling heart
 Knows not the touch of sorrow ; these again
 In fortune's summer gale with the like art
 Shall dress in forced smiles the unwilling face :
 But him the penetrating eye soon marks,
 That in the seemly garb of honest zeal
 Attempts to clothe his meagre blandishments.
 When first in Helen's cause my royal lord
 Levied his host, let me not hide the truth,
 Notes, other than of music, echoed wide
 In loud complaints from such as deem'd him
 rash,

And void of reason, by constraint to plant
 In breasts averse the martial soul, that glows
 Despising death. But now their eager zeal
 Streams friendly to those chiefs, whose pros-
 perous valour
 Is crown'd with conquest. Soon then shalt
 thou learn,

As each supports the state, or strives to rend it
 With faction, who reveres thy dignity.

AGAM. To Argos first, and to my country Gods,
 I bow with reverence, by whose holy guidance
 On Troy's proud towers I pour'd their righte-
 ous vengeance,
 And now revisit safe my native soil.
 No loud-tongued pleader heard, they judged
 the cause,
 And in the bloody urn * without one vote

* Judgment was anciently given by ballot, each person who had a voice in the decision being furnished with a shell, which he cast into the acquitting or condemning urn, according as he deemed the accused party innocent or guilty ; a majority of votes deter-

Dissentient, cast the lots that fix'd the fate
 Of Ilion and its sons : the other vase
 Left empty, save of widow'd hope. The smoke,
 Rolling in dusky wreaths, shows that the town
 Is fall'n ; the fiery storm yet lives, and high
 The dying ashes toss rich clouds of wealth
 Consumed. For this behoves us to the Gods
 To render grateful thanks, and that they
 spread

The net of fate sweeping with angry ruin.
 In beauty's cause the Argive monster* rear'd
 Its bulk enormous, to th' affrighted town
 Portending devastation ; in its womb
 Hiding embattled hosts, rush'd furious forth,
 About the setting of the Pleiades,
 And, as a lion rav'ning for its prey,
 Ramp'd o'er their walls, and lapp'd the blood
 of kings.

This to the Gods address'd, I turn me now
 Attentive to thy caution : I approve
 Thy just remark, and with my voice confirm it.
 Few have the fortitude of soul to honour
 A friend's success, without a touch of envy ;
 For that malignant passion to the heart
 Cleaves close, and with a double burden loads
 The man infected with it : first he feels
 In all their weight his own calamities,
 Then sighs to see the happiness of others.
 This of my own experience have I learn'd ;
 And this I know, that many, who in public
 Have borne the semblance of my firmest friends,

mined the cause. Farther on the reader will see the forms at large,
 in the trial of Orestes in the Furies.

* The wooden horse.

Are but the flatt'ring image of a shadow
 Reflected from a mirror : save Ulysses,
 Alone, who, though averse to join our arms,
 Yoked in his martial harness, from my side
 Swerved not ; living or dead be this his praise.
 But what concerns our kingdom and the Gods,
 Holding a general council of the state,
 We will consult ; that what is well may keep
 Its goodness permanent, and what requires
 Our healing hand, with mild severity
 May be corrected. But my royal roof
 Now will I visit, and before its hearths
 Offer libations to the gods, who sent me
 To this far distant war, and led me back.
 Firm stands the victory that attends our arms.

Enter CLYTEMNESTRA.

CLYTEMNESTRA, AGAMEMNON, CHORUS.

CLYT. Friends, fellow-citizens, whose counsels guide
 The state of Argos, in your reverend presence
 A wife's fond love I blush not to disclose :
 Thus habit softens dread. From my full heart
 Will I recount my melancholy life
 Through the long stay of my loved lord at Troy :
 For a weak woman, in her husband's absence,
 Pensive to sit and lonely in her house,
 'Tis dismal, list'ning to each frightful tale :
 First one alarms her, then another comes
 Charged with worse tidings. Had my poor
 lord here
 Suffer'd as many wounds as common fame
 Reported, like a net he had been pierced :

Had he been slain oft as the loud-tongued
rumour

Was noised abroad, this Geryon * triple-form'd,
A second of the name, whilst yet alive,
For of the dead I speak not, well might boast
To have received his triple mail, to die
In each form singly. Such reports oppress'd me,
Till life became distasteful, and my hands
Were prompted oft to deeds of desperation.
Nor is thy son Orestes, the dear tie
That binds us each to th' other, present here
To aid me, as he ought : nay, marvel not,
The friendly Strophius with a right strong arm
Protects him in Phocæa ; whilst his care
Saw danger threaten in a double form,
The loss of thee at Troy, the anarchy
That might ensue, should madness drive the
people

To deeds of violence, as men are prompt
Insultingly to trample on the fall'n :
Such care dwells not with fraud. At thy return
The gushing fountains of my tears are dried,
Save that my eyes are weak with midnight
watchings,

Straining, through tears, if haply they might see
Thy signal fires, that claim'd my fix'd atten-
tion.

If they were closed in sleep, a silly fly
Would, with its slightest murm'rings, make me
start,

* Geryon was a king of Spain, fabled to have three bodies, because he had three armies commanded by his three sons ; he was killed by Hercules.

And wake me to more fears. For thy dear sake
 All this I suffer'd : but my jocund heart
 Forgets it all, whilst I behold my lord,
 My guardian, the strong anchor of my hope,
 The stately column that supports my house,
 Dear as an only child to a fond parent ;
 Welcome as land, which the tost mariner
 Beyond his hope descries ; welcome as day
 After a night of storms with fairer beams
 Returning ; welcome as the liquid lapse
 Of fountain to the thirsty traveller :
 So pleasant is it to escape the chain
 Of hard constraint. Such greeting I esteem
 Due to thy honour : let it not offend,
 For I have suffer'd much. But, my loved lord,
 Leave now that car ; nor on the bare ground set
 That royal foot, beneath whose mighty tread
 Troy trembled. Haste, ye virgins, to whose
 care

This pleasing office is entrusted, spread
 The streets with tapestry ; let the ground be
 cover'd

With richest purple, leading to the palace ;
 That honour with just state may grace his
 entry,

Though unexpected. My attentive care,
 Shall, if the Gods permit, dispose the rest
 To welcome his high glories, as I ought.

AGAM. Daughter of Leda, guardian of my house,
 Thy words are correspondent to my absence,
 Of no small length. With better grace my
 praise

Would come from others : soothe me not with
 strains

Of adulation, as a girl ; nor raise,
 As to some proud barbaric king, that loves
 Loud acclamations echoed from the mouths
 Of prostrate worshippers, a clamorous wel-
 come :

Nor spread the streets with tapestry ; 'tis in-
 vidious ;

These are the honours we should pay the Gods.
 For mortal man to tread on ornaments
 Of rich embroid'ry—No : I dare not do it :
 Respect me as a man, not as a God.

Why should my foot pollute these vests, that
 glow

With various tinctured radiance ? My full fame
 Swells high without it ; and the temperate rule
 Of cool discretion is the choicest gift

Of fav'ring Heaven. Happy the man, whose life
 Is spent in friendship's calm security.

These sober joys be mine, I ask no more.

CLYT. Do not thou thwart the purpose of my mind.

AGAM. Art thou so earnest to obtain thy wish ?

CLYT. Let me prevail : indulge me with this con-
 quest.

AGAM. If such thy will, haste some one, from my
 feet

Unloose these high-bound buskins, lest some
 God

Look down indignant, if with them I press
 These vests sea-tinctur'd : shame it were to
 spoil

With unclean tread their rich and costly tex-
 ture.

Of these enough.—This stranger, let her find
 A gentle treatment : from high heaven the God

Looks with an eye of favour on the victor
 That bears his high state meekly ; for none
 wears
 Of his free choice the yoke of slavery.
 And she, of many treasures the prime flower
 Selected by the troops, has follow'd me.

Clytemnestra, stung perhaps by this affectionate recommendation of Cassandra, replies in terms of seeming congratulation and respect for her husband's power and prowess, but clokes under this veil of adulation a prayer for the accomplishment of her secret wishes for his destruction. Hereupon the Chorus, though still unconscious of her design, rapt and inspired with prophetic visions of approaching calamity, utters the following woe-de-nouncing strain :

CHORUS.

STRO. 1. What may this mean ? Along the skies
 Why do these dreadful portents roll ?
 Visions of terror, spare my aching eyes,
 Nor shake my sad presaging soul !
 In accents dread, not tuned in vain,
 Why bursts the free, unbidden strain ?
 These are no phantoms of the night,
 That vanish at the faithful light
 Of steadfast confidence. Thou sober power,
 Whither, ah, whither art thou gone ?
 For since the long passed hour,
 When first for Troy the naval band
 Unmoor'd their vessels from the strand,
 Thou hast not in my bosom fix'd thy throne.

ANTIS. 1. At length they come : these faithful eyes,

See them return'd to Greece again :

Yet, while the sullen lyre in silence lies,

Erinnys wakes the mournful strain :

Her dreadful powers possess my soul,

And bid the untaught measures roll ;

Swell in rude notes the dismal lay,

And fright enchanting hope away ;

Whilst, ominous of ill, grim-visaged care

Incessant whirls my tortured heart.

Vain be each anxious fear !

Return, fair hope, thy seat resume,

Dispel this melancholy gloom,

And to my soul thy gladsome light impart !

STRO. 2. Ah me, what hope ! this mortal state

Nothing but cruel change can know.

Should cheerful health our vig'rous steps await,

Enkindling all her roseate glow ;

Disease creeps on with silent pace,

And withers ev'ry blooming grace.

Proud sails the bark ; the fresh gales breathe,

And dash her on the rocks beneath.

In the rich house her treasures plenty pours :

Comes sloth, and from her well-poised sling

Scatters the piled up stores.

Disease yet makes not all her prey :

Nor sinks the bark beneath the sea :

And famine sees the heaven-sent harvest spring.

ANTIS. 2. But when forth-welling from the wound

The purple-streaming blood shall fall,

And the warm tide distain the reeking ground,

Who shall the vanish'd life recal ?

Nor verse, nor music's magic pow'r,
 Nor the fam'd leech's* boasted lore;
 Not that his art restored the dead,
 Jove's thunder burst upon his head.—
 But that the Fates forbid, and chain my tongue,
 My heart, at inspiration's call,
 Would the rapt strain prolong:
 Now all is dark; it raves in vain,
 And, as it pants with trembling pain,
 Desponding feels its fiery transports fall.

CLYTEMNESTRA, CASSANDRA, CHORUS.

CLYT. Thou, too, Cassandra, enter; since high Jove,
 Gracious to thee, hath placed thee in this house,
 With many slaves to share the common rites,
 And deck the altar of the fav'ring God,
 Come from that chariot, and let temperance rule
 Thy lofty spirit; e'en Alcmena's son †,
 Sold as a slave, submitted to the yoke

* Æsculapius, son of Apollo, and inventor of Medicine. Pluto complained of him, as Death did of Burns's Doctor Hornbook, that he restored his patients even after the fatal dart had been launched against them; whereupon, as the poets tell, Jupiter struck him with thunder that he died.

† Hercules: he had wantonly murdered Iphitus son of Eurytus king of Œchalia, some say in a fit of insanity produced by love of the youth's sister. In punishment of this crime the Gods inflicted a disease upon him, from which finding no relief by ordinary means, he consulted the oracle of Apollo, and was commanded to sell himself for a slave, and to send the purchase money to the family of Iphitus. In compliance with the voice of the god, he prevailed upon Mercury to sell him to Omphale queen of Mæonia, in Asia Minor. The story of their loves and her correction of the hero with her slipper, is probably familiar to the reader. This is perhaps one of the earliest notices we have of a were-gild, eruc, or fine for homicide, paid to the relations of the murdered party.

Perforce ; and if necessity's hard hand
 Hath sunk thee to this fortune, our high rank,
 With greatness long acquainted, knows to use
 Its power with gentleness : the low-born wretch,
 That from his mean degree rises at once
 To unexpected riches, treats his slaves
 With barbarous and unbounded insolence.

From us thou wilt receive a juster treatment.

CHOR. She speaks what best beseems thy present
 state ;

Follow, submit, and leave that lofty car.

CLYT. I have not leisure here before the gates
 T' attend on her ; for at the inmost altar,
 Blazing with sacred fires, the victims stand
 Devoted to the Gods for his return
 So much beyond our hopes. If to comply
 Thou form thy mind, delay not : If thy tongue
 Knows not to sound our language, let thy signs
 Supply the place of words, speak with thy hand.

CHOR. Of foreign birth, she understands us not ;
 But as new taken struggles in the net.

CLYT. 'Tis phrensy this, the impulse of a mind
 Disorder'd ; from a city lately taken
 She comes, and knows not how to bear the
 curb,

'Till she has spent her rage in bloody foam * ;
 But I no more waste words to be disdain'd.

CHOR. My words, for much I pity her, shall bear
 No mark of anger. Go, unhappy fair one,
 Forsake thy chariot, unreluctant learn
 To bear this new yoke of necessity.

* This is one of the instances of a covert mode of expression, in which more is meant than meets the ear, that occur so frequently in the speeches of Clytemnestra.

CASS. Woe! woe! O Earth, Apollo, O Apollo!

CHOR. Why with that voice of woe invoke Apollo?

Ill do these notes of grief accord with him.

CASS. Woe, woe! O Earth! Apollo, O Apollo!

CHOR. Again her inauspicious voice invokes

The God, whose ears are not attuned to woe.

CASS. Apollo, O Apollo, fatal leader,

Yet once more, God, thou leadest me to ruin!

CHOR. She seems prophetic of her own misfortunes,

Retaining, though a slave, the divine spirit.

CASS. Apollo, O Apollo, fatal leader,

Ah, whither hast thou led me? to what house?

CHOR. Is that unknown? Let me declare it then:

This is the royal mansion of th' Atridæ.

CASS. It is a mansion hated by the Gods,

Conscious to many a foul and horrid deed;

A slaughter house, that reeks with human gore.

CHOR. This stranger seems, like the nice-scented hound,

Quick in the trace of blood, which she will find.

CASS. These are convincing proofs. Look there,
look there,

Whilst pity drops a tear, the children butcher'd,

The father feasting on their roasted flesh!

CHOR. Thy fame, prophetic virgin, we have heard;

We know thy skill; but wish no prophets now.

CASS. Ye powers of Heaven, what does she now design?

What new and dreadful deed of woe is this?

What dreadful ill designs she in the house,

Intolerable, irreparable mischief,

Whilst far she sends the succouring power
away?

CHOR. These prophecies surpass my apprehension:

The first I knew;—they echo through the city.

CASS. Ah daring wretch, dost thou achieve this deed,

Thus in the bath the partner of thy bed
 Refreshing? How shall I relate th' event?
 Yet speedy shall it be. E'en now advanc'd
 Hand above hand extended threatens high.

CHOR. I comprehend her not; her words are dark,
 Perplexing me like abstruse oracles.

CASS. Ha! What is this, that I see here before me?
 Is it the net of hell? or rather hers
 Who shares the bed and plans the murderous
 deed?

Let discord, whose insatiable rage
 Pursues this race, howl through the royal
 rooms

Against the victim destined to destruction.

CHOR. What Fury dost thou call within this house
 To hold her orgies? The dread invocation
 Appals me, to my heart the purple drops
 Flow back; a deathlike mist covers my eyes,
 With expectation of some sudden ruin.

CASS. See, see there: from the heifer keep the
 bull!—

O'er his black brows she throws th' entangling
 vest,

And smites him with her huge two-handed
 engine.

He falls, amidst the cleansing laver falls:
 I tell thee of the bath, the treach'rous bath.

CHOR. T' unfold the oracles obscure of Heaven
 Is not my boast; beneath the shadowing veil
 Misfortune lies: When did th' inquirer learn
 From the dark sentence an event of joy?
 From time's first records the diviner's voice
 Gives the sad heart a sense of misery.

CASS. Ah me unhappy! Wretched, wretched fate!
For my own sufferings join'd call forth these
wailings.

Why hast thou brought me hither? Wretched
me!

Is it for this, that I may die with him?

CHOR. This is the phrensy of a mind possess'd
With wildest ravings: Thy own woes thou
wailest

In mournful melody; like the sweet bird*,
That darkling pours her never-ceasing plaint;
And for her Itys, her lost Itys, wastes
In sweetest woe her melancholy life.

CASS. Ah me! the fortune of the nightingale
Is to be envied: on her light-poised plumes
She wings at will her easy way, nor knows
The anguish of a tear, whilst o'er my head
Th' impending sword threatens the fatal wound.

CHOR. Whence is this violent, this wild presage
Of ill? Thy fears are vain; yet with a voice
That terrifies, though sweet, aloud thou speakest
Thy sorrows. Whence hast thou derived these
omens,

Thus deeply mark'd with characters of death?

CASS. Alas the bed, the bridal bed of Paris,
Destructive to his friends! Paternal stream,
Scamander, on thy banks with careless steps
My childhood stray'd: but now methinks I go,
Alas, how soon! to prophesy around
Cocytus †, and the banks of Acheron!

* Philomela: the story is similar to that offensive one of Lavinia, in Titus Andronicus.

† Cocytus and Acheron, rivers in the infernal regions of the ancient poets.

CHOR. Perspicuous this, and clear! the new-born
babe

Might comprehend it: but thy piercing griefs
Bewailing thus the miseries of thy fate,
Strike deep; they wound me to my very soul.

CASS. Ah my poor country, my poor bleeding
country,

Fall'n, fall'n for ever! And you, sacred altars,
That blazed before my father's towered palace,
Not all your victims could avert your doom!
And on the earth soon shall my warm blood
flow.

CHOR. This is consistent with thy former ravings.
Or does some God indeed incumbent press
Thy soul, and modulate thy voice to utter
These lamentable notes of woe and death?
What the event shall be, exceeds my know-
ledge.

CASS. The oracle no more shall shroud its visage
Beneath a veil, as a new bride that blushes
To meet the gazing eye; but like the sun,
When with his orient ray he gilds the east,
Shall burst upon you in a flood of light,
Disclosing deeds of deeper dread. Away,
Ye mystic coverings! And you, reverend men,
Bear witness to me, that with steady step
I trace foul deeds that smell above the earth.
For never shall that band, whose yelling notes
In dismal accord pierce th' affrighted ear,
Forsake this house. The genius of the feast,
Drunk with the blood of men, and fired from
thence

To bolder daring, ranges through the rooms
Link'd with his kindred Furies: these possess

The mansion, and in horrid measures chaunt
The first base deed*; recording with ab-
horrence

Th' adulterous lust, that stain'd a brother's bed.
What, like a skilful archer, have I lodged
My arrow in the mark? No trifling this,
T' alarm you with false sounds. But swear
to me,

In solemn attestation, that I know,
And speak the old offences of this house.

CHOR. In such a rooted ill what healing power
Resides there in an oath? But much I marvel
That thou, the native of a foreign realm,
Of foreign tongue, canst speak our language
freely,

As Greece had been thy constant residence.

CASS. Apollo graced me with this wondrous skill.

CHOR. Did the God feel the force of young desire?

CASS. Why ask what shame at first forbad to speak?

CHOR. In each gay breast ease fans the wanton
flame.

CASS. (*Sighs.*) And *he* breath'd all of love's im-
patient fervour!

CHOR. And didst thou listen to his tempting lures?

CASS. First I assented, then deceived the God.

CHOR. Wast thou then fraught with these pro-
phetic arts?

CASS. E'en then I told my country all its woes.

CHOR. The anger of the God fell heavy on thee?

CASS. My voice, for this offence, lost all persuasion.

CHOR. To us it seems a voice of truth divine.

* Properly the crime of Tantalus was the first, but it is more probable that the incestuous adultery of his grandson Thyestes, with *Ærope*, his brother Atreus' wife, is here intended.

CASS. Woe, woe is me ! Again the furious power
 Swells in my lab'ring breast ; again commands
 My bursting voice ; and what I speak is Fate.—
 Look, look, behold those children.—There they
 sit ;
 Such are the forms, that in the troubled night
 Distract our sleep.—By a friend's hands they
 died :
 Are these the ties of blood ?—See, in their
 hands
 Their mangled limbs, horrid repast, they bear :
 Th' invited father shares th' accursed feast.
 For this the sluggard savage, that at ease
 Rolls on his bed, nor rouses from his lair,
 'Gainst my returning lord, for I must wear
 The yoke of slavery, plans the dark design
 Of death. Ah me ! the chieftain of the fleet,
 The vanquisher of Troy, but little knows
 What the smooth tongue of mischief, filed to
 words
 Of glozing courtesy, with Fate her friend,
 Like Atè ranging in the dark, can do
 Calmly : such deeds a woman dares : she dares
 Murder a man. What shall I call this mischief ?
 An Amphibæna* ? or a Scylla rather,
 That in the vex'd rocks holds her residence,

* A venomous and deadly serpent of the Libyan desert, remarkable for having two heads. Milton, in describing the transformation of the fallen angels in Pandæmonium into serpents, writes

“ — Dreadful was the din
 Of hissing through the hall ; thick swarming now
 With complicated monsters, head and tail
 Scorpion and asp and amphibæna dire.”

And meditates the mariner's destruction?
 Mother of Hell, 'midst friends enkindling discord

And hate implacable! With dreadful daring
 How did she shout, as if the battle swerved?
 Yet with feign'd joy she welcomes his return.—
 These words may want persuasion. What of that?

What must come, will come: and e'er long
 with grief

Thou shalt confess my prophecies are true.

CHOR. Thyestes' bloody feast oft have I heard of,
 Always with horror; and I tremble now
 Hearing th' unaggravated truth. What else
 She utters, leads my wand'ring thoughts astray
 In wild uncertainty.

CASS. Then mark me well,
 Thou shalt behold the death of Agamemnon*.

CHOR. To better omens tune that voice unblest'd,
 Or in eternal silence be it sunk.

CASS. This is an ill no medicine can heal.

CHOR. Not if it happen: but avert it, Heav'n!

CASS. Ah, what a sudden flame comes rushing on
 me!

I burn, I burn. Apollo, O Apollo!
 This lioness, that in a sensual sty
 Roll'd with the wolf, the generous lion absent,
 Will kill me. And the sorceress, as she brews
 Her philtered cup, will drug it with my blood:
 She glories, as against her husband's life

* To account for the inaction of the Chorus, even after this explicit declaration, the reader must bear in mind the effect of Apollo's kiss, in consequence of which no credit was ever to be given to the predictions of Cassandra, however true.

She whets the axe, her vengeance falls on him
For that he came accompanied by me.—

Why do I longer wear these useless honours,
This laurel wand, and these prophetic wreaths ?

Away ; before I die I cast you from me ;

Lie there, and perish ; I am rid of you ;

Or deck the splendid ruin of some other.

Apollo rends from me these sacred vestments,

Who saw me in his rich habiliments

Mock'd 'midst my friends, doubtless without a
cause.

When in opprobrious terms they jeer'd my
skill,

And treated me as a poor vagrant wretch,

That told events from door to door for bread,

I bore it all : but now the prophet God,

That with his own arts graced me, sinks me
down

To this low ruin. As my father fell

Butcher'd e'en at the altar, like the victim's

My warm blood at the altar shall be shed :

Nor shall we die unhonour'd by the Gods.

He comes, dreadful in punishment, the son

Of this bad mother, by her death t' avenge

His murder'd father : Distant though he roams,

An outcast and an exile, by his friends

Fenced from these deeds of violence, he comes

In solemn vengeance for his father laid

Thus low *.—But why for foreign miseries

Does the tear darken in my eye, that saw

The fall of Ilium, and its haughty conq'rors

* The fulfilment of this prophecy forms the subject of the next tragedy of this trilogy.

In righteous judgment thus receive their meed?
 But forward now ; I go to close the scene,
 Nor shrink from death. I have a vow in
 heaven :

And further I adjure these gates of Hell,
 Well may the blow be aim'd, that whilst my
 blood

Flows in a copious stream, I may not feel
 The fierce, convulsive agonies of death ;
 But gently sink, and close my eyes in peace.

CHOR. Unhappy, in thy knowledge most unhappy,
 Long have thy sorrows flow'd. But if indeed
 Thou dost foresee thy death, why, like the
 heifer

Led by an heav'nly impulse, do thy steps
 Advance thus boldly to the cruel altar ?

CASS. I could not by delay escape my fate.

CHOR. True ; but to die with glory crowns our
 praise.

CASS. So died my father, so his noble sons.

CHOR. What may this mean ? Why backward dost
 thou start ?

Do thy own thoughts with horror strike thy
 soul ?

CASS. The scent of blood and death breathes from
 this house.

CHOR. The victims now are bleeding at the altar.

CASS. 'Tis such a smell as issues from the tomb.

CHOR. This is no Syrian odour in the house.

CASS. Such though it be, I enter, to bewail
 My fate, and Agamemnon's. To have lived,
 Let it suffice. And think not, gen'rous
 strangers,

Like the poor bird that flutters o'er the bough,

Through fear I linger. But my dying words
 You will remember, when her blood shall flow
 For mine, woman's for woman's; and the man's,
 For his that falls by his accursed wife.

CHOR. Thy fate, poor sufferer, fills my eyes with
 tears.

CASS. Yet once more let me raise my mournful
 voice.

Thou Sun, whose rising beams shall bless no
 more

These closing eyes! you, whose vindictive rage
 Hangs o'er my hated murderers, Oh avenge
 me,

Though a poor slave, I fall an easy prey!

This is the state of man: in prosperous fortune
 A shadow, passing light, throws to the ground
 Joy's baseless fabric: in adversity

Comes malice with a sponge moisten'd in gall,
 And wipes each beauteous character away:

More than the first this melts my soul to pity.

CHOR. By nature man is form'd with boundless wishes
 For prosperous fortune; and the great man's
 door

Stands ever open to that envied person

On whom she smiles: but enter not with words
 Like this, poor sufferer, of such dreadful import.

His arms the powers of heaven have graced with
 conquest;

Troy's proud walls lie in dust; and he returns
 Crown'd by the Gods with glory: but if now

His blood must for the blood there shed atone,

If he must die for those that died, too dearly

He buys his triumph. Who of mortal men

Hears this, and dares to think his state secure?

AGAM. (*within*) Oh, I am wounded with a deadly blow.

SEMI-CHOR. List, list. What cry is this of wounds and death?

AGAM. Wounded again, Oh, basely, basely murder'd.

SEMI-CHOR. 'Tis the king's cry; the dreadful deed is doing.

What shall we do? what measures shall we form?

SEMI-CHOR. What if we spread th' alarm, and with our outcries

Call at the palace gates the citizens?

SEMI-CHOR. Nay rather rush we in, and prove the deed,

Whilst the fresh blood is reeking on the sword.

SEMI-CHOR. There's reason in thy words. Best enter then,

And see what fate attends the son of Atreus.

CLYTEMNESTRA, CHORUS.

CLYT. To many a fair speech suited to the times
If my words now be found at variance,
I shall not blush. For when the heart conceives
Thoughts of deep vengeance on a foe, what
means

T' achieve the deed more certain, than to wear
The form of friendship, and with circling wiles
Inclose him in th' insuperable net?

This was no hasty, rash-conceiv'd design;
But form'd with deep, premeditated thought,
Incensed with wrongs; and often have I stood,
T' assay the execution, where he fell;

And plann'd it so, for I with pride avow it:
He had no power t' escape, or to resist,

Entangled in the gorgeous robe, that shone
 Fatally rich. I struck him twice, and twice
 He groan'd, then died. A third time as he lay
 I gored him with a wound; a grateful present
 To the stern god that in the realms below
 Reigns o'er the dead: there let him take his seat.
 He lay; and spouting from his wounds a stream
 Of blood, bedew'd me with these crimson drops.
 I glory in them, like the genial earth,
 When the warm showers of heaven descend,
 and wake

The flow'rets to unfold their vermeil leaves.
 Come then, ye reverend senators of Argos,
 Joy with me, if your hearts be tuned to joy;
 And such I wish them. Were it decent now
 To pour libations o'er the dead, justly
 It might be done; for his injurious pride
 Fill'd for this house the cup of desolation,
 Fated himself to drain it to the dregs.

CHOR. We are astonish'd at thy daring words,
 Thus vaunting o'er the ruins of thy husband.
 What poison hath the baleful-teeming earth,
 Or the chafed billows of the foamy sea,
 Given thee for food, or mingled in thy cup,
 To work thee to this phrensy? Thy cursed hand
 Hath struck, hath slain. For this thy country's
 wrath

Shall in just vengeance burst upon thy head,
 And with abhorrence drive thee from the city.

CLYT. And dost thou now denounce upon my head
 Vengeance, and hate, and exile? 'Gainst this
 man

Urging no charge! Yet he without remorse,
 As if a lamb that wanton'd in his pastures

Were doom'd to bleed, could sacrifice his
daughter,

(For whose dear sake I felt a mother's pains,)
T' appease the winds of Thrace. Should not
thy voice

Adjudge this man to exile, in just vengeance
For such unholy deeds? Scarce hast thou heard
What I have done, but sentence is pronounced,
And that with rigour too. But mark me well,
I boldly tell thee that I bear a soul
Prepared for either fortune: if thy hand
Be stronger, use thy power: but if the Gods
Prosper my course, be thou assured, old man,
Thou shalt be taught a lesson of discretion.

CHOR. Aspiring are thy thoughts, and thy proud
vaunts

Swell with disdain; e'en yet thy madding mind
Is drunk with slaughter; with a savage grace
The thick blood stains thine eye. But soon
thy friends

Faithless shall shrink from thy unshelter'd side,
And leave thee to just vengeance, blow for
blow.

CLYT. Hear then this solemn oath: By that revenge,
Which for my daughter I have greatly taken;
By the dread powers of Atè and Erinnys,
To whom my hand devoted him a victim,
Without a thought of fear I range these rooms,
Whilst present to my aid Ægisthus stands,
As he hath stood, guarding my social hearth:
He is my shield, my strength, my confidence.
Here lies my base betrayer, who at Trøy
Could revel in the arms of each Chryseis;
He, and his captive minion; she that mark'd

Portents and prodigies, and with ominous
tongue

Presaged the Fates ; a wanton harlotry
Haunting with *him* in bark and pinnace ; thus
Their meed have they received. See where he
lies ;

And she his paranymp, that like the swan
Warbled death's notes, lies with him, to my bed
Leaving the darling object of my wishes.

CHOR. No slow-consuming pains, to torture us
Fix'd to the groaning couch, await us now ;
But Fate comes rushing on, and brings the
sleep

That wakes no more. There lies the king,
whose virtues

Were truly royal. In a woman's cause
He suffer'd much, and by a woman perish'd.

Ah fatal Helen ! in the fields of Troy
How many has thy guilt, thy guilt alone,
Stretch'd in the dust ? But now by murd'rous
hands

Hast *thou* sluiced out this rich and noble blood,
Whose foul stains never can be purged. This
ruin

Hath discord, raging in the house, effected.

CLYT. Wish not for death ; nor bow beneath thy
griefs ;

Nor turn thy rage on Helen, as if she
Had drench'd the fields with blood, as she
alone

Fatal to Greece had caused these dreadful ills.

CHOR. Tremendous fiend, that breathest through
this house

Thy baleful spirit, and with equal daring



Flaxman Del.

Chorus.

Clytemnestra.

*My king, my royal lord, what words can show
My grief,*

Chorus.

E. Finken. Sculp.

Agamemnon. 4.

Hast steel'd these royal sisters * to fierce deeds
 That rend my soul, now, like the baleful raven,
 Incumbent o'er the body dost thou joy
 T' affright us with thy harsh and dissonant
 notes!

CLYT. There 's sense in this : now hast thou touch'd
 the key,

Rousing the Fury that from sire to son
 Hath bade the stream of blood, first pour'd by
 her,

Descend : one sanguine tide scarce roll'd away,
 Another flows in terrible succession.

CHOR. And dost thou glory in these deeds of death,
 This vengeance of the Fury? Thus to pride
 thee

In ruin and the havoc of thy house,
 Becomes thee ill. Ah! 'tis a higher power,
 That thus ordains ; we see the hand of Jove,
 Whose will directs the fate of mortal man.
 My king, my royal lord, what words can show
 My grief, my reverence for thy princely virtues!
 Art thou thus fall'n, caught in a cobweb snare,
 By impious murder breathing out thy life?

CLYT. Thou say'st, and say'st aloud, I did this deed :
 Say not that I, that Agamemnon's wife,
 Did it: the Fury, fatal to this house,
 In vengeance for Thyestes' horrid feast,
 Assumed this form, and with her ancient rage
 Hath for the children sacrificed the man.

CHOR. Art thou thus fall'n, Ah the disloyal bed!
 Secretly slaughter'd by a treach'rous hand?

CLYT. No: of his death far otherwise I deem,

* Clytemnestra and Helen.

Nothing disloyal. Nor with secret guile
Wrought he his murd'rous mischiefs on this
house.

For my sweet flow'ret, opening from his stem,
My Iphigenia, my lamented child,
Whom he unjustly slew, he justly died.
Nor let him glory in the shades below ;
For as he taught his sword to thirst for blood,
So by the thirsty sword his blood was shed.

CHOR. Perplex'd and troubled in my anxious
thought,

Amidst the ruins of this house, despair
Hangs heavy on me. Drop by drop no more
Descends the shower of blood ; but the wild
storm

In one red torrent shakes the solid walls ;
Whilst vengeance, ranging through the deathful
scene,

For further mischief whets her fatal sword.

O Earth, that I had rested in thy bosom,
E'er I had seen him lodged with thee, and
shrunk

To the brief compass of a silver urn !

Who shall attend the rites of sepulture ?

Who shall lament him ? Thou whose hand has
shed

Thy husband's blood, wilt thou dare raise the
voice

Of mourning o'er him ? Thy unhallow'd hand
Renders these honours, (should they come from
thee,)

Unwelcome to his shade. What faithful tongue,
Fond to recount his great and godlike acts,
Shall steep in tears his funeral eulogy ?

CLYT. This care concerns not thee : by us he fell,
 By us he died ; and we will bury him
 With no domestic grief. But Iphigenia,
 His daughter, as is meet, jocund and blithe,
 Shall meet him on the banks of that sad stream,
 The flood of sorrow* ; and with filial duty
 Hang fondling on her father's neck, and kiss
 him.

ÆGISTHUS, CLYTEMNESTRA, CHORUS.

ÆGIS. Hail to this joyful day, whose welcome light
 Brings vengeance ! Now I know that the just
 Gods
 Look from their skies, and punish impious
 mortals,
 Seeing this man roll'd in the blood-wove woof,
 The tissue of the Furies, grateful sight,
 And suffering for his father's hateful crimes.
 Atreus, his father, sovereign of this land,
 Brooking no rival in his power, drove out
 My father and his brother, poor Thyestes,
 A wretched exile : from his country far
 He wander'd ; but at length return'd, and stood
 A suppliant before the household Gods,
 Secure in their protection that his blood
 Should not distain the pavement. This man's
 father,
 The sacrilegious Atreus, with more show
 Of courtesy than friendship, spread the feast,
 Devoting, such the fair pretence, the day
 To hospitality and genial mirth :
 Then to my father in that feast served up

* Styx.

The flesh of his own sons : and he, woe ! woe !
 The while ! without suspicion ate a food
 Destructive to the race. But when he knew
 Th' unhallow'd deed, he raised a mournful cry,
 And starting up with horror, spurn'd away
 The barb'rous banquet, uttering many a curse
 Of deepest vengeance on the house of Pelops.
 Thus perish all the race of Plisthenes !
 And for this cause thou seest him fall'n : his
 death

With justice I devised ; for me he chased,
 The thirteenth son, an infant in my cradle,
 With my unhappy father. Nursed abroad,
 Vengeance led back my steps, and taught my
 hand

From far to reach him. All this plan of ruin
 Was mine, reckless of what ensues ; e'en death
 Were glorious, now that I am thus avenged.

CHOR. And did the baseness of thy coward soul
 Unman thee for this murder, that a woman,
 (Shame to her country, and her country's gods!)
 Must dare this horrid deed ? But when Orestes,
 Where'er he breathes the vital air, returns,
 (Good fortune be his guide!) shall not his
 hand

Take a bold vengeance in the death of both ?

ÆGIS. From thee, who labourest at the lowest oar,
 This language, and to him that holds the helm !
 Thou shalt be taught, old man, what at thy age
 Is a hard lesson,—prudence. Chains and hunger,
 Besides the load of age, have sovereign virtue
 To physic the proud heart. Behold this sight* ;

* Pointing to the dead body of the murdered monarch.

Does it not ope thine eyes? Rest quiet then;
Contend not with the strong; there's danger
in it.

CHOR. An Argive scorns to fawn on guilty greatness.

Shalt thou reign king in Argos? Thou, whose
soul

Plotted this murder; whilst thy coward hand
Shrunk back, nor dared to execute the deed?

ÆGIS. This folly, be assured, shall cost thee dear.

CLYT. Let no more blood be shed. Go then, old
men,

Each to his home; go, whilst ye may in peace.

CHOR. The craven in her presence rears his crest.

CLYT. Slight men, regard them not; but let us
enter,

Assume our state, and order all things well.

END OF THE AGAMEMNON*.

* The following profound criticism of La Harpe on this play, will at least amuse if it do not edify the reader:

“Agamemnon est une pièce froidement atroce Clytemnestre n'est ni amoureuse, ni jalouse, ni ambitieuse. Seulement elle veut tuer son mari, et le tue. Voilà la pièce.” Cours de Littérature, Tome 1.

In reality the plot of the Agamemnon is very simple, but that is one of the characteristics of the dramas of Æschylus. Subordinate to the imperturbable power of destiny, the combined passions of lust, ambition, and revenge, which actuate Clytemnestra and Ægisthus, constitute the moving principle which chiefly conduces to the progress of the action. Clytemnestra has been styled the Lady Macbeth of antiquity, but “vaulting ambition” was the sole actuating principle of the latter, in the former, love of her paramour and revenge for her daughter are predominating passions, by which, it may be observed, she is never, like Shakspeare's heroine, completely unsexed.

The first part of the book is devoted to a general history of the United States from its discovery to the present time. It is divided into three volumes. The first volume contains the history of the discovery and settlement of the continent, and the second volume contains the history of the colonies. The third volume contains the history of the United States from its independence to the present time. The author has written this book in a simple and plain style, and it is intended for the use of schools and families. It is a very interesting and useful book, and it is highly recommended to all who are interested in the history of the United States.

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THE
CHOËPHORÆ.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

ELECTRA.

ORESTES.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

ÆGISTHUS.

PYLADES.

NURSE AND SERVANTS.

CHORUS OF CAPTIVE TROJAN WOMEN.

MEMORANDUM

TO : [Illegible]

FROM : [Illegible]

SUBJECT : [Illegible]

[Illegible text follows, consisting of several paragraphs of faint, mirrored text.]

INTRODUCTION.

THE threatened vengeance, with which the Chorus menaces the murderers in the close of the last tragedy, overtakes them in this. Orestes, son of Agamemnon, had been rescued from the machinations of Ægisthus and Clytemnestra by the solicitude of Electra, his sister, and had been secretly conveyed in safety to the court of Strophius, king of Phocis, who was married to Agamemnon's sister. The king, his uncle, received him with the utmost kindness, and he was carefully educated with his cousin Pylades, the son of Strophius, and from their boyish intimacy arose that inviolable attachment which afterwards became proverbial. Arrived at the age of manhood, and instigated by the oracle of Apollo to avenge his father's wrongs, Orestes repairs to his native Argos, accompanied by his friend. On his arrival, he immediately proceeds to the tomb of Agamemnon, and makes an offering to the shade of the deceased monarch of his "crisped locks," which he had previously nourished and consecrated to the river Inachus. A parallel instance occurs in the XXIII^d Iliad, where Achilles devotes his hair, (sacred till then to the river Sperchius,) to the manes of his beloved Patroclus.

Whilst in the act of making this oblation, Orestes

perceives a solemn and sorrowful procession approaching, which proves to be his sister Electra coming to offer libations at the tomb of their common father, attended by a mourning train of female captives brought from Troy. These form the chorus; and, as is common in the Greek dramas, give the name to the tragedy; the word Choëphoræ signifying bearers of libations to the manes of the dead. Orestes and Pylades stand apart in concealment, to wait the issue of this ceremony, the Chorus singing a solemn dirge in honour of the departed, and denouncing the sure though lingering vengeance of Atè, goddess of evil, upon the perpetrators of this foul and unnatural murder. The hair of Orestes, lying on the tomb, fills Electra with hope at once and apprehension, until Orestes turns her fears to joy, by discovering himself fully. She fires him to prompt and decisive action, by a glowing recital of their father's sudden and bloody death, his mangled corpse barbarously disfigured, and consigned unhonoured to the grave, by his own exile from Argos, the throne of which was his birth-right, by the indignities heaped upon herself, and finally, by a picture of the successful adulterers revelling in the enjoyment of their ill-gotten power and guilty pleasures.

Orestes, still naturally anxious to catch at any thing that might tend to palliate their mother's crime, eagerly inquires into her motive for sending these oblations to their father's tomb. The Chorus inform him that it was not from any feeling of remorse that she had shewn the memory of Agamemnon even this mark of respect; but that urged by a fearful dream, which they relate, and which

Orestes perceives to be significant of his own intended vengeance, her guilty fears had impelled her to this effort to appease the shade of her murdered husband. Orestes then plans the means of gaining access to the palace. He feigns himself a way-faring man, travelling from Phocis, and charged with a message from king Strophius to the ruler of Argos, to tell that young Orestes was no more; an interview with Ægisthus is granted him, he springs upon the assassin, and despatches him at once. Before his mother's tears, however, his fury relents, and filial reverence and affection are ready to disarm his rage, until Pylades overcomes his scruples by admonishing him of the solemn command, and awful denunciations of Apollo, in case of disobedience.

The softening of the indignation of the Chorus against the adulterers, after vengeance is inflicted upon them, and the remorse and incipient madness of Orestes, are touched with singular delicacy and truth to nature. There are several circumstances in this play, and in particular many traits in the character of Orestes, which will forcibly recall to the reader's thoughts an English drama,—perhaps the most profound and heartfelt of all our Shakspeare's tragedies,—Hamlet.

Some part of the commencement of the play is lost; the address of Orestes, however, on presenting his hair at his father's tomb, is preserved entire. This is followed by the dirge of the Chorus, and a dialogue between the Coryphæus and Electra, as to the most suitable mode of addressing the shade of Agamemnon, under the extraordinary circumstance of offering oblations from the perpetrators of

his murder. Electra then advances to the tomb, and the action proceeds as follows:—

SCENE, as in the preceding drama, the area before the royal palace at Argos, where the tomb of Agamemnon is now perceived.

ELECTRA,—at the tomb.

O thou, that to the realms beneath the earth
 Guidest the dead, be present, Mercury,
 And tell me that the powers, whose solemn
 sway
 Extends o'er those dark regions, hear my vows ;
 Tell me that o'er my father's house they roll
 Their awful eyes, and o'er this earth, that bears
 And fosters all, rich in their various fruits.
 And thee, my father, pouring from this vase
 Libations to thy shade, on thee I call :
 O pity me, and pity dear Orestes,
 That in this seat of kings our hands may hold
 The golden reins of power: for now oppress'd,
 And harass'd by a mother's cruel hand,
 (Who for Ægisthus, that contrived thy death,
 Exchanged her royal lord,) he wanders far,
 While I am treated as a slave. Orestes
 From his possessions exiled, they with pride
 Wantonly revel in the wealth thy toils
 Procured: O grant Orestes may return,
 And fortune be his guide! Hear me, my fa-
 ther,
 And grant me, more than e'er my mother
 knew,

The grace and blush of unstain'd modesty,
 And a more holy hand! For us these vows;
 But on our foes may thy avenger rise
 Demanding blood for blood. These vows I
 breathe

In dreadful imprecations on their heads.
 Be thou to us, my father, with the Gods,
 This earth, and powerful justice, be to us
 That breathe this vital air, a guide to good.
 With these libations such the vows I offer.
 Now let your sorrows flow; attune the pæan,
 And soothe his shade with solemn harmony.

CHOR. Swell the warbling voice of woe,
 Loudly let the measures flow;
 And ever and anon the sorrowing tear
 Trickling dew the hallow'd ground,
 T' avert the ills we fear;
 Whilst on this sepulchral mound
 Her pious hands the pure libation shed,
 T' atone the mighty dead.
 Hear me, O hear me, awful lord,
 Through the dreary gloom adored!
 Ha! Who is this? See, sisters, see,
 Mark with what force he shakes his angry
 lance:

Comes he this ruin'd house to free?
 So does some Thracian chief advance;
 So Mars, when roused with war's alarms,
 Radiant all his clashing arms,
 Rears high his flaming falchion to the blow,
 And thunders on the foe.

ELEC. 'Tis finish'd; these libations to my father
 The earth has drunk.—Thou awful Power, that
 holdest

'Twi'xt this ethereal sky and the dark realms
Beneath, dread intercourse, what may this mean?

'Tis all amazement. Share this wonder with me.

CHOR. Say what: my throbbing heart has caught
th' alarm.

ELEC. Placed on the tomb behold these crisped
locks.

None here, myself excepted, could devote
Their locks, the mournful offering ill becomes
Our enemies. Then the colour: mark it well;
'Tis the same shade.

CHOR. With whose? I burn to know.

ELEC. With mine. Compare them: are they not
much like?

CHOR. Are they a secret offering from Orestes?

I marvel how he dared to venture hither.

ELEC. Perchance he sent this honour to his father.

CHOR. Nor that less cause of sorrow, if his foot

Must never press his native soil again.

ELEC. A flood of grief o'erwhelms me, and my heart
Is pierced with anguish; from my eyes that
view

These locks, fast fall the ceaseless-streaming
tears,

Like wintry showers. To whom besides, that
here

Inhabits, could I think these locks belong?

Could she, who slew him, offer on his tomb

Her hair? Alas, her thoughts are impious all,

Such as a daughter dares not name. I deem,

With reason then I deem, they graced the head

Of my Orestes, dearest of mankind,

And fondly mix their kindred griefs with mine,

A grace and honour to our father's tomb.

Why should I not indulge the flatt'ring hope?
But to the Gods, who know what furious
storms

Burst o'er me, like a shipwreck'd mariner,
I make appeal: if haply aught of safety
Remains, from this small root the vigorous
trunk

May spread its shelt'ring branches.—Further
mark

Th' impression of these feet; they shew that
two

Trod here; himself perchance and his attend-
ant;

One of exact dimensions with my own:
But all is anguish and perplexity.

ORESTES, PYLADES, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

ORES. In other pressures beg the favouring Gods
To hear thy vows, and shower their blessings
on thee.

ELEC. What blessing from them have I now ob-
tain'd?

ORES. Thou seest before thee whom but late thine
eyes

Most wished to see.

ELEC. And dost thou know the name
Which with fond joy my tongue delights to
utter?

ORES. Thy fervent vows, I know, are for Orestes.

ELEC. And of those vows what have I yet obtain'd?

ORES. I am Orestes: seek no firmer friend.

ELEC. With wily trains thou wouldst ensnare me,
stranger.

ORES. Then should I spread these trains against
myself.

ELEC. But thou wouldst mock me in my miseries.

ORES. To mock thy miseries were t' insult my own.

ELEC. Am I indeed conversing with Orestes?

ORES. Thou seest me present, yet art slow to know me.

When offer'd on the tomb thou saw'st these locks,

When with thy own th' impressions of my feet
Were measured, joy gave wings to expectation,
And imaged me before thee. Mark these locks,
Shorn from thy brother's head; observe them well,

Compare them with thy own. This tissue,
view it,

The texture is thy own, the rich embroidery,
Thine are these figures, by thy curious hand
Imaged in gold.—Let not thy joy transport thee:
Our nearest friends are now our deadliest foes.

ELEC. Thou dearest pledge of this imperial house,
From thee my hopes, water'd with tears, arose:
Thy valour shall support our righteous cause,
And vindicate the glories of thy father.

Pride of my soul, for my fond tongue must
speak,

The love my father shared, my mother shared,
(Once shared; but justly now my soul abhors
her,)

And that poor victim, my unhappy sister,
Is centred all in thee: thou art my father,
Mother, sister, my support, and glory,
My only aid: and heaven's great King shall
prosper

Thy courage, and the justice of thy cause.

ORES. Look down, great King of heaven! Look
down, behold

These deeds of baseness ; see an orphan race,
 Reft of the parent eagle, that, inwreathed
 In the dire serpent's spiry volumes, perish'd.
 They, unprotected, feel the oppressive pangs
 Of famine, yet too weak to wing their flight,
 And, like their parent, fill their nest with prey.
 We are the eagle's offspring, of our father
 Deprived, and driven in exile from his house.
 Before thy altars, loaded by his hand,
 He bow'd with pious reverence. Should thy
 will

Permit his young to perish, who shall pay thee
 Like costly honours ? Should the eagle's off-
 spring

Be doom'd to perish, who shall bear thy thun-
 ders,

Dread sign of wrath awaked on mortal man ?
 Nor will this empire, wither'd from its roots,
 Adorn thy altars on the solemn day
 With hallow'd victims. Save us then, protect us,
 To all its former glories raise this house,
 Whose ruin'd towers seem tott'ring to their fall.

CHOR. Ye generous offspring of this royal house,
 And guardians of its honour, check your trans-
 ports ;

Lest they be heard, and some malicious tongue
 Bear them to our bad rulers : may these eyes
 First see the dark wreaths of their funeral piles.

ORES. The voice of Phœbus never shall deceive :
 In dreadful accents utter'd from his shrine
 Aloud he charged me to defy the danger,
 Threatening my soul with keenest tortures,
 mulcts
 Less lightly paid than those of hard-earn'd gold,

Should I forbear t' avenge my father's death
With equal retribution on his murderers.
Ills else did he denounce :—ills to the citizen—
Such as breed joy in taunting foemen's eyes,
Famine and fruitless acres :—and for us—
Corrosive leprosies with rankling tooth
To gnaw our flesh, and taint our healthful
bodies
With ulcerous foulness, changing these fresh
locks
To untimely white ; with trains of heavier
woes
Raised by the Furies for a father's blood.
For the dark shaft, shot from the realms be-
neath
By suppliant kinsmen, slain by villain hands,
Helps with the night's dread fears, to rouse and
sting
The guilty soul to madness, while the whip
And city's scourge consume his mangled body.
Such from the friendly bowl, the hallow'd gob-
let,
The social intercourse, the incensed altar,
Is chased, condemn'd to bear the secret pangs
Of inly-gnawing guilt : meanwhile the fiends,
Hatred and Infamy, pursue his steps,
And drag him to an execrable death.
The sacred voice of Phœbus then demands
My prompt obedience. Could my soul refuse
T' obey the awful mandate, yet the deed
Must be accomplish'd ; many urgencies
Conspire : the charges of the Gods, the grief
That wounds me for my father, the fierce
pangs

Of penury compel me ; and the shame,
That burns the generous soul, to leave my
country,

And all those heroes glorious through the world,
Whose conquering arms laid Troy's proud
towers in dust,

Slaves to two women ; for his soul is woman :
If not, the occasion soon will prove his spirit.

CHOR. And you, tremendous Destinies, whose power
Is ratified by Jove, mark the firm course
Of justice, and by that direct th' event.

ORES. O thou much injured shade, my suffering
father,

In thy dear cause what shall I say, what do,
Guided by fortune hither ? Where, O where
Is thy couch spread ? Our light is shaded o'er
With darkness deep as thine : our youthful
graces,

That in this royal house once bloom'd with hope
Fair opening, shrink at the rough blast of
sorrow.

CHOR. No : the devouring flames, my son, that
waste

The body of the dead, touch not the soul ;
That lives, and knows its destined hour to
show

Its wrath : yet for the dead our sorrows rise.

ELEC. Hear me too, O my father ; in those griefs
Which at thy sepulchre thy children pour,
I have a mournful part. Thy tomb receives
Alike the suppliant and the exile. Which,
Ah which of these is well ? Which without
evils ?

No lenient hand can ease our miseries.

CHOR. Yet may the God, that uttered from the
shrine

His awful voice, from these raise other sounds
More pleasing ; and for these sepulchral notes,
(Notes steep'd in tears,) thro' all these royal
rooms

The voice of joy may ring, and hail their lord,
Return'd to bless them with his kind protection.

ELEC. Yet, O my father, hadst thou greatly fallen
Beneath the walls of Troy, pierced by the spear
Of some bold Lycian, leaving to thy house
Thy glory, gracing with illustrious splendor
Thy children's steps, on that barbaric coast
The high-raised tomb had dignified thy dust
And soothed our sorrows. In the realms be-
neath

Thy friendly shade, amongst the friendly shades
That fell with honour there, had held its state
Majestic and revered, a king, next those
Whose awful power those darksome realms
obey.

For to thy last of life thou wast a king,
The golden reins of empire graced thy hands,
And thy strong sceptre ruled a willing people.
But in the fields of Troy thou didst not fall,
Nor is thy tomb beside Scamander's stream
With those that perish'd by the hostile spear.

CHOR. Supreme of Gods, send from the realms of
night,

The slow-avenging Atè ; bid her rise
To blast the fraudulent and audacious hands
Of impious mortals : for a father's wrongs
She stamps her vengeance deep. When on
this man

The vengeful sword shall fall, and bleeding
nigh

Lies this bad woman, be it mine to hear
Their shrieks of death, and answer to their
cries

In notes as dismal. Why should I conceal
My honest hopes? Fate spreads her sable
wings,

And hovers o'er their heads; before their eyes
Stands indignation arm'd, and hate enraged,
Ready to rend their hearts, when Jove shall
stretch

His puissant hands. O thou, whose power sub-
dues

The mighty, to this country seal thy faith,
And ratify their doom! On th' impious heads
I ask for vengeance. You, whose dreaded
power

Th' infernal realms revere, ye Furies, hear me!
There is a law that, for each drop of blood
Shed on the earth, demands that blood be
shed;

For, from the slain, Erinnyes calls for slaughter,
On ruin heaping ruin. Ye dread powers
Of Hell's dark realms, where are you now?
Behold,

Ye potent curses of the slain, behold
The poor remains of this imperial house
Sunk in distress, and all its glories vanish'd!
Where, King of Heaven, where may we seek
for refuge?

ELEC. Again my throbbing heart sinks at the sound
Of thy laments; and dark'ning o'er my soul
At thy sad voice come anguish and despair.

But when thy words breathe courage, my sick
griefs

Are fled, and fairer fortune seems to smile.

But with what words to woo her? Speak
aloud

The miseries which we suffer from our pa-
rents?

Or smooth our tongues to glozing courtesy?

That softens not our miseries: and our spirits,

Roused by the wrongs of our ungentle mother,

Contract a kindred fierceness. With bold hand

She struck the fatal stroke. She struck him
once;

Again she struck him; her uplifted hands

Redoubled blow on blow; swift on his head

The distant-sounding strokes with steep force
fell.

Bold, unrelenting woman! that could bear

Without one pitying sigh t' entomb the king

Unhonour'd with his people's grief, the hus-
band

Without a tear to grace his obsequies!

ORES. All thou hast mentioned are indignities

That swell my grief to rage. But vengeance
arms

This hand, assisted by the Gods, to punish

The ignominious wrongs done to my father.

May this revenge be mine, then let me die!

ELEC. When she had killed, with impious hand she
maim'd

His manly figure, and with this abuse

Entomb'd him here, studious to make his
murder

A deed of horror, that through all thy life

Might shock thy soul. Such was thy father's death.

Such were thy father's ignominious wrongs.
But me, a poor, deserted, worthless thing,
Spurn'd like a menial from my own apart-
ments,

They bid begone : there I could heave the sigh
In secret, there indulge the mournful pleasure
To pour the tear, unnoticed and uncheck'd.
Hear this, and on thy mind imprint it deep,
Engrave it on the tablet of thy heart ;
Be resolute and calm.

The time demands a firm, determined spirit.
And thou, my father, hear : on thee I call,
And with a friendly voice, tho' choked with
tears :

Hear us, and aid !

CHOR. And with a friendly voice this social train
To her sad voice accords the strain.
Hear, mighty shade, and from the realms of
night
Revisit this ethereal light ;
Against thy foes impart thy aid,
Be war with war, and blood with blood repaid !
Ye Gods with justice strike the blow !
I tremble, as the measures flow ;
But Fate attends, and hears our call,
And, stern the bloody forfeit to demand,
With fury arms the kindred hand,
And bids the righteous vengeance fall.
Here Sorrow holds her dismal state,
Unsated Murder stains the ground,
Revenge behind and Terror wait,
And Desolation stalks his round ;

Not with a distant foe the war to wage,
 But on this house to pour their rage.
 These are the strains, that to the Gods below,
 Th' avenging Gods, in rude notes flow :
 Hear us, dread powers ; and this imperial race,
 Victorious in your might with glory grace !

ORES. My royal father, who unroyally
 Wast murdered, give me to command thy
 house !

ELEC. Hear me my father, for I want thy aid ;
 Grant me to share his vengeance on Ægisthus,
 And then escape ; else when the grateful odours
 Are wafted from the festive board, to grace
 The mighty dead, thy shade must want its
 honours.

ORES. EARTH, send my father to behold the com-
 bat !

ELEC. Inspire him, PROSERPINE, with glorious force !

ORES. Think on the bath where thou wast basely
 murdered !

ELEC. Think of the net in which their hands en-
 tangled thee !

ORES. My father, cannot these dishonours raise
 thee ?

ELEC. Dost thou not raise thy honour'd head ? O
 send

Justice to aid thy friends : or if thy soul
 Sinks with its wrongs, nor rises to avenge
 them,

Be the like sufferings ours ! But, O my father
 Hear our last cries, and sitting on thy tomb
 Behold thy sorrowing children !—

Now, brother, since thy soul is roused to dare
 This deed, trust on the God, and do it straight.

ORES. I shall : but let me pause awhile to ask
Wherefore she sent these off'rings, on what
motive

Thus late she soothes th' immedicable ill,
Paying this wretched honour to the dead
That cares not for it.

(to the CHOR.) Ye, if ye know, explain her mo-
tives to me.

CHOR. I know, for I was present: dreams and
visions,

The terrors of the night, appall'd her soul ;
And guilty fears urged her to send these
off'rings.

ORES. Told she the dreams that so alarm'd her
fears ?

CHOR. Her hideous fancies feign'd that she had
given

A dragon birth.

ORES. And what th' event ? Be brief.

CHOR. This new-born dragon, like an infant child
Laid in the cradle, seem'd in want of food ;
And in her dream she held it to her breast.

ORES. Without a wound 'scaped she the hideous
monster ?

CHOR. The milk he drew was mix'd with clotted
blood.

ORES. 'Tis not for nought, this vision from her
husband.

CHOR. She cried out in her sleep with wild af-
fright ;

And many lamps, dim-gleaming through the
darkness,

To do her pleasure enter'd the apartment.

Soon to the tomb she sends these funeral honours,

Medicinal, as she hopes, to heal her ills.

ORES. But to this earth, and to my father's tomb

I make my supplications, that in me

Her dream may be accomplish'd ; and I judge

It aptly corresponds : for as this serpent,

Leaving the place that once was mine, there
lying

Swathed like an infant, seized that breast which
nursed

My tender age, and mingled with the milk

Drew clotted blood ; and as with such affright

She call'd out in her sleep ; it cannot be

But as she nursed this monster, she must die

A violent death ; and with a dragon's rage

This hand shall kill her, as her dream declares.

Or how wilt thou expound these prodigies ?

CHOR. Thus may it be. But now instruct thy friends

What each must singly do, and each forbear.

ORES. Few words suffice : then mark me : Let HER
enter ;

And keep, I charge thee, keep my purpose
secret ;

That they, who slew an honourable man

By cursed deceit, may by deceit be caught

In the same snare, and perish ; so the God,

Powerful Apollo, from whose sacred voice

Nothing but truth can flow, admonish'd me.

I, like a stranger, harness'd in this coarse

And way-worn garb, with Pylades my friend,

Will as a guest and friend knock at the gate :

Our tongues shall imitate the rustic accent

Familiar to the mountain-race of Phocis.
 But if I pass the threshold of the gates,
 And find HIM * seated on my father's throne,
 Or should he come t' accost me, be assured
 Quick as the eye can glance, e'er he can say
 Whence is this stranger? my impatient sword
 Shall strike him dead. So shall the fell Erin-
 nys,
 That riots with a horrid joy in slaughter,
 Quaff this third bowl of blood.—Go then,
 Electra,
 Be watchful; see that all things in the house
 Be well disposed. And you, I charge you, guard
 Your tongues; be silent where you ought, and
 where
 Your voice can aid me, speak. The rest my
 friend,
 That guides my sword to vengeance, will o'er-
 see.

CHORUS.

STRO. 1. Pregnant with ills the dreary air
 Gives sickness, pain, and terror birth,
 The seas, that wind around the earth,
 Fatal to man their monsters bear:
 Each forest in its shaggy sides
 That darkens o'er the perilous ground,
 The lurking, rav'nous savage hides,
 Whilst fierce birds wheel the summits
 round:
 And mark with what tempestuous rage
 Black from the skies the rushing winds engage.

* Ægisthus.

ANTIS. 1. But who the dangerous thoughts can tell
 That in man's daring bosom roll;
 Or whirl the more tempestuous soul
 Of woman when the passions swell?
 When love, to torment near allied,
 Bids phrensy rule the troubled hour?
 Love, that exerts with wanton pride
 O'er female hearts despotic power;
 And binds in his ungentle chain
 Each savage of the wood, and monster of the
 main.

STRO. 2. Think with what sullen phrensy fired
 The Thestian dame* with ruthless hand
 Cast on the hearth the fatal brand;
 The flames consumed it, and her son expired.
 With horror think on Scylla's deed †:
 To win the favour of the foes,
 (The golden bracelets were the meed,)
 Against her father's life she rose,
 Approach'd the sleeping monarch's bed,
 And reft the sacred honours of his head.

ANTIS. 2. Amongst these deeds of blood that stain
 The annals of the times of old,
 Be that unhallow'd couch enroll'd,
 Whose guilty loves this royal house profane.
 Enroll'd be all that female hate
 Form'd 'gainst the chief in arms renown'd;

* Althæa. See Ovid Met. viii. fab. 4.

† Daughter of Nisus, king of Megara. On the head of her father grew a golden hair upon which the preservation of his city depended. When Megara was besieged by Minos king of Crete, Scylla, fired with love of the invader, entered her father's apartment as he slept, and cut off the fatal hair. See the story in Ovid Trist. 2.

The chief, whose glorious, awful state
 E'en madd'ning foes with reverence own'd:
 Those glories, though they blaze no more,
 Quench'd by a woman's hand, I still adore.
 EP.OD. In the black annals of far distant time
 The Lemnian dames recorded stand *;
 But the soul shudders at the crime,
 And execrates the murders of their hand:
 Basely at once the husbands bleed;
 The indignant Gods abhor the deed:
 And shall man dare with impious voice to ap-
 prove
 Deeds, that offend the powers above?
 Through the gored breast
 With rage imprest
 The sword of justice hews the dreadful wound;
 And haughty might
 That mocks at right,
 Like the vile dust is trampled on the ground.
 Righteous are thy decrees, eternal King,
 And from the roots of justice spring:
 These shall strike deep, and flourish wide,
 Whilst all, that scorn them, perish in their
 pride.
 Fate the portentous sword prepares,
 And the rough labours of the anvil shares;
 Wide through the house a tide of blood
 Flows where a former tide had flow'd;
 Erinny's marks the destined hour,
 Vengeful her meditated rage to pour.

* They murdered every male in the island except Thoas, who was saved by his daughter Hypsipyle. See Statius, Thebaid. v.

ORES. (*Knocking at the palace gate.*) What, does no
 servant hear me knock? Who waits
 Within? Again I knock: Does no one hear?
 A third time to the menials of this house
 I call, if to the stranger at his gate
 The great Ægisthus bears a courteous soul.

SERV. Forbear, I pray. Who art thou, and from
 whence?

ORES. Go tell the lords of this fair house, to them
 I come, charged with strange tidings: haste;
 For now the sable chariot of the night
 Rolls on apace; and the dark hour exhorts
 The way-spent traveller to seek repose.

CLYTEMNESTRA, ORESTES, PYLADES,
 ELECTRA, CHORUS.

CLYT. Speak, strangers, what your wants; here
 shall you find
 All that becomes a house like this*; warm
 baths
 Refreshment of your toils, the well spread couch
 Inviting soft repose, and over all
 An eye regarding justice. If your business
 Be of more serious import, asking counsel,
 The province this of men; we will inform
 them.

* "Hospitality" observes the late Mr. Mitford, the profound and ingenious historian of Greece, "will be generally found to have flourished in different ages and countries, very nearly in proportion to the necessity for it; that is, in proportion to the deficiency of jurisprudence, and the weakness of government." *Hist. of Greece*, Vol. I. Sect. 4.

ORES. A Phocian am I, from the town of Daulis.
 Occasions of my own call'd me to Argos,
 Nor ask'd a better dress than this coarse garb
 Familiar to me: onwards as I travell'd
 I met a man unknown, myself to him
 Unknown; he courteous question'd me how far
 I journey'd, and inform'd me of my way,
 Strophius of Phocis, (so I chanc'd to learn;)
 "Stranger", he said, "since business of thy own
 Leads thee to Argos, let me task thy care
 To tell Orestes' parents that the youth
 Is dead. Forget it not. Whether his friends
 With solemn obsequies will fetch him hence,
 Or in eternal rest our friendly earth
 Shall lay him in her hospitable bosom,
 Bring back their pleasure; for the brazen urn
 Now holds the ashes of the honour'd prince
 Whom we lament." This, faithful to my charge
 Have I deliver'd; if to kindred ears,
 And those whose power is sovereign here, I
 know not.

But it is meet his parents knew th' event.

ELEC. Ah me! Thus desolation on our head
 Is fall'n! O thou relentless curse, whose rage
 Hung o'er this house, has thy unsparing eye
 Mark'd what we lodged at distance, aiming there
 Thy cruel shafts, to rob me of my friends?
 E'en now Orestes, who with cautious tread
 Had from this gulf of ruin freed his foot,
 E'en he, the hope medicinal to the madness
 Of this bad house, shows that our hope be-
 trays us*.

* It is almost needless to remind the reader that Electra well knew this account of her brother's death to be feigned, and that

ORES. It were my wish to have borne other tidings,
 More welcome to the lords of this fair mansion,
 And meriting their hospitable favours :
 For what more strongly to benevolence
 Can bind the grateful soul? Yet I should
 deem it

An impious wrong not to disclose e'en these,
 Unwelcome, as they must be, to his friends,
 So solemnly entrusted to my charge.

CLYT. Nor less for this shalt thou receive such care
 As thy worth challenges : nor less for this
 Respected here : another would have come,
 Charged with the same sad message. But the
 hour

Demands refreshment for the stranger, spent
 With the long travel of the weary day.
 Lead him to those apartments, where the men
 Are well received ; let his attendant follow,
 His fellow traveller : let thy careful hand,
 I charge thee, minister to all their wants.
 We to the ruler of this house will bear
 These tidings, and amongst our friends consult
 What measures in this sad event to form.

CHORUS, *alone.*

Now, my dear partners, slaves to this proud
 house,
 Now let us shew our fortitude, now teach
 Our tongues a noble daring for Orestes.

Thou hallow'd earth, thou hallow'd mound,
 Whose high sepulchral round

this apostrophe to the curse of Thyestes, is only intended to deceive Clytemnestra, and disarm her of all suspicion.

Lies on the royal chief, that o'er the main
To glory led his martial train,

Now hear us, now impart your aid :
On this important hour,
Persuasion, try thy fraudulent power :

And thou, through night's surrounding shade,
Come Mercury, from the shades below,
And when the falchion flames, direct th' aveng-
ing blow !

SERVANT, GILISSA, CHORUS.

SERV. This stranger, it should seem, brings mourn-
ful tidings ;

I see the tear steal from Gilissa's eye,
Nurse of Orestes. But her honest grief
Shall here find no reward : expect it not.

GILIS. My royal mistress order'd me with speed
To call Ægisthus to these stranger guests ;
That man from man he with more certainty
Might learn this fresh report. Before the ser-
vants

She kept her smile beneath a mournful eye,
To hide her joy at this event ; to her
A joy indeed, but to this house a tale
Of deep affliction. He too, when he hears
The narrative, will from his soul rejoice.
Ah me ! what sorrows in successive train
Have in this house of Atreus pierced my soul
From ancient times : but never have I suffer'd
A loss like this : with patience other ills,
Well as I might, I bore. But my Orestes
Was the dear object of my anxious thoughts ;
An infant I received him from his mother ;
I nursed him, many a night to all his wants,

To all his cries attentive, with a care
 That now avails me not. Ere reason dawns,
 The nurse's care is needful; in his cradle
 The infant knows not to express his wants,
 Rise they from thirst, or hunger, or the calls
 Of nature: with fond diligence I mark'd
 Th' instinctive cry, nor with a squeamish nice-
 ness

Thought scorn of any office; for my love
 Made all delightful. Now, alas! in vain.
 But I am sent in haste to that vile man,
 Whose rank pollution stains this noble house;
 With pleasure this report will he receive.

CHOR. With what appointment does she bid him
 come?

GILIS. She bids him come attended with his guards.

CHOR. No, tell him not*, this hated lord; but wear
 A face of cheerfulness; and urge him hither
 Alone, devoid of fear, to be inform'd.

GILIS. This news, it seems, is welcome to thy soul.

CHOR. But what if Heaven's high King redress
 these ills?

GILIS. How? With Orestes all our hopes are
 dead.

CHOR. Not all. This needs no prophet to unfold it.

GILIS. Hast thou heard aught disproving this re-
 port?

* Orestes had enjoined the Chorus to be silent where they ought, and to speak where their voice might aid him: they had kept themselves near the tomb till they saw him enter the palace; they then advance with an intention of assisting his cause, as occasion should arise: Gilissa soon gave them a very favourable one, which they embrace, by conjuring that faithful servant to call forth Ægisthus alone, without his guards, which facilitated the design of Orestes.

CHOR. Go, bear thy message ; do as thou art order'd :

The Gods, whose care this is, will guide the event.

GILIS. I go, in all observant of thy precepts.

May what is best come from the fav'ring Gods!

Exit.

CHORUS*.

Thou, that hast fix'd thy dreary reign

Deep in the yawning gulf below,

Yet let him † rise, yet view this scene,

Around his gloomy eyeballs throw,

Distinct and clear the vengeance mark,

That threatens from her covert dark !

Thou, son of Maia ‡, come, and with thee lead

Success, that crowns the daring deed :

To form the close and dark design,

Whether th' ambiguous tale thou lovest to weave,

And throw around the veil of night ;

Or bidd'st e'en truth itself deceive,

Displayed in all the dazzling blaze of light ;

The powers of secrecy are thine.

Then shall this pensive female train

These rich oblations pay no more ;

No more the melancholy strain,

Tuned to the voice of anguish, pour.

Raptured their triumph shall I see,

My friends from ruffian danger free.

* The following ode, the reader will observe, is monostrophic ; see page 40.

† Agamemnon.

‡ Mercury.

And thou, when thy stern part is come, be
bold :

Think how in blood thy father rolled :

And when, " my son, my son," she cries,
To melt thy manly mind with plaintive moan,
Then to her guilty soul recal

Thy murder'd father's dying groan :
And to his angry vengeance let her fall :

Like Perseus turn thy ruthless eye ;
Just to thy friends above, thy friends below,
Aim with applauded rage the destined wound ;
Great in thy vengeance rush upon the foe,
And strike the murd'rer bleeding to the
ground.

ÆGISTHUS, GILISSA, CHORUS.

ÆGIS. This message has a voice, that calls me
forth

To learn with more assurance the report,
By certain strangers brought, touching the
death

Of young Orestes ; whether should I give
Full credit to this tale, or rather deem it
The idle offspring of these women's fears,
That lightly rose, and will as lightly die ?
This stranger I must see, that I may learn
If he himself were present at his death,
Or only speaks from an obscure report.

Exit.

CHOR. What should I say, eternal King,
Or how begin the strain ?

These passions how contain,
That in my throbbing breast tumultuous spring ?

O that, in aid, my daring deed
Might all the force of words exceed!
For now distain'd with blood the flick'ring
sword

The contest ends; if all
This royal race shall fall;
Or the just laws their ancient state resuming,
And liberty her light reluming,
Hail to his father's rights the son restored.
Gainst two fierce wolves the youth contesting
stands

Alone. May heaven-sent conquest grace his
hands!

ÆGIS. (*Within.*) Oh! I am slain.

CHOR. That groan! Again that groan!
Whence? What is done? Who rules the storm
within?

The deed is finish'd: let us keep aloof,
And seem unconscious of these ills: best stand
At distance, whilst destruction ends her work.

SERV. Woe, woe is me! Woe to my slaughter'd
lord!

Woe on my wretched head, and woe again!
Ægisthus is no more.

CLYTEMNESTRA, SERVANT, CHORUS.

CLYT. What means thy clamour? Whence these
shrieks of woe?

SERV. They, that were rumour'd dead, have slain
the living.

CLYT. Ah me! I understand thee, though thy words
Are dark; and we shall perish in the toils,
E'en as we spread them. Give me instantly
The slaught'ring axe; it shall be seen if yet

We know the way to conquer, or are conquer'd :
 These daring measures have my wrongs enforced.

ORESTES, PYLADES, CLYTEMNESTRA, CHORUS.

ORES. Thee too I seek : *he* has his righteous meed.

CLYT. Ah me ! my dear Ægisthus, thou art dead.

ORES. And dost thou love the man ? In the same
 tomb

Shalt thou be laid, nor e'en in death forsake
 him.

CLYT. Ah, stay thy hand, my son : my child, my
 child,

Revere this breast, on which thou oft hast
 slept,

And oft thy infant lips have press'd its milk.

ORES. What shall I do, my Pylades ? Restrain'd
 By filial reverence, dread to kill my mother ?

PYL. Where then the other oracles of Phœbus,
 Giv'n from the Pythian shrine ? The faithful
 vows,

The solemn adjurations, whither vanish'd ?

Deem all the world thy foes, save the just
 Gods.

ORES. Thou hast convinced me ; thy reproofs are
 just.—

Follow him : on his body will I slay thee.

Alive thou held'st him dearer than my father ;

Then sleep with him in death, since thou couldst
 love him,

And hate the man who most deserved thy love.

CLYT. My son, my son, thou wilt not kill thy mother !

ORES. Thy hand, not mine, is guilty of thy death.

CLYT. Take heed ; avoid a mother's angry Furies.

ORES. Relaxing here, how shall I 'scape my father's ?

CLYT. Methinks, while yet alive, before my tomb
I pour the funeral strain, that nought avails
me.

ORES. Nought : for my father's fate ordains thy
death.

CLYT. Ah me ! I gave this dragon birth, I nursed
him ;

These terrors of the night were more than
phantoms.

ORES. Foul and unnatural was thy murd'rous deed :
Foul and unnatural be thy punishment.

Exeunt.

CHOR. (*alone.*) The double ruin e'en of these
awakes

Our grief. But since his cruel fate has plunged
Orestes deep in blood, pour we the prayer
That his fair day set not in endless night.

ÉPODE.

Cheerful the light begins to rise ;
Sunk was our sun, and long in darkness lay,
Nor promised the return of day :
Soon may his beams revisit our sad eyes !
When these cleansed floors no more retain
Polluting murder's sanguine stain,
Time haply may behold his orient rays
O'er these illumined turrets blaze ;
And fortune, mounted on her golden seat,
Rejoice in our triumphant state,

Rejoice to see our glories rise,
And our unclouded sun flame o'er the sapphire
skies.

Re-enter ORESTES.

ORESTES, CHORUS.

ORES. Behold the murderers of my father slain !
Behold the proud oppressors of my country.
Spread out the bloody garment to the sun,
That with his awful eye he may behold
My mother's impious deeds, and in the hour
Of judgment be my witness, that with justice
My vengeance fell on her, and on Ægisthus.

CHOR. O horror, horror ! dreadful were your deeds,
And dreadful is your death ; the ling'ring ven-
geance
Bursts with redoubled force. This was her
deed,
Her cursed deed : this vestment is my witness,
Tinged by Ægisthus' sword ; the gushing blood,
Now stiffen'd, stains its Tyrian-tinctured ra-
diance.

ORES. I see the doom assign'd me : as the car
Whirl'd from its course by the impetuous
steeds
That scorn the reins, so my exulting heart
Bounds with tumultuous and ungovern'd pas-
sions.
Yet let me plead, whilst reason holds her seat,
Plead to my friends, that in the cause of justice
I slew my mother ; for her impious hands,
Stain'd with my father's blood, call'd down
revenge



Chorus.

Clytemnestra.
Behold the proud oppressors of my country.
(Chorus, 2.)

Prætor.

Æschylus, l. 11.

From the offended Gods. And here I plead,
To mitigate the deed, the Pythian prophet,
Phœbus, whose voice pronounced me from the
shrine,

If I achieved the vengeance, free from guilt :
To my refusal dreadful was his threat
Of punishments, beyond the reach of thought.
Graced with this branch of olive and this
wreath,

I will approach his shrine, his central throne *,
And his eternal fires, there to be cleansed
From the pollution of this kindred blood.
Ha ! look, ye female captives, what are these
Vested in sable stoles, of Gorgon aspect,
Their starting locks tangled with knots of
vipers !

I fly, I fly ; I cannot bear the sight.

CHOR. What phantoms, what unreal shadows thus
Distract thee ? Victor in thy father's cause,
To him most dear, start not at fancied terrors.

ORES. These are no phantoms, no unreal shadows ;
I know them now ; my mother's angry Furies.

CHOR. The blood as yet is fresh upon thy hands,
And thence these terrors sink into thy soul.

* The Greeks considered the temple of Apollo at Delphi, a valley of Mount Parnassus, as the centre of the earth, and told a foolish story about Jupiter letting loose two doves of equal swiftness from the extremities of the world, which met at the place where the temple was built. Mr. Bryant, in his *Analysis*, informs us that this notion arose from a corruption of the words Omphi-El, which signify the Oracle of the Sun, but resemble in sound a Greek word which means navel, whence Delphi was commonly reputed umbilicus terræ.

ORES. Royal Apollo, how their numbers swell!
And the foul gore drops from their hideous
eyes.

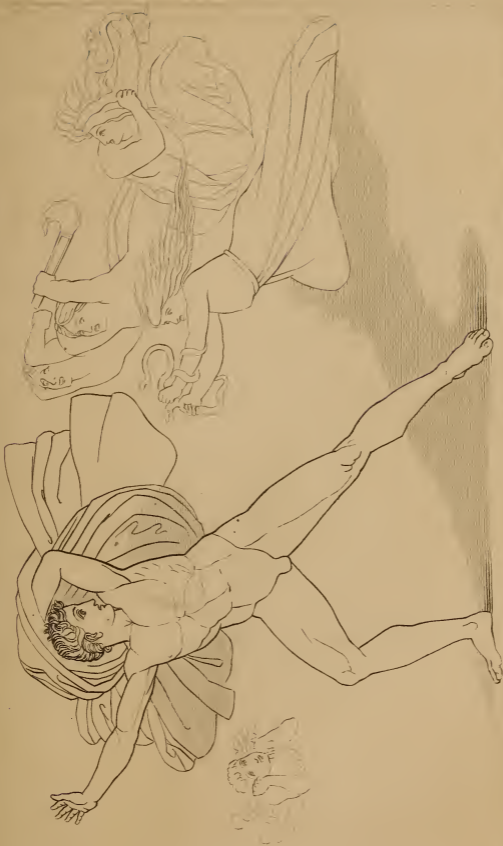
CHOR. Within are lavers. Soon as thou shalt reach
His shrine, Phoebus will free thee from these
ills.

ORES. But see you nothing there? Again, look,
look!

Distraction's in the sight: I fly, I fly.

CHOR. Blest may'st thou be: and may the God,
whose eye
Looks on thee, guard thee in these dreadful
dangers!

Thrice on this royal house the bursting
storm
Hath pour'd its rage in blood. Thyestes first
Mourn'd for his slaughter'd sons. Th' imperial
lord,
The leader of the martial hosts of Greece,
Next fell beneath the murd'ring sword, and
stain'd
Th' ensanguined bath. Then came th' intrepid
youth
Arm'd with the sword—of Freedom should I
say,
Or fate?—How long shall vengeance pour her
terrors?
When curb her fiery rage, and sleep in peace?



A. Flaxman Del.

Orises.

Look, look!
Distractions in the sight: I fly, I fly.
Choo-phurr 4

Furies

L. Flaxman Del.



EUMENIDES,

OR

THE FURIES.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

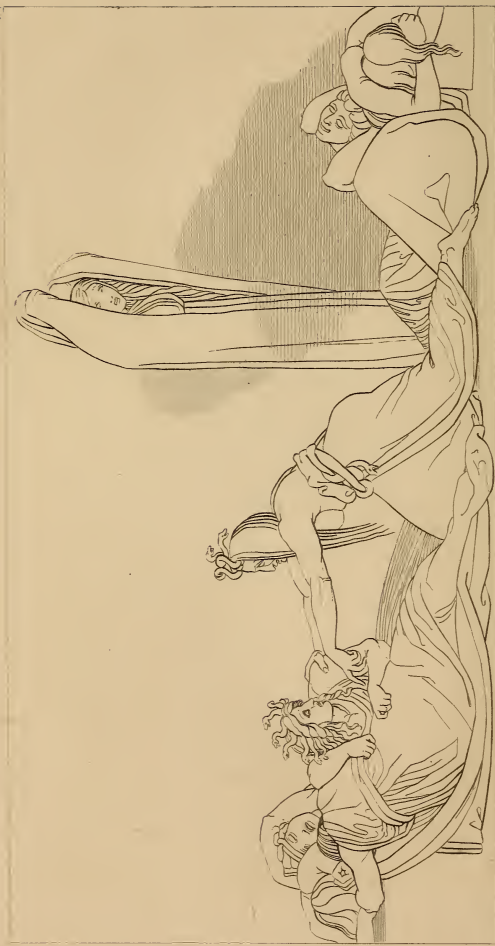
ORESTES.

MINERVA.

APOLLO.

JUDGES OF THE AREOPAGUS.

CHORUS, THE FURIES.



Phaenon Dol'

Chorus, the Furies.

Ghost of Clytemnestra.

E. Pindar's sculpt.

Awake, arise, rouse her as I rouse thee.

The Furies, 3.

INTRODUCTION.

ORESTES fled, according to his declaration at the close of the last tragedy, to the temple of Apollo at Delphi, to implore deliverance from the Furies, who haunted him continually on account of the death of his mother. This play commences with solemn rites in honour of the Gods, performed by the Pythian priestess in the vestibule of the temple. The temple then opens and discovers Orestes in an attitude of supplication before the God, surrounded by a grisly troop of female furies, overcome with fatigue in pursuing their wretched victim over land and wave, city and sea-girt isle; and now snoring loudly in profound slumber. In answer to the prayer of Orestes, Apollo commands him to repair to the image of Minerva, in her favoured city, where means shall be devised to ratify his pardon and peace. Orestes having accordingly departed to Athens, the ghost of Clytemnestra rises, and chides, in the bitterest terms, the infernal powers, (yet snoring,) for their remissness in thus indulging repose, instead of hunting their victim to the death, when once they had snuffed the scent of blood. One of the Furies, at length awaking, instantly takes alarm, and violently seizes the Fury next her, screaming out,

Awake, arise : rouse her as I rouse thee ;

an exclamation which, as implying that there was

only one more to be awoke, seems to strengthen the supposition that the number was limited to three, Alecto, Tisiphone, and Megaira, although it is not so represented in Flaxman's accompanying design. Once roused from slumber, they yell out their rage against Apollo for suffering Orestes to escape while they slept, and the god very unceremoniously drives them out of his temple, denouncing them as detested hags of hell, with other harsh and scornful epithets, little suited to our notions of celestial dignity.

Orestes next appears, in obedience to the voice of the Delphic oracle, a suppliant at the shrine of Pallas, in the Acropolis of Athens. The advocates of what they pleasantly term the "Aristotelic" unities, are highly offended at this sudden change of scene, in open violation of their boasted unity of place; and they rail at it in good French and bad Latin accordingly. The feelings of the English reader, albeit unused to quarrel with the similar metabases so frequent in our Shakspeare, have been spared so severe a shock as stirs the bile of the French critics on this occasion, by the excision of all that part of the drama which precedes the appearance of Orestes in the temple of Minerva. In answer to the prayer of her suppliant, the goddess consents to put him on his trial, before selected judges of the Areopagus, and to abide their decision as to his guilt or innocence. A brief account of the institution to which so signal a mark of even divine approbation is ascribed by the poet, who doubtless intended this as the most flattering compliment he could pay to his countrymen, may not be unacceptable.

The number of persons who composed the court

of Areopagus at Athens, which Aristides pronounces the most sacred and venerable tribunal of all Greece, is not certainly known. Maximus informs us that it consisted of fifty-one members, besides such men of rank as were eminent both for their virtue and their riches. Those of the archons, or governors-general of Attica, who had served their office irreproachably, were usually admitted. Such was the general reputation of the court for the fairness and integrity of its decisions, that foreign states often voluntarily submitted their disputes to its arbitration, and bound themselves to abide by its award.

Among the Athenians themselves, the crime of idleness, which they looked upon as the root of all evil, was one that came especially under the cognizance of the Areopagus. All matters relating to religion and the worship of the gods were also referred to the decision of this court; whence, in the 17th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, we find Saint Paul arraigned before it, as a setter forth of strange gods, because when certain philosophers of the Epicureans and of the Stoics encountered him, he preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection, "to the Greeks foolishness." And it was to them more immediately, that the same apostle directs that admirable address commencing Acts ch. xvii. v. 22.

They sat in the open air, because they took cognizance of murder and other offences of the deepest dye, and dreaded the pollution of capital criminals, if admitted under the same roof: they heard pleadings at night only, and in darkness, that they might not see the parties, nor be influenced by any external circumstance whatever. They per-

mitted facts only to be stated, without any of the ornaments of rhetoric. On the tribunal were placed two urns, one of brass, the other of wood; into the former the shells of condemnation were cast, into the latter those of acquittal. Pericles undermined the purity and authority of this tribunal, in revenge for their refusal to admit him as a member, and from his time it ceased to be an object of much veneration.

On the passage in Cicero's defence of Milo, which refers to the acquittal of Orestes by the goddess of wisdom herself, when the voices of his human judges were equally divided, Bishop Hurd, in his notes on the *Ars Poetica* of Horace, thus comments: "The venerable council of Areopagus, when judging by the severe rules of written justice, it seems, did not condemn the criminal, and the unwritten law of equity, which the fable calls the wisdom of Pallas, formally acquitted him."

"The pagan doctrine of Fate was such, that in order to discharge duty in one respect, it was unavoidable to incur guilt in another. This was the case here; Phœbus commanded and fate had decreed: yet obedience was a crime, to be expiated by future punishment.

"This may seem strange to us, who have other notions of these matters, but was perfectly according to the pagan system. The result is, that they knowingly exposed themselves to vengeance in order to fulfil their fate. All that remained was to lament their destiny, and revere the awful and mysterious providence of their gods."

We shall no longer detain the reader from the temple of Minerva, and the trial itself.

SCENE, the Temple of Minerva at Athens; Orestes alone before the statue of the goddess, in an attitude of supplication.

ORES. Hither, divine Minerva, by command
 Of Phœbus, am I come. Propitious power
 Receive me, by the Furies' tort'ring rage
 Pursued, no vile unhallow'd wretch, nor stain'd
 With guilty blood, but worn with toil, and
 spent
 With many a painful step to other shrines,
 And in the paths of men. By land, by sea
 Wearied alike, obedient to the voice,
 The oracle of Phœbus, I approach
 Thy shrine, thy statue, Goddess; here to fix
 My stand, till judgment shall decide my cause.

[Here the Chorus of Furies enter.]

CHOR. These toils oppress me, as with breathless
 haste
 I urge the keen pursuit: o'er the long tract
 Of continent, and o'er th' extended ocean,
 Swift as the flying ship I hold my course,
 Though on no pennons borne.—There, there he
 stands,
 His speed outstripping mine. Have I then
 found thee?
 With joy I snuff the scent of human blood—
 Take heed, take heed: keep careful watch; nor
 let
 This murderer of his mother once more 'scape,
 By secret flight, your vengeance: trembling,
 weak,

He hangs upon the image of the goddess,
 And wishes to be clear'd of his base deeds.
 It may not be : no : when the fluent moisture
 Has sunk into the ground, 'tis lost for ever :
 Can then a mother's blood, spilt on the earth,
 Be from the earth recover'd? No. Thy hour
 Of suff'ring is arrived, the hour that gives
 The purple stream that warms thy heart to
 quench

My thirst, which burns to quaff thy blood, and
 bend

To the dark realms below thy wasted limbs ;
 There, for thy mother's murder, shalt thou
 learn

To taste of pain ; there see whatever mortal
 Dared an injurious deed, profaned the Gods,
 Attack'd with ruffian violence the stranger,
 Or raised his impious hand against a parent,
 Each with vindictive pains condemn'd to groan,
 His crimes requiting ; for beneath the earth,
 The awful judge of mortals, Pluto sits,
 And with relentless justice marks their deeds.

ORES. Train'd in affliction's rigid lore, I know
 Many ablutions : when to speak I know,
 When to be silent : inspiration now
 With heavenly wisdom prompts my tongue to
 plead.

The faded blood is vanish'd from my hands,
 Nor from my mother's slaughter leaves a
 stain ;

The recent crimson at Apollo's shrine
 Wash'd off with lavers pure, atoned with gifts.
 All things with time grow old, and wear away.
 And now from hallow'd lips my pious prayer

Invokes the power presiding o'er this realm,
 Royal Minerva, that she haste to aid
 Her suppliant : so, with voluntary zeal
 Myself, my country, all the Argive people,
 To her with justice I devote for ever.
 If in the coasts of Libya, on the banks
 Of Triton *, native stream, she sets her foot,
 Or bare or buskin'd, prompt to aid her
 friends ;
 If o'er the plains of Phlegra, like a chief
 That marshals his bold troops, she darts her
 eye,

Her presence I implore ; though distant far,
 The goddess hears ; to free me from these ills.

CHOR. No : not Apollo, nor Minerva's power
 Shall set thee free, but that an abject outcast
 Thou drag thy steps, seeking in vain to find
 Rest to thy joyless soul, exhausted, worn,
 A lifeless shadow. Yet thy pride replies not,
 Me and my threats despising, though to me
 Devoted, my rich victim, and alive
 To feed my rage, not offer'd on the altar.
 Hear now the potent strain, that charms thee
 mine.

PROSODE.

Quickly, sisters, stand around,
 Raise your choral warblings high ;
 Since, the guilty soul to wound,
 Swells the horrid harmony.
 Since to mortal man we show
 How we give his fate to flow ;

* Tritonis was a lake and river of Libya, whence Pallas was called Tritonia ; either from a temple dedicated to her near the place, or, because it was there that she sprang from the skull of Jove.

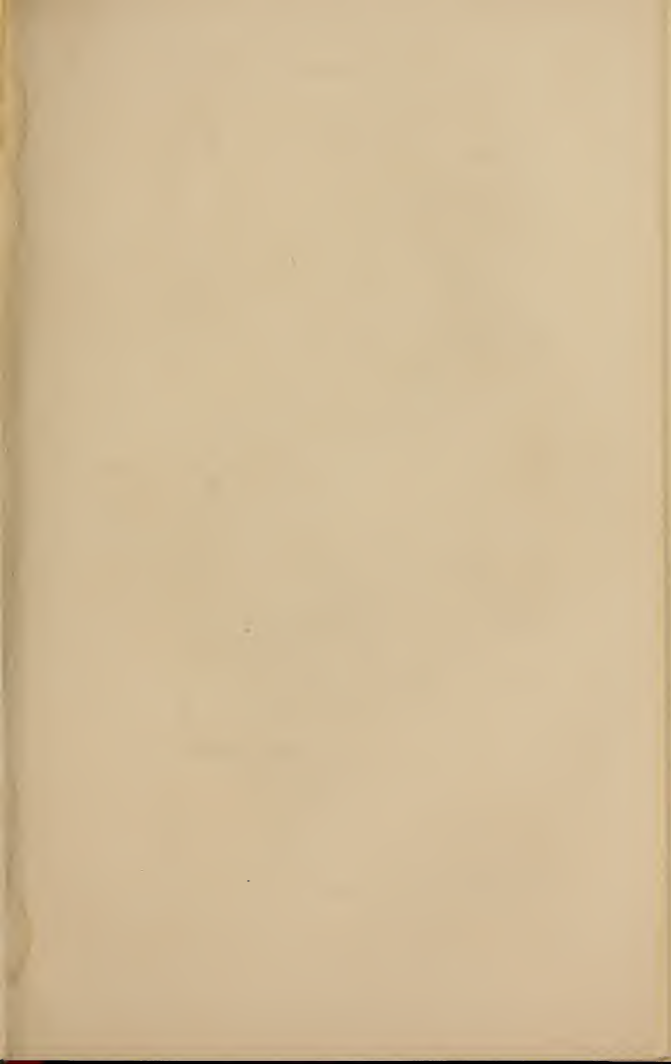
Since our will his doom ordains,
 Show that justice 'mongst us reigns.
 He, whose hands from guilt are pure,
 Stands in innocence secure ;
 And from youth to honour'd age
 Fears not our vindictive rage.
 To the wretch, that strives to hide
 Ruffian hands with murder dyed,
 Clothed in terrors we appear,
 Unrelentingly severe ;
 And, faithful to the injured dead,
 Pour our vengeance on his head.

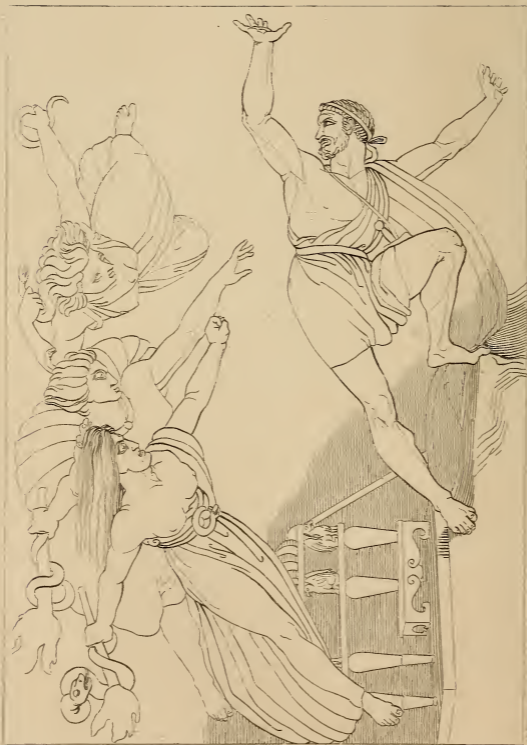
STROPHE.

Hear me, dread parent, sable-vested Night,
 O hear the avenger of each impious deed ;
 Whether we lie in shades conceal'd,
 Or to the eye of day reveal'd!
 Seest thou how Phœbus robs me of my right,
 From my just rage the trembling victim freed,
 Destined his mother's death t' atone,
 And for her blood to shed his own!
 O'er my victim raise the strain,
 And let the dismal sound
 His tortured bosom wound,
 And to phrensy fire his brain.
 Silent be the silver shell,
 Whilst we chant the potent spell ;
 Then yelling bid the infernal descant roll,
 To harrow up his soul.

ANTISTROPHE 1.

Avenging fate, as bending o'er the loom
 She wove the web, to us this part assign'd,





When, mounted in these saddle-shaded states,
With blood-bespinked feet we rage the chase,
Sinks dorkling to th' infernal shades.

Purres. 4

“ Whoe’er the laws shall dare disdain
And his rude hand with murder stain,
Pursue him Furies, urge his rigorous doom,
Till refuge in the realms he find.”

E’en there not free ; my chast’ning power
Pursues him to that dreary shore.
O’er my victim raise the strain,
And let the dismal sound
His tortured bosom wound,
And to phrensy fire his brain.
Silent be the silver shell,
Whilst we chant the potent spell ;
Then yelling bid th’ infernal descant roll,
To harrow up his soul.

ANTISTROPHE 2.

His wrathful eye heav’n’s mighty monarch
rolls,
Awfully silent on this blood-stain’d race.
But all the gorgeous blaze of power,
Which trembling mortals here adore,
When, mantled in these sable-shaded stoles,
With blood-besprinkled feet we urge the chase,
Sinks darkling to the infernal shades,
And all its boasted glory fades.
Near him, as he flies, I bound,
And when, with guilt opprest,
His weary steps would rest,
Spurn him headlong to the ground.
Senseless he, perchance, and blind,
Such the phrensy of his mind,
Such the deep gloom guilt spreads around his
walls,
He knows not that he falls.

EPODE.

But shall shelt'ring wall or gloom
 That from dark'ning guilt is spread,
 Hide him from his rigorous doom,
 Or protect his destined head?
 Mine the vengeance to design,
 And to stamp it deep is mine.
 Sternly mindful of the crime,
 Nor by man appeased, nor time,
 When the wretch, whose deed unblest
 Dares profane high Heaven's behest,
 Though conceal'd from mortal eyes
 Through the sunless darkness flies,
 We pursue the rugged chase,
 And his dubious footsteps trace.
 Hear then, guilty mortals, hear,
 And the righteous gods revere;
 Hear the task to me assign'd,
 Fate the firm decree shall bind;
 Mine the prize of old ordain'd,
 Never with dishonour stain'd,
 Though my drear abode profound
 Night and darkness cover round.

MINERVA, ORESTES, CHORUS.

MIN. Whose was the voice that call'd? Though distant far

I heard it, where Scamander laves the fields,
 My ancient right: to me the Grecian chiefs
 With voluntary zeal assign'd this portion
 Of their rich conquest, ever to be mine,
 Selected as a gift to the brave race
 Of Theseus. With a speed that equals wings

My vig'rous steeds thence whirl'd my car, the
wind

Against my ægis * rustling as I pass'd.

But who are these consorted here? Mine eye
Views them untterrified; but much I marvel.

What, and whence are you? To you all I
speak,

To him, the stranger, seated at my image,

And you, whose hideous shape resembles
nought

Of mortal race, nor goddesses in heaven.

CHOR. Daughter of Jove, take our report in brief.

We are the gloomy daughters of black Night,
Called Furies in the drear abodes below.

MIN. I know your race, and aptly added titles.

CHOR. 'Tis ours to drive all murd'ers from their
home,

Where they shall never taste or peace or joy.

MIN. And does thy yelling voice thus drive HIM out?

CHOR. He dared to be the murderer of his mother.

MIN. Urged by the force of no necessity?

CHOR. What force could urge the wretch to kill his
mother?

MIN. He hears but half that hears one party only.

CHOR. Hear thou the cause, and judge with righteous
justice.

MIN. Rests the decision of the cause on me?

CHOR. We reverence thee as worthiest 'midst the
worthy.

MIN. Say, stranger, what canst thou reply to this?

Speak first thy race, thy country, thy misfor-
tunes;

* The shield of Jupiter; but borne also by Minerva.

Then urge thy plea against this accusation ;
 If trusting in the justice of thy cause,
 Thus seated near my altar, thou embrace
 With reverent hands, a suppliant as Ixion *,
 My statue. Be thy answer short and clear.

ORES. Royal Minerva, let me first remove
 What thy last words, with much concern, suggest.

I am not stain'd with blood, nor shall my hand
 Pollute thy statue : what I urge in proof
 Bears strong conviction. Him, whose hands
 are red

With blood, the laws forbid to plead his cause,
 Till with its flowing gore the new-slain victim
 Has made atonement, and the cleansing wave
 Restored his purity. In other shrines
 Long since these hallow'd rites have been performed

With offer'd victims and the flowing stream.
 Blameless of this offence, I next declare
 My race : an Argive : nor to thee unknown
 My sire, the leader of the naval hosts,
 The royal Agamemnon ; for with him
 Thy conquering hand laid the proud walls of
 Troy

In dust ; returning to his house he perish'd

* Ixion married the daughter of Deioneus, king of Phocis : having treacherously murdered his wife's father, he was refused purification on earth, and roamed through the world a fugitive and a vagabond, till, at the last, Jupiter, moved to pity, expiated his crime and received him into heaven. Here he became enamoured of Juno, whom he found a goddess indeed in pursuit, but a cloud in possession. By the continually revolving wheel to which Ixion was fabled to have been subsequently fastened in hell, the eternity of divine punishments is thought to have been intimated.

By deeds of baseness ; for my dark-soul'd
mother

With wily art in private murder'd him ;
Th' ensanguined bath attested the foul deed.

I, then an exile, bending back my steps,
Slew her that gave me birth ; nor shall my
tongue

Deny the deed ; it was a vengeance due
To my loved father's shade : so Phœbus deem'd,
Who urged me, and denounced heart-rending
woes,

Should I shrink back refusing to avenge
The guilt ; but if with justice, be thou judge.
To thy deciding voice my soul submits.

MIN. This is a cause of moment, and exceeds
The reach of mortal man ; nor is it mine
To judge, when blood with eager rage excites
To vengeance. Thou with preparation meet
Hast to my shrine approach'd a suppliant pure,
Without offence ; and to my favour'd city
Uncharged with blame I readily receive thee.
Let these, whose ruthless rage knows not the
touch

Of pity, not succeeding in their plea,
Retire awhile, till judgment shall decide
The contest : from their breasts black poison
flows,

And taints the sick'ning earth. Thus I pro-
nounce

To each, unequal in this dubious strife
To give content to both. But since to me
Th' appeal is made, it shall be mine t' elect
Judges of blood, their faith confirm'd by oath,
And ratify the everlasting law.

Prepare you for the trial, call your proofs,
 Arrange your evidence, bring all that tends
 To aid your cause: I from the holiest men
 That grace my city will select, to judge
 This cause with justice; men whose sanctity
 Abhors injustice, and reveres an oath.

CHORUS.

STROPHE 1.

Confusion on these upstart laws!
 Havoc with haughty stride
 Shall march, and wave her banner wide,
 If venial be this bloody caitiff's cause.
 Impunity shall mortals lead
 To every savage deed,
 And prompt the son with rage unblest
 To plant the dagger in the parent's breast,
 I smile at all this lawless force;
 Nor shall our dreaded power
 In vengeance visit impious mortals more:
 No: let destruction take her destined course.

ANTISTROPHE 1.

Whilst his own anguish one shall moan,
 He hears his neighbour tell,
 Appall'd, of deeds as fierce, as fell;
 Tear falls to tear, and groan succeeds to groan.
 Nor shall the rolling storm of woe
 One gleam of comfort know.
 When anguish rends the tortured breast,
 Be not to us the mournful call address.
 "Where is your throne, ye Furies, where
 Justice?" the father cries,
 Or the pale mother, as in blood she lies:

But justice from her throne is exiled far.

STROPHE 2.

Yet are there hours, when conscious fear
 And the stern eye, that darts
 Severely through their secret hearts,
 With sober counsels check their mad career.
 For when no ray of heavenly light
 Breaks through the sullen night,
 Dark deeds ensue, and virtue's power
 By man, by state is revered no more.
 Shall he, the wretch that scorns control,
 And spurns each sacred law,
 Or he that drags his chain with servile awe,
 Feel the sweet peace that calms the virtuous
 soul?

ANTISTROPHE 2.

Placed in the midst does strength reside,
 With an indignant frown
 On each extreme the Gods look down ;
 Injustice is the child of impious pride.
 But all the joys that life can know,
 From temper'd wisdom flow.
 To justice chief thy soul incline,
 And bow with reverence at her hallow'd shrine ;
 Nor dare, allured by cursed gold,
 With foot profane and bold
 To spurn her altars: vengeance waits the
 crime,
 And arm'd with terrors knows her destined time

EPODE.

Let each with awe profound
 A parent's honour'd name obey :

Each to thy milder voice, humanity,
 Attentive homage pay,
 When for the stranger thou art found
 Pleading thy strains of pious potency.
 He, that to virtue's heavenly power
 Unforced his willing soul shall bow,
 Nor ruin's tyrant rage shall know,
 Nor keen affliction's torturing hour.
 But he, that dares her sacred laws despise,
 Trampling on justice to secure his prey,
 Appall'd shall hear the rushing whirlwinds rise,
 And tremble at the storms that swell the sea.
 Wild with despair
 He pours his prayer,
 Whirl'd in the giddy tempest round :
 His blasted pride
 The Gods deride,
 And all his daring hopes confound ;
 Smile, as they view him rack'd with pain
 Bound in misfortune's iron chain ;
 As on the pointed rock they see him thrown,
 To perish there in pain, unpitied and alone.

MINERVA, APOLLO, ORESTES, CHORUS.
 (The JUDGES of the Areopagus seated.)

MIN. Now, herald, let thy voice to all my people
 Proclaim attention : sound the Tuscan trumpet,
 That its ear-piercing notes may fill the city,
 Commanding silence, and impressing awe
 Due to this great assembly ; that the state
 May learn my everlasting laws, and hear
 The righteous judgment that decides this
 cause.

CHOR. Royal Apollo, where thy rule extends,
There lord it: but what right canst thou claim
here?

APOL. To give my evidence I come. This man
Is at my shrine a suppliant, at my shrine
He sojourns; with ablutions pure I cleansed
His stains of blood; and now shall plead his
cause,
Our common cause, since for his mother's
death

Your accusations reach e'en me: but thou
Urge, as thou canst, thy plea: open the charge.

MIN. This is incumbent on you; open then
The cause: th' accuser's voice must first ex-
plain

Clearly through every circumstance the charge.

CHOR. Though we are many, brief shall be our
words.

Now answer me in order, word for word.

My first demand is, Didst thou kill thy mo-
ther?

ORES. I did; and never shall deny the deed;
I drew my sword, and plunged it in her breast.

CHOR. At whose persuasion? Or by whose ad-
vice?

ORES. By HIS oracular voice: he will attest it.

CHOR. APOLLO urge thee to this bloody deed!

ORES. Nor thus far have I to accuse my fate.

CHOR. Far other language the condemning vote
Will teach thy tongue.

ORES. My confidence is firm;

My father from the tomb will send me aid.

CHOR. Thy sword is purple with thy mother's
blood.

ORES. Her breast was spotted with a double stain :
 She slew my father when she slew her husband.

CHOR. And yet thou liv'st : from that stain she is free.

ORES. Why, whilst she lived, didst thou not drive *her* out ?

CHOR. She had no kindred blood with him she slew.

ORES. Is mine allied then to my mother's blood ?

CHOR. How else, before thy birth, did she sustain,
 How nourish thee ? The murd'rous wretch disowns

That dearest of all ties, a mother's blood.

ORES. Now let me call thy testimony ; now
 Declare, Apollo, if I slew her justly :
 For that I slew her, in such circumstance,
 I do confess : if rightfully, or not,
 Decide, that I to these may plead thy sanction.

APOL. To you, the great and reverend council here
 Placed by Minerva, will I speak, and truly ;
 For never shall the God of Prophecy
 Pronounce a falsehood : never have I utter'd
 From my oracular seat, to man, to woman,
 Or state, save what the great Olympian Sire
 Shall have commanded. Of his sovereign justice

Learn you the force, and bow to his high will ;
 Nor deem an oath of greater power than Jove.

CHOR. This oracle, thou say'st, was dictated
 By Jove, to charge Orestes, whilst his hand
 Was arm'd with vengeance for a father's murder,

To pay no reverence to his mother's blood.

APOL. Of higher import is it, when a man
 Illustrious for his virtues, by the Gods
 Exalted to the regal throne, shall die,
 Die by a woman's hand, by one that dares not
 Bend, like an Amazon, the stubborn bow.
 But hear me, Pallas, hear me you that sit
 In awful judgement to decide this cause.
 Victorious from the war, with glory crown'd,
 And graced with many a trophy, at the bath
 She smilingly received him ; there refresh'd,
 As o'er his head he threw the splendid robe
 Prepared to muffle him, she slew her hus-
 band.

So died the chief, the glorious, the renown'd,
 The leader of the warlike troops of Greece !

CHOR. So Jove, it seems, respects the father's fate ;
 Yet on *his* father he could bind the chain,
 On hoary Saturn* : thus his deed gainsays
 Thy words : I pray you mark the poor evasion.

APOL. Detested hags, the abhorrence of the Gods !
 He could unbind these chains, and the release
 Has a medicinal power. But when the blood,
 That issues from the slain, sinks in the dust,
 It never rises more. For this my sire
 No remedy admits, in all besides
 With sovereign power or ruins or restores.

CHOR. See with what ill-judged zeal thy arguments
 Tend to absolve him ! Shall the wretch, whose
 hand
 Spilt on the earth the kindred blood that flow'd
 Within his mother's veins, return to Argos

* The statues of Saturn were usually hung with fetters, in commemoration of the chains with which he had been bound when dethroned and imprisoned by Jupiter.

Lord of his father's house ? Before what altar,
Sacred to public offerings, shall he bend ?

What friendly laver shall admit his hands ?

APOL. This too shall I explain ; and mark me well,
If reason guide my words. The mother's
power

Produces not the offspring, ill call'd hers.

No : 'tis the father, that to her commits

The infant plant ; she but the teeming soil

That gives the stranger growth, if favouring
Heaven

Denies it not to flourish : this I urge

In proof, a father may assert that name

Without a mother's aid : an instance sits

Minerva, daughter of Olympian Jove ;

Not the slow produce of nine darkling months,

But form'd at once in all her perfect bloom :

Such from no pregnant goddess ever sprung.

Thy state, thy people, Pallas, be it mine

To exalt to glory, and what else of greatness

I know to give. This suppliant to thy shrine

I sent, assuring his eternal faith ;

Thy votary he, and his descendants thine,

From sire to son through all succeeding ages.

MIN. The pleas are urged : these now I charge to
give

Sentence, with strict regard to truth and jus-
tice.

CHOR. We have discharged our shafts : and now I
wait

To hear what sentence shall decide this cause.

MIN. What, am I never to escape your censure ?

CHOR. Give what you've heard due weight ; and
with pure hearts

Pronouncing judgment reverence your high
oath.

MIN. Ye citizens of Athens, now attend,
Whilst this great council in a cause of blood
First give their judgment. But through fu-
ture ages
This awful court shall to the hosts of Ægeus
With uncorrupted sanctity remain.
Here on this mount of Mars * the Amazons
Of old encamp'd, when their embattled troops
March'd against Theseus, and in glittering
arms
Breathed vengeance; here their new-aspiring
towers
Raised high their rampired heads to storm his
towers;
And here their hallow'd altars rose to Mars:
Hence its illustrious name the cliff retains,
The Mount of Mars. In this the solemn state
Of this majestic city, and the awe
That rises thence shall be a holy guard
Against injustice, shall protect the laws
Pure and unsullied from th' oppressive power
Of innovation, and th' adulterate stain
Of foreign mixture: Should thy hand pollute
The liquid fount with mud, where wilt thou
find
The grateful draught? Let not my citizens
Riot in lawless anarchy, nor wear
The chain of tyrant power, nor from their
state
Loose all the curb of rigour: this removed,

* The word Areopagus means Mars'-hill.

What mortal man, unchecked with sense of fear,
 Would reverence justice? Let the majesty,
 That here resides, impress your souls with awe;
 Your country has a fence, your town a guard,
 Such as no nation knows; not those that dwell
 In Scythia, or the cultured realms of Pelops:
 This court, superior to th' alluring glare
 Of pestilent gold, this court, that claims your
 awe

Severely just, I constitute your guard,
 Watchful to shield your country and its peace:
 These my commands to every future age
 Have I extended. Now behoves you, judges,
 Give test of your integrity; bring forth
 The shells; with strictest justice give your
 votes,

And reverence your high oath. This is my
 charge.

CHOR. Nor of their honours rob this train, whose
 power

Is dreadful in the drear abodes below.

APOL. And be my oracles, the voice of Jove,
 Revered, nor seek to move their firm decree.

CHOR. Beyond thy charge protecting deeds of
 blood,

Nor reverend are thy oracles, nor pure.

APOL. Think of the expiation which of old
 Ixion made for blood*; wilt thou arraign
 My father's councils there? Or slept his wis-
 dom?

CHOR. Thou say'st it: but if justice fails me here,
 This land shall feel the terrors of my wrath.

* See note, page 158.

APOL. Unhonour'd thou by every power of heaven,
Or young, or old; to triumph here is mine.

CHOR. Such in the house of Pheres were thy deeds,
When, won by thy alluring voice, the Fates
On mortal man * conferr'd immortal honours.

APOL. To aid, to grace the pious, when their
prayers

Rightly invoke our influence, is just.

CHOR. What, hast thou crush'd the power of ancient
Fate,

And wouldst thou now delude our honour'd
age?

APOL. Soon shall thy malice, baffled in this cause,
Shed its black venom harmless to thy foes.

CHOR. Since thy proud youth insults my hoary
years,

I wait th' event in silence, and suspend
The fury of my vengeance on this city.

MIN. Last to give suffrage in this cause is mine:

In favour of Orestes shall I add

My vote; for as no mother gave me birth,

My grace in all things, save the nuptial rites,

Attends the male, as from my sire I drew

The vigour of my soul. No woman's fate,

Stain'd with her husband's blood, whom nature
form'd

Lord of his house, finds partial preference here.

Orestes, if the number of the votes

Be equal, is absolved. Now from the urn

Let those among the judges, to whose honour

This office is assign'd, draw forth the lots.

* Admetus, son of Pheres, whose flocks Apollo tended when banished from heaven.

ORES. O Phœbus, what th' event that waits this cause!

CHOR. O Night, dark mother, through thy raven gloom

Seest thou these things? Now on the doubtful edge

Of black despair I stand, or joyful light,

Driven out with infamy, or graced with honour.

APOL. Now, strangers, count the lots with wary heed,

And with impartial justice sever them.

One shell misplaced haply brings ruin; one

May raise again a desolated house.

MIN. (*after a pause,*) He is absolved, free from the doom of blood,

For equal are the numbers of the shells.

ORES. O thou, whose tutelary power preserved The honours of my house, thou, Goddess, thou

Hast to his country and his native rites

Restored this exile; and each Greek shall say,

This Argive to his father's throne returns;

So Pallas wills, and Phœbus, and the God

All-powerful to protect: my father's death

He marked severe, and looks indignant down

On those that patronise my mother's cause.

First to this country, and to this thy people

Through time's eternal course I pledge my faith,

And bind it with an oath: now to my house

I bend my steps: never may chieftain thence

Advance against this land with hostile spear.

If any shall hereafter violate

My oath now made, though then these mould'ring bones

Rest in the silent tomb, my shade shall raise

Invincible distress, disasters, toils,
 To thwart them, and obstruct their lawless
 march,
 Till in dismay, repentant, they abhor
 Their enterprise. But to the social powers
 That reverence this thy state, and lift the lance
 In its defence, benevolent shall be
 My gentler influence. Hail, Goddess; hail,
 Ye guardians of this city; be your walls
 Impregnable, and in the shock of war
 May conquest grace the spear that aids your
 cause!

CHOR. I burst with rage. With cruel pride
 These youthful Gods my slighted age deride;
 And, the old laws disdainng to obey,
 Rend from my wither'd hands my prey.
 Tortured with grief's corroding smart,
 And taught disgrace and scorn to know,
 Distilling from my anguish'd heart
 The pestilential drop shall flow:
 Where'er it falls, nor fruit around,
 Nor leaf shall grace the blasted ground;
 Through the sick air its baleful dews
 A caustic venom shall diffuse;
 And breathing on this hated race
 With deep rough scars the beauteous form
 deface.
 Vainly shall I heave my sighs,
 Or bid my angry vengeance rise?
 To insults, which my bosom rend,
 Vulgar spirits scorn to bend;
 And shall thy daughters, awful Night, in vain
 Of their disgrace complain?

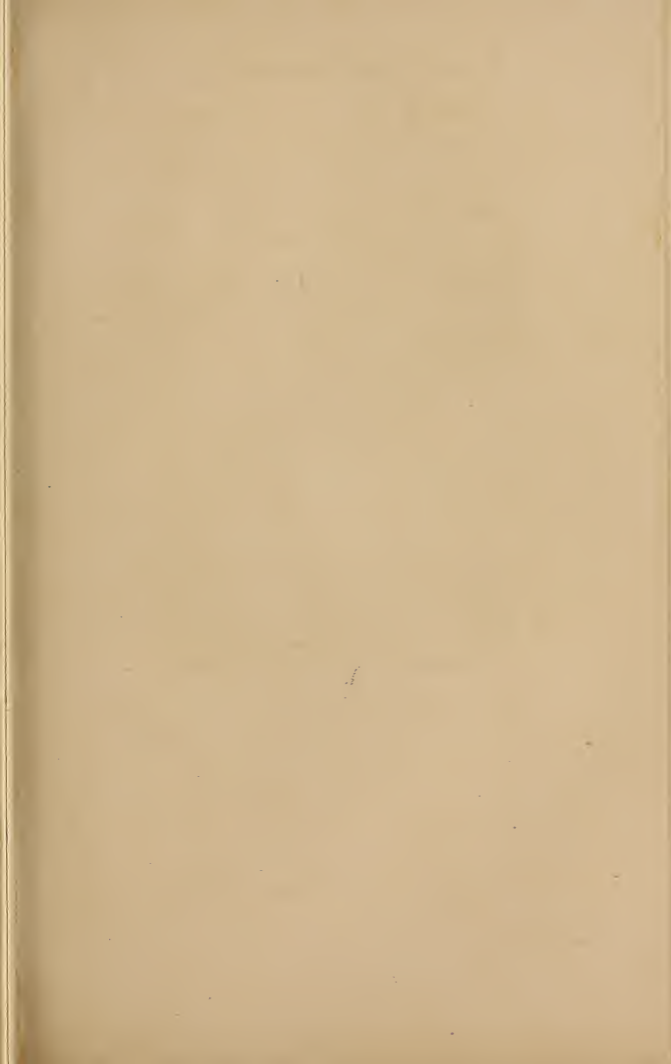
MIN. Let my entreaties move you; bear not this

With such deep anger ; for no conquest here
 Wounds your insulted honour : from the urn
 The lots came equal, so disposed by truth,
 To thee no insult off'ring ; and from Jove
 Flowed splendid signs : he gave the oracle,
 He added his high test, that for the deed
 Orestes should not suffer. Breathe not then
 Your heavy vengeance on this land ; restrain
 Your indignation ; o'er these sick'ning fields
 Drop not your pestilential dews, nor blast
 Their glitt'ring verdure, and their springing
 seeds.

Of all the Gods I only know the keys
 That ope those solid doors within whose vaults
 Jove's thunders sleep. Of these there is no need,
 If, now persuaded, thy o'er-hasty tongue
 Forbear those threats, from which no fruit can
 flow,

But ruin to the earth : Compose that rage,
 And here I pledge my faith this grateful land
 Shall willingly receive you ; raise you seats
 High at their blazing hearths, and with deep awe
 Imprest, pay reverent honours to your power.

The 'Wierd Sisters' remain long inexorable both to the threats and the entreaties of Minerva ; at length, however, overcome by persevering importunity, they yield to her persuasions, agree to second her efforts in the cause of mercy, and fix their residence at Athens, where a temple and a festival are thereupon dedicated to their honour. Minerva then dismisses them to the altars at which victims are being sacrificed, with the soothing and auspicious words,





J. Flaxman Del. Judges.

Orpheus.

Minerva. Apollo.

Furies.

L. Finlay sculp.

Go to those sacred flames, they will conduct you.

The Furies. 5.

Go to those sacred flames, they will conduct
you,
And from these hallow'd victims sink with
speed
To the dark shades below ; imprison there
Whate'er is noxious to these realms ; whate'er
Has influence to bless them, send in triumph.
And you, high-lineaged guardians of the state,
Attend these stranger-guests to their new seats,
And be each gentle thought attuned to good.

The Chorus then sing a votive strain, "breathing blessings o'er the land," and retire with promises that to the utmost of their power Athens shall enjoy golden days, unclouded with grief or care, as long as they continue to receive respect and worship in the state. It was on this occasion that their name was changed, from Erynnyes or Furies, to that of Eumenides or Benignant, whence the title of the drama.

END OF THE EUMENIDES.



THE
SEVEN CHIEFS

AGAINST

THEBES.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

ETEOCLES.

SOLDIER.

ANTIGONE.

HERALD.

CHORUS OF THEBAN VIRGINS.



INTRODUCTION.

THE expedition of the Seven Chiefs against Thebes is the first instance on record of a league among the princes of Greece, or of any thing resembling a regular war. Eteocles and Polynices were sons of Œdipus and Jocasta; Œdipus, whose story we shall see at length in Sophocles, when he learned that he had killed his father Laius, and that Jocasta, who had borne to him two sons and two daughters, was his own mother, tore out his eyes in a transport of despair and horror. His sons, grown up to man's estate, deprived their father, now blind and doting, of his kingdom: he in his resentment uttered the most horrid imprecations against them, praying that a father's curse might ever sow dissension between them, and divide with a sword the kingdom they had stolen. To avert this fatality it was agreed between the brothers that they should reign in Thebes alternately, each for a year. Eteocles, the elder, reigned first, but at the expiration of his year refused to yield up the throne to his brother. Polynices upon this fled to the court of Adrastus king of Argos to implore assistance, and received in marriage Argia, the daughter of that monarch; Adrastus then marched against Thebes, to support the claims of his son-in-law, with an army led by seven of the most renowned Argive generals, whence the name of the tragedy. The scene is in the city of Thebes,

before the principal temple. The play begins with an exhortation of Eteocles to the Theban citizens to be vigorous and vigilant in defence of their beleagured walls: while he speaks, a soldier enters with intelligence of the enemy:

SOLDIER, ETEOCLES, CHORUS.

SOLD. Illustrious king of Thebes, I bring thee tidings

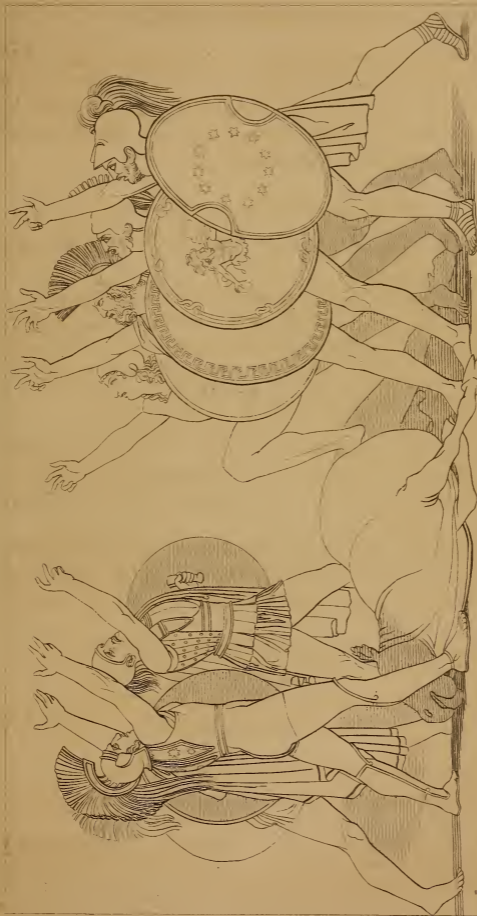
Of firm assurance from the foe; these eyes
Beheld each circumstance. Seven valiant chiefs
Slew on the black-orb'd shield the victim bull,
And dipping in the gore their furious hands,
In solemn oath attest the God of war,
Bellona, and the carnage-loving power
Of Terror, sworn from their firm base to rend
These walls, and lay their ramparts in the dust;
Or, dying, with their warm blood steep this
earth.

Each in Adrastus' car some dear remembrance*,
Piled to their distant parents, whilst their eyes
Dropp'd tears, but on their face was no re-
morse.

Each soul of iron glowing with the rage
Of valour, as the lion when he glares
Determined battle. What I now relate
Sleeps not, nor lingers: round the urn I left
them,

By lot deciding to what gate each chief
Should lead his forces. Against these select

* The famous augur Amphiaraus, married to Eriphyle the sister of Adrastus king of Argos, had foretold that he alone of the chiefs should return from the Theban war.



Ereocles.

Polyneus.

Capaneus.

Euthympeus. Amphicreus. Hippocleides.

Troians.

*Stew on the block; orb'd shield the victim bull.
And dipping in the gore their various hams,
In solemn oath attest the God of war.*

Seven Chiefs against Thebes. I.



The best, the bravest of the sons of Thebes,
 And instant at the gates assign their stations.
 For all in arms the Argive host comes on
 Clouded in dust, and from the snorting steeds
 The thick foam falls, and dewes the whiten'd
 fields.

Be thine the provident pilot's gen'rous care,
 Guard well the town, e'er yet the storm assails;
 E'en now the waves of war roar o'er the plain:
 Seize then this fair occasion, instant seize it.
 My faithful eye this day shall hold the watch,
 That well inform'd, no danger may surprise thee.

ETEO. O Jove, O Earth, O all ye guardian Gods;
 And thou dread curse, the fury of my father,
 Of fatal power, O rend not from its roots
 This ruin'd city, by the insulting foe
 Trampled in dust, her sweet Helladian tongue
 Silent, and all her sacred fires extinct!

CHOR. Woe, woe, intolerable woe!
 Fierce from their camps the hosts advance,
 Before their march with thundering tread
 Proud o'er the plain their fiery coursers prance,
 And hither bend their footsteps dread:
 Yon cloud of dust that chokes the air,
 A true though tongueless messenger,
 Marks plain the progress of the foe.
 And now the horrid clang of arms,
 That, like the torrent, whose impetuous tide
 Roars down the mountain's craggy side,
 Shakes the wide fields with fierce alarms,
 With nearer terrors strikes our souls,
 And through our chaste recesses rolls:
 Hear, all ye powers of Heaven, propitious hear,
 And check the furies of this threat'ning war!

The crowded walls around
 Loud clamours rend the sky;
 Whilst ranged in deep array th' embattled
 powers

Their silver shields * lift high,
 And, level with the ground
 To lay their rampired heads, assail our towers.

What guardian God shall I implore?
 Bending at what sacred shrine
 Call from their happy seats what powers divine,
 And suppliant ev'ry sculptured form adore?
 The time demands it: why then, why delay?—
 The sound of arms swells on my affrighted
 ear.—

Hold now the pall, the garland, as you pray.—
 Hark! 'tis the rude clash of no single spear.

Stern God of war,
 Dost thou prepare
 Thy sacred city to betray?
 Look down, look down;
 O save thine own;
 Nor leave us to our foes a prey:
 If e'er thy soul had pleasure in the brave,
 God of the golden helm, hear us, and save!
 And all ye powers, whose guardian care
 Protects these walls, this favour'd land,
 O hear these pious, suppliant strains;
 Propitious aid us, aid a virgin band,
 And save us from the victor's chains!
 For all around with crested pride
 High waves the helm's terrific tide,

* i. e. Plain or white shields, thus Thetis is styled *silver-footed* by Homer, to signify the whiteness of her feet.

Tost by the furious breath of war.
 And thou, great Jove, almighty sire,
 Confound with foul defeat these Argive powers,
 Whose arms insult our leaguer'd towers,
 And daunt our souls with hostile fire.
 The reins that curb their proud steeds
 'round,
 Rattle, and death is in the sound.
 'Gainst our seven gates seven chiefs of high
 command,
 In arms spear-proof, take their appointed stand ;
 Daughter of Jove, whose soul
 Glows at th' embattled plain,
 And thou, by whom the pawing steed arose *,
 Great monarch of the main
 Curb'd by thy strong control ;
 From our fears free us, free us from our foes !
 On thee, stern Mars, again I call :
 Haste thee, God, and with thee bring
 The Queen of Love, from whose high race we
 spring ;
 If Cadmus e'er was dear, defend his wall !
 Thou terror of the savage, Phœbus, hear,
 In all thy terrors rush upon the foe !
 Chaste Virgin-huntress, Goddess ever dear,
 Wing the keen arrow from thy ready bow !
 Hark ! fraught with war
 The groaning car,

* The story was, that Neptune and Minerva both claimed the honour of giving their name to Athens : Jupiter decreed that whichever produced the most useful present to mankind should have the preference. Neptune struck the earth with his trident, and gave existence to the horse ; Minerva with her spear raised the olive tree, and conquered.

Imperial Juno ! shakes the ground ;
 Fierce as they pass,
 The wheels of brass,
 Dear Virgin-huntress ! roar around :
 The gleaming lustre of the brandish'd spear
 Glares terribly across the troubled air.
 Alas my country ! must these eyes,
 Must these sad eyes behold thy fall ?
 Ah, what a storm of stones, that flies
 And, wing'd with ruin, smites the wall !
 O Phœbus ! at each crowded gate
 Begins the dreadful work of fate ;
 Each arm the thund'ring falchion wields,
 And clashes on the sounding shields.
 O thou, whose kind and matchless might,
 Blest Onca *, through the glowing fight
 Obedient conquest joys t' attend,
 All our seven gates, dread queen, defend !
 And all ye mighty, guardian powers,
 That here preside, protect our towers :
 Nor the war-wasted town betray,
 To fierce fraternal foes a prey !
 Ye Gods, deliverers of this land,
 To whom we stretch the suppliant hand,
 Hear us, O hear our virgin prayer,
 And show that Thebes is yet your care !
 By every solemn temple, every shrine,
 Each hallowed orgie, and each rite divine,
 Each honour to your power in reverence paid,
 Hear us, ye guardian Gods, hear us, and aid !

ETEOCLES, CHORUS.

ETEO. War is no female province, but the scene

* Minerva.

For men : hence, home ; nor spread your wailings here.

CHOR. Dear to thy country, son of Ædipus,
My soul was seized with terror, when I heard
The rapid car roll on, its whirling wheels
Grating harsh thunder ; and the iron curb
Incessant clashing on the barbed steed.

ETEO. What ! should the pilot, when the lab'ring bark
Scarce rides the swelling surge, forsake the
helm,

And seek his safety from the sculptured prow ?

CHOR. Yet therefore to these ancient images,
Confiding in their sacred power, I ran,
When at the gates sharp sleet of arrowy shower
Drove hard ; my fears impell'd me to implore
The blest Gods to protect the city's strength.

ETEO. Pray that our towers repel the hostile spear.
My charge shall be at our seven gates to fix
Six of our bravest youth, myself the seventh,
In dreadful opposition to the foe ;
E'er yet the violent and tumultuous cry
Calls me perforce to join the fiery conflict.

CHOR. Guard, ye great Gods, O guard our wall,
Nor let the towers of Cadmus fall !

STROPHE.

Before my sad presaging soul
What scenes of imaged horror roll !
I see the tender virgin's woe,
E'er yet her ripened beauties glow ;
The hateful way I see her tread,
Forcibly torn from her sweet home :
Happier, far happier are the dead ;
They rest within the silent tomb.

But, the walls humbled to the ground,
 What dreadful mis'ries rage around !
 Furious one leads the vengeful bands ;
 One stains with blood his reeking hands ;
 Wide roll, outrageous to destroy,
 The dusky smoke, and torrent fires ;
 Whilst slaught'ring Mars with hideous joy
 The heaven-contemning rage inspires.

ANTISTROPHE.

From house to house, from street to street,
 The crashing flames roar round, and meet ;
 Each way the fiery deluge preys,
 And girds us with the circling blaze.
 The brave, that 'midst these dire alarms
 For their lost country greatly dare,
 And fired with vengeance rush to arms,
 Fall victims to the blood stain'd spear.
 The bleeding babe with innocent cries,
 Drops from his mother's breast, and
 dies.

See rapine rushes, bent on prey,
 His hasty step brooks no delay.
 The spoiler, loaded with his store,
 Envious the loaded spoiler views ;
 Disdains another should have more,
 And his insatiate toil renews.

SEMI-CH. See, from his watch the veteran returns,
 Bearing, I ween, fresh tidings from yon host,
 Of highest import : quick his foot, and hasty.

SEMI-CH. This way, behold, the son of Œdipus,
 The king himself advances, pressing on
 His hurried step to learn their new-form'd
 measures.

ETEOCLES, SOLDIER, CHORUS*.

SOLD. Already near the Prætian gate in arms
 Stands Tydeus raging; for the prophet's voice
 Forbids his foot to pass Ismenus' stream,
 The victims not propitious: at the pass
 Furious, and eager for the fight, the chief,
 Fierce as the dragon when the midday sun
 Calls forth his glowing terrors, raves aloud,
 Reviles the sage, as forming tim'rous league
 With war and fate. Frowning he speaks, and
 shakes

The dark crest streaming o'er his shaded helm
 In triple wave; whilst dreadful ring around
 The brazen bosses of his shield, impress'd
 With this proud argument. A sable sky
 Burning with stars; and in the midst full-
 orb'd

A silver moon, the eye of night, o'er all,
 Awful in beauty, pours her peerless light.
 Clad in these proud habiliments, he stands
 Close to the river's margin, and with shouts
 Demands the war, like an impatient steed,
 That pants upon the foaming curb, and waits
 With fiery expectation the known signal,
 Swift as the trumpet's sound to burst away.
 Before the Prætian gate, its bars removed,
 What equal chief wilt thou appoint against him?

ETEO. This military pride affects me not:
 The gorgeous blazonry of arms, the crest

* Nothing can be more poetical, or *less dramatic*, than the whole of this remarkable scene, the descriptions are vivid and beautiful, but in direct violation of that requisite of tragedy that its imitation shall be "in the way not of narration but of action."

High waving o'er the helm, the clanging boss,
 Harmless without the spear, imprint no wound.
 The sable night, spangled with golden stars,
 On his proud shield impress'd, perchance may
 prove

A gloomy presage. Should the shades of
 night

Fall on his dying eyes, the boastful charge
 May to the bearer be deem'd ominous,
 And he the prophet of his own destruction.

Against his rage the son of Astacus,
 Who breathes deliberate valour, at that gate
 Will I appoint commander; bent on deeds
 Of glory, but a votary at the shrine
 Of modesty, he scorns the arrogant vaunt
 As base, but bids brave actions speak his worth.
 The flower of that bold stem, which from the
 ground

Rose arm'd, and fell not in the dreadful fight,
 Is Melanippus; him his parent earth
 Claims as her own, and in her natural right
 Calls him to guard her from the hostile spear*:
 But the brave deed the die of war decides.

SOLD. May the Gods crown his valiant toil with
 conquest.

But Capaneus against the Electran gates
 Takes his allotted post and towering stands
 Vast as the earth-born giants, and inflamed
 To more than mortal daring: horribly
 He menaces the walls; may Heaven avert

* As Melanippus here put forward against Tydeus, and Megareus afterwards opposed to Eteoclus, were both of the dragon-race, which sprang armed from the earth, there is a peculiar propriety in calling them forth to defend their fostering mother.

His impious rage! vaunts that, the Gods as-
senting

Or not assenting, his strong hand shall rend
Their rampires down; that e'en the rage of
Jove

Descending on the field should not restrain him.
His lightnings, and his thunders wing'd with
fire

He likens to the sun's meridian heat.

On his proud shield portrayed, a naked man
Waves in his hand a blazing torch; beneath
In golden letters, I WILL FIRE THE CITY*.

Against this man—But who shall dare t' en-
gage

His might, and dauntless his proud rage sus-
tain?

ETEO. Advantage from advantage here arises.

The arrogant vaunts, which man's vain tongue
throws out,

Shall on himself recoil. This haughty chief
Threats high, and prompt to execute his
threats

Spurns at the Gods, opes his unhallowed lips

In shallow exultation, hurls on high,

Weak mortal as he is, 'gainst Jove himself

Hurls his extravagant and wild defiance.

On him, I trust, the thunder wing'd with fire,

Far other than the sun's meridian heat,

Shall roll its vengeance. But against his pride,

Insolent vaunter, shall the glowing spirit,

That burns for glory in the daring breast

* The man being naked marks the contempt with which Capaneus treated the enemy, and implies that he needed no armour to enable him to attack and fire the city.

Of Polyphontes, be opposed ; his arm,
 Strong in Diana's tutelary aid,
 Shall be a sure defence. But to thy tale ;
 Who next before our gates assumes his station ?

CHOR. Yes, let him perish, the proud foe,
 That storms, in savage hope, the vanquish'd
 town,

And rends its rampires down.
 Him first may Heaven's almighty sire,
 Rolling his vengeful fire,
 Dash in the flaming ruin low * ;
 Ere his impetuous spear
 Bursts ev'ry bar of my retreat,
 And from my virgin seat
 Drags me perforce from all my soul holds dear.

SOLD. Third from the brazen helm leap'd forth the
 lot

Of fierce Eteoclus, who takes his post
 Against the gates of Nēis : there he whirls
 His fiery-neighing steeds, that toss their heads
 Proud of their nodding plumes, eager to rush
 Against the gates, and snorting champ their
 curbs

Boss'd with barbaric pride. No mean device
 Is sculptured on his shield, a man in arms,
 His ladder fix'd against the enemies' walls,
 Mounts, resolute to rend their rampires down ;
 And cries aloud, the letters plainly marked,
 NOT MARS HIMSELF SHALL BEAT ME FROM THE
 TOWERS.

Appoint some chief of equal hardihood
 To guard thy city from the servile yoke.

* Capaneus does perish by lightning accordingly.

ETEO. Such shall I send, to conquest send him ; one
That bears not in his hand this pageantry
Of martial pride. The hardy Megareus,
From Creon sprung, and that bold race which
rose

Embattled from the earth : him from the gates
The furious neighings of the fiery steeds
Affright not ; but his blood spilt on the earth
Amplly requites the nourishment she gave him ;
Or, captive both, the man in arms, the town
Stormed on the sculptured shield, and the proud
bearer,

Shall with their spoils adorn his father's house.

SOLD. At the next gate, named from the martial
Goddess

Onca Minerva, stands Hippomedon*.

I heard his thund'ring voice, I saw his form
In bulk and stature proudly eminent ;
I saw him roll his shield, large, massy, round,
Of broad circumference : it struck my soul
With terror. On its orb no vulgar artist
Expressed this image, a Typhœus huge,
Disgorging from his foul and soot-grimed jaws,
In fierce effusion, wreaths of dusky smoke,
Signal of kindling flames : its bending verge
With folds of twisted serpents border'd round.

* Of the other gates we find no satisfactory account to lay before the reader : but the scholiast here observes that Onca was one of the titles of Minerva at Thebes, which Cadmus introduced from Phœnicia, where she was so called. The scholiast on the second Olympic ode of Pindar asserts, that Cadmus erected at *Ὀγκαι*, a village in Bœotia, a statue of Pallas, who was therefore worshipped under the title of *Ὀγκαία* ; hence (it is said,) the Irish *Ogham*.

With shouts the giant-chief provokes the war ;
 And in the ravings of outrageous valour
 Glares terror from his eyes. Behoves thee
 then

Strong opposition to his fiery rage,
 Which at the gates e'en now spreads wild dis-
 may.

ETEO. First, Onca Pallas, holding near the gates
 Her hallowed state, abhors his furious rage,
 And in her guardian care shall crush the pride
 Of this fell dragon. Then the son of Ænops,
 Hyperbius, of approved and steady valour,
 Shall man to man oppose him ; one that dares
 Encounter fate in the rough shock of battle ;
 In form, in spirit, and in martial arms
 Consummate ; such high grace Hermes con-
 ferr'd.

In hostile arms thus man shall combat man,
 And to the battle on their sculptured shields
 Bring adverse Gods ; the fierce Typhœus *he*,
 Breathing forth flakes of fire ; Hyperbius bears
 The majesty of Jove securely throned,
 Grasping his flaming bolt : and who e'er saw
 The Thund'rer vanquish'd ? In the fellowship
 Of friendly Gods, the conquerors are with us,
 They with the conquer'd ; and with like event
 These warriors shall engage ; as Jove in fight
 Subdued the fell Typhœus, so his form
 Emblazon'd on the shield shall guard Hyper-
 bius.

CHOR. If aught of truth my soul inspires,
 This chief, that towering o'er th' affrighted
 field
 Bears on his sculptured shield

The enormous monster, buried deep
 Beneath a mountainous heap,
 Rolling in vain his turbid fires,
 Monster accursed, abhorr'd
 By Gods above, by men below ;
 This chief his head shall bow
 Low at the gate beneath the victor's sword.

SOLD. Prophetic be thy hopes. At the north gate,
 Yet hear me, king, the fifth bold warrior takes
 His station, near the tomb where honour'd lies
 Jove-born Amphion* : By his spear he swears,
 Which, as he grasps, he dares to venerate
 More than a God, and dearer to his eyes
 Than the sweet light of heaven : by this he
 swears,
 To level with the ground the walls of Thebes,
 Though Jove himself oppose him. Thus exclaims
 This beauteous branch sprung from a mountain
 nymph †,
 Blooming in manly youth ; the tender down
 Of unripe age scarce sprouting on his cheek ;
 But ruthless are his thoughts, cruel his eye,
 And proudly vaunting at the gate he takes
 His terrible stand. Upon his clashing shield,
 Whose orb sustains the storm of war, he bears
 The foul disgrace of Thebes, a rav'nous
 sphinx ‡,

* Amphion, the son of Jupiter and Antiope, having received a lute from Mercury, was so excellent a musician, that according to the fable, by the magic of his playing he brought the stones together with which the tower of Thebes was built.

† Parthenopæus was son of Meleager and Arcadian Atalanta.

‡ The story of the Sphinx will be explained in the *Œdipus* of Sophocles.

Fix'd to the plates; the burnish'd monster
round

Pours a portentous gleam; beneath her lies
A Theban, mangled by her cruel fangs.

'Gainst this let each brave arm direct the spear.

No hireling he, to prostitute for gold

The war, or shame the length of way he trod,

E'en from Arcadia: such this stranger comes

Parthenopæus, and repays to Argos

Its hospitable honours, 'gainst these towers

Breathing proud menaces. The Gods avert
them!

ETEO. That ruin, which their fierce aspiring thoughts

With impious vaunts intend, may the just Gods

Turn on themselves, total defeat, and shame;

So let them perish! To this proud Arcadian

No boaster we oppose; but one whose hand

Knows its rough work, Actor, the valiant bro-
ther

Of him last named. Never will he permit

The tongue, without the assay of warlike deeds,

To rush within the gates, and execute

Its ruinous threats; nor him, whose hostile
shield

Bears sculptured that abhorr'd and rav'ning
beast:

And many a thund'ring stroke with stern re-
buke

Shall check her proud advances to the walls.

Soon shall the fav'ring Gods confirm these
hopes.

CHOR. These words appal my throbbing breast:

And the light tangles of my braided hair

Rise upright with my fear,

As from the impious foes around
 These dreadful voices sound,
 Furious with thund'ring threats express'd.
 Ye Powers that rule on high,
 Scatter their dreaded forces wide,
 Or let their crested pride
 Low in the dust beneath our rampires lie!

SOLD. The sixth brave chief, that with the golden
 curb

Of prudence knows to check his gen'rous va-
 lour,

The fate-foretelling seer, Amphiaraus,
 At the Omolæan gate his destined post
 Assumes in arms, and on the fiery Tydeus
 Throws many a keen reproach, reviles him as
 A homicide, the troubler of the state,
 The mighty author of all ill to Argos,
 With murder and the furies at his heels
 Urging Adrastus to these hateful deeds.
 Thy brother Polynices, with him leagued
 In these spiteful acts, he blames aloud,
 Descants upon his name, and thus rebukes him,
 "How grateful to the Gods must be this deed,
 Glorious to hear, and in the roll of fame
 Shining to distant ages, thus to lead
 These foreign arms to waste thy bleeding
 country,
 To raze those princely mansions, where thy
 fathers,
 Heroes and demigods, once held their seats!
 But say thy cause is just, will justice dry
 Thy mother's tears? And when the furious
 spear,

Hurl'd by thy hand, shall pierce thy country's
bosom,

Will she with friendly arms again receive thee?

Prescient of fate I shall enrich this soil,

Sunk in the hostile plain. But let us fight.

One meed at least is mine: I will not find

A vulgar, or dishonourable death."

So spoke the prophet; and with awful port

Advanced his massy shield, the shining orb

Bearing no impress: for his gen'rous soul

Wishes to be, not to appear, the best;

And from the culture of his modest worth

Bears the rich fruit of great and glorious deeds.

Him let the virtuous and the wise oppose;

For dreadful is the foe that fears the Gods.

ETEO. I mourn the destiny, that blends the just

With these unhallow'd wretches. Nothing

worse

In any cause, than impious fellowship;

Nothing of good is reap'd, for when the field

Is sown with wrong, the ripen'd fruit is death.

If with a desperate band, whose hearts are hot

With villany, the pious hoist his sails,

The vengeance of the Gods bursts on the bark

And sinks him with the heav'n-detested crew.

If 'midst a race, inhospitably bent

On savage deeds, regardless of the Gods,

The just man fix his seat, the impending wrath

Spares not, but strikes him with vindictive fury,

Crush'd in the general ruin. So this seer,

Of temper'd wisdom, of unsullied honour,

Just, good, and pious, and a mighty prophet,

Despite his better judgment join'd in arms

With men of impious daring, bent to tread
 The long, irremeable way, with them
 Shall, if high Jove assist us, be dragg'd down
 To joint perdition. Ne'er shall he advance
 Against our gates, withheld, not by base fear
 Or cowardice of soul, but that he knows
 His fate, (if Phœbus aught of truth foretels,)
 To fall in fight: he loves then to be silent,
 Since what the time demands he cannot speak.
 Yet against him the strength of Lasthenes,
 Who from the stranger's inroad guards our gates,
 Shall I oppose: in manhood's vig'rous prime
 He bears the providence of age; his eye
 Quick as the lightning's glance; before his
 shield

Flames his protended spear, and longs t' obey
 His hand. But victory is the gift of Heaven.

CHOR. That gift, ye great immortal Powers,
 On the brave guardians of our state bestow;
 On each victorious brow
 The radiant honour bind! Oh, hear
 A virgin's pious prayer;
 Chase the proud strangers from our towers;
 Or headlong let them fall,
 (Thy red right hand, almighty Sire,
 Rolling its vengeful fire,)

In flaming ruin stretch'd beneath our wall!

SOLD. The seventh bold chief—Forgive me that I
 name

Thy brother, and relate the horrible vows,
 The imprecations, which his rage pours forth
 Against high Thebes—burning to mount the
 walls,

And from their turrets to this land proclaim,

Rending its echoes with the song of war,
 Captivity : to meet thee sword to sword,
 Kill thee, then die upon thee : if thou livest,
 T' avenge on thee his exile and disgrace
 With the like treatment : thund'ring vengeance
 thus,

The rage of Polynices calls the Gods
 Presiding o'er his country, to look down
 And aid his vows. His well-orb'd shield he
 holds,

New-wrought, and with a double impress
 charged :

A warrior, blazing all in golden arms,
 A female form of modest aspect leads,
 Expressing justice, as th' inscription speaks,
 YET ONCE MORE TO HIS COUNTRY, AND ONCE MORE
 TO HIS PATERNAL THRONE, I WILL RESTORE HIM.
 Such their devices. But th' important task,
 Whom to oppose against his force, is thine.

ETEO. How dreadful is the hatred of the Gods !

Unhappy sons of Œdipus, your fate
 Claims many a tear. Ah me ! my father's curse
 Now stamps its vengeance deep. But to lament,
 Or sigh, or shed the tear, becomes me not,
 Lest more intolerable grief arise.

Ill-omen'd name ! * be Polynices told,
 Soon shall we see how far his blazon'd shield
 Avails ; how far inscriptions wrought in gold,
 With all their futile vauntings, will restore him.
 If Justice, virgin daughter of high Jove,
 Had ever form'd his mind, or ruled his ac-
 tions,

* The name Polynices signifies "much contention."

This might have been: but neither when his
 eyes

First saw the light of life; nor in the growth
 Of infancy; nor in th' advancing years
 Of youth; nor in the riper age, that clothes
 With gradual down the manly cheek, did Justice
 E'er deign t' instruct, or mark him for her own.
 Nor now, I ween, in this his fell intent
 To crush his country, will her presence aid him:
 For Justice were not justice, should she favour
 Th' injurious outrage of his daring spirit.
 In this confiding I will meet his arms
 In armed opposition: Who more fit?
 Chief shall engage with chief, with brother
 brother,

And foe with foe. Haste, arm me for the fight,
 Bring forth my greaves, my hauberk and my
 spear.

CHOR. Ah, whither dost thou rush? Let not re-
 venge,
 That filled with fury shakes the blood-stained
 sword,
 Transport thee thus. Check this hot tide of
 passion.

Cruel and murd'rous is the rage that fires thee
 To deeds of death, to unpermitted blood;
 And sorrow is the bitter fruit it yields.

ETEO. My father's imprecations rage, and haunt
 My sleep: too true the vivid visions rise,
 And wave the bloody sword that parts his king-
 doms.

His dreadful curse, a stern, relentless fury,
 Rolling her tearless eyes, looks on and tells me
 Glory pursues her prize, disdaining fate.

CHORUS.

The first ill deed from Laius sprang :
 Thrice from his shrine these words of fate
 Awful the Pythian Phœbus sang,
 “ Die childless, wouldst thou save the
 state ”.

Urged by his friends, as round the free wine flows,
 To Love’s forbidden rites he flies.
 By the son’s hand the father dies.
 He in the chaste ground, whence he rose,
 Was bold t’ implant the deadly root * ;
 And madness rear’d each baleful-spreading shoot.
 Wide o’er misfortune’s surging tide
 Billows succeeding billows spread ;
 Should one, its fury spent, subside,
 Another lifts its boist’rous head,
 And foams around the city’s shatter’d prow.
 But should the rough tempestuous wave
 Force through our walls, too slight to save,
 And lay the thin partition low,
 Will not the flood’s resistless sway
 Sweep kings and people, town and realms away ?
 The dreadful curse pronounc’d of old
 To vengeance rouses ruthless hate ;
 And slaughter, ranging uncontroll’d,
 Pursues the hideous work of fate.
 Wreck’d in the storm, the great, the brave, the
 wise
 Are sunk beneath the roaring tide.
 Such was the chief, this city’s pride,
 Dear to each God in yon bright skies,

* This, and what follows, is in allusion to the revolting misfortune of Œdipus, whose story the reader will find at large in Sophocles.

Whose prudence took our dread away,
 The rav'ning monster gorged with human prey*.
 Where now the chief? His glories where?
 Fall'n, fall'n. From the polluted bed
 Indignant madness, wild despair,
 And agonizing grief succeed.
 The light of heaven, himself, his sons abhorr'd,
 Darkling he feeds his gloomy rage,
 Bids them, with many a curse, engage,
 And part their empire with the sword.
 That curse now holds its unmoved state,
 The furious fiend charged with the work of fate.

SOLDIER, CHORUS.

SOLD. Have comfort, virgins, your fond parents'
 joy;
 All at six gates is well: but at the seventh
 The God, to whom that mystic number's sac-
 cred †,
 Royal Apollo, took his awful stand,
 Repaying on the race of Œdipus
 The ill-advised transgression of old Laius.
 CHOR. What new affliction hath befall'n Thebes?
 SOLD. The city is preserved: the brother kings
 Are fall'n, each slaughter'd by the other's
 hand.

* The Sphinx, from which Œdipus delivered Thebes.

† 'Εβδομαγίτας Ἀπίλλων.—Hesiod tells us that the seventh is a sacred day, because on that day Latona brought forth Apollo with the golden sword; this mention of the "mystic number" seven, is one of those Pythagorean doctrines alluded to in the chapter on the life and works of Æschylus. Pythagoras is supposed to have borrowed it from the Egyptians, who founded their notion of this being the *full harmonic number*, on some reference to the seven planets known to them.

CHOR. Who? What? Thy words distract my sense
with fear.

SOLD. Be calm, and hear. The sons of Ædipus—
It is indeed too certain—both are dead;
Brother by brother's hands, dreadfully slain.

CHOR. And has one common fate involved them
both?

SOLD. To both the rigid steel, forged in the mines
Of Scythia, shares their whole inheritance;
And each receives but that small tract of earth,
Which serves him for a tomb; their father's
curse,
Fatally cruel, sweeps them both away.
The city is preserved; but the dust drinks
The brothers' blood, each by th' other slain.

The Chorus, scarcely pausing to thank the Gods for their deliverance of the state, then bewails the hapless fate of the two brothers, slain, as they deem, by their father's curse. Amid their lamentations the dead bodies of Eteocles and Polynices are borne in upon the stage, and with them come Antigone and Ismene, sisters of the dead princes. The Chorus then divides into hemichoria, and they sing a long and varied funeral hymn for the departed, in alternate strains, which after some time is taken up and concluded by Ismene and Antigone in their stead. Meanwhile a herald enters, and the following scene ensues:—

ANTIGONE, CHORUS, HERALD.

HER. My office leads me to proclaim the mandate
Of the great rulers of the Theban state.
Eteocles, for that he loved his country,

They have decreed with honour to inter.
 To shield her from her foes he fought, he fell,
 Her sacred rites revered, unstain'd with blame,
 Where glory calls the valiant youth to bleed,
 He bled. Thus far of him it is decreed.
 Of Polynices, that his corpse shall lie
 Cast out unburied, to the dogs a prey ;
 Because his spear, had not the Gods opposed,
 Threaten'd destruction to the land of Thebes.
 In death the vengeance of his country's Gods
 Pursues him, for he scorn'd them, and presumed
 To lead a foreign host, and storm the town.
 Be this then his reward, to lie exposed
 To rav'nous birds, unhonour'd, of the rites *

* Denial of the rites of sepulture was considered by the ancients as the greatest of all calamities, even more deplorable than death itself ; as we have abundant testimony both in sacred and profane history. Bishop Warburton ascribes the prevalence of this opinion to the judicious policy of the Egyptians. "Those profound masters of wisdom", he observes, "in projecting for the common good, found nothing would more contribute to the safety of their fellow-citizens than the public and solemn interment of the dead ; as without this provision private murders might be easily and securely perpetrated. They therefore introduced the custom of pompous funeral rites : to secure these by the force of religion, as well as civil custom, they taught that the deceased could not retire to a place of rest till they were performed." Div. Leg. Vol. I. The habit of considering the loss of burial among the worst of human miseries, seems however to have had a much higher origin than even the wisdom of the Egyptians, unless we should imagine Moses to have borrowed it thence. In the XXVIIIth chapter of the book of Deuteronomy, we find him enumerating to the Israelites among the curses that should follow disobedience, "The Lord shall cause thee to be smitten before thine enemies, *and thy carcass shall be meat* unto all the fowls of the air, and unto the beasts of the earth, and no man shall fray them away." The important influence of this belief among the Greeks is also

That grace the dead, libations at the tomb,
The solemn strain that 'midst the exequies
Breathes from the friendly voice of woe, de-
prived.

These are the mandates of the Theban rulers.

ANT. And to these Theban rulers I declare,
If none besides dare bury him, myself
Will do that office, heedless of the danger,
And think no shame to disobey the state,
Paying the last sad duties to a brother.
I, though a woman, will prepare his tomb,
Dig up the earth, and bear it in this bosom,
In these fine folds, to cover him. Go to :
I will not be opposed. A sister's love
Shall devise means to execute the task.

HER. I charge thee not t' offend the state in this.

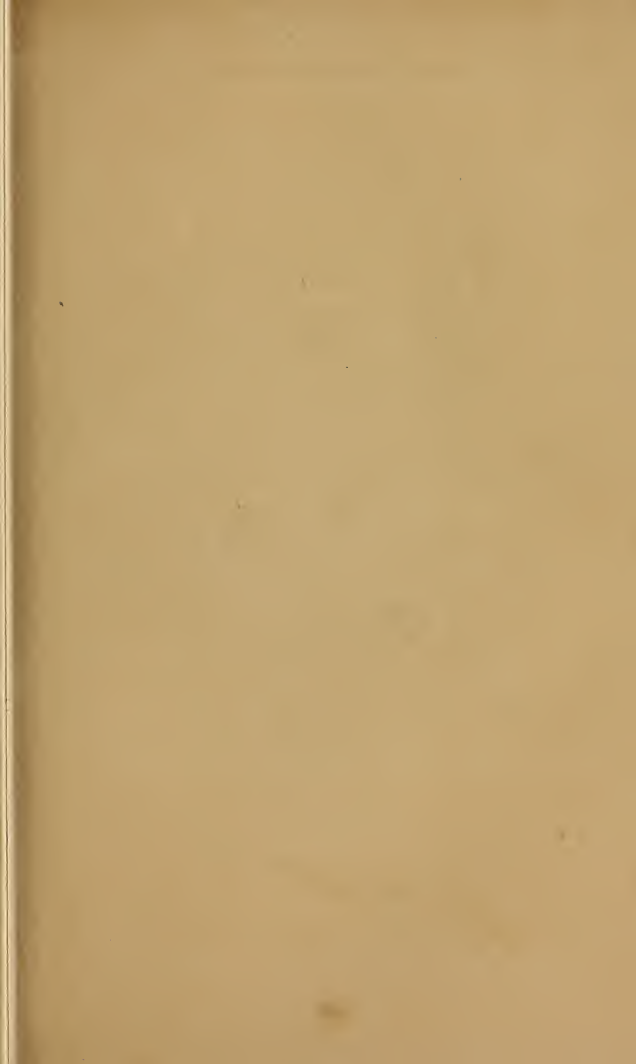
ANT. I charge thee waste not words on me in vain.

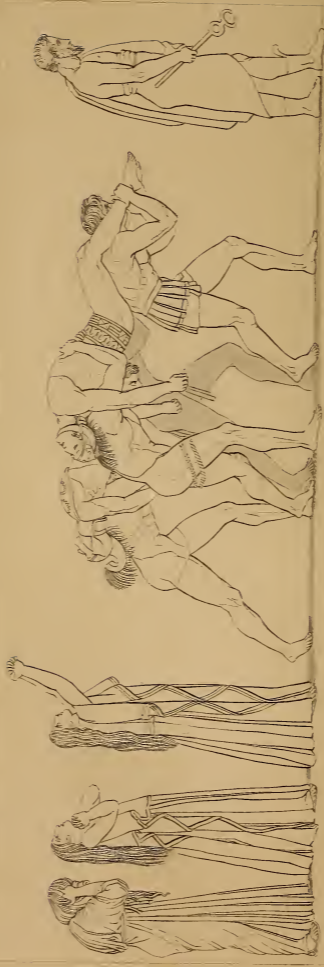
HER. Self-will'd and rash ! I bear thy answer back.

ANTIGONE, CHORUS.

1st. SEMI. With what a ruthless and destructive rage
The Furies hurl their vengeful shafts around,
And desolate the house of Ædipus !
What then remains for me ? and how resolve ?
Can I forbear to mourn thee, to attend
Thy obsequies ? Yet duty to the state,

apparent both in the "Suppliants" of Euripides, the plot of which hinges on this circumstance, and in the Ajax of Sophocles, the last act of which, as Wakefield has observed, is extended after the death of the hero, purely to satisfy the audience that he obtained the honours of burial, and the whole of the distress turns upon this very point. The same observation applies to the last book of the Iliad, and furnishes the justification of the poet for extending the action beyond the death of Hector.





The Priest

Esquire

Indigent

Polydross

Rascal

Herald

*With what a rattle and destructive rattle
The Purvis had their Vengrill shak'd around,
And absolute the house of Thebes!*

Seven Thirls against Thebes, 4.

London: Published by John Murray—Albemarle Street, 1846.

And reverence to its mandates, awe my soul.
 Thou * shalt have many to lament thy fall :
 Whilst he †, unwept, unpitied, unattended,
 Save by a sister's solitary sorrows,
 Sinks to the shades. Approve you this resolve?

2d. SEMI. To those that wail the fate of Polynices
 Let the state act its pleasure. We will go,
 Attend his funeral rites, and aid his sister
 To place him in the earth. Such sorrows move
 The common feelings of humanity ;
 And, where the deed is just, the state approves.

* Eteocles.

† Polynices.

END OF THE SEVEN CHIEFS AGAINST THEBES.



PROMETHEUS CHAINED.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

PROMETHEUS.

OCEANUS.

MERCURY.

CHORUS OF SEA-NYMPHS.



INTRODUCTION.

ACCORDING to the Theogony of Hesiod, Chaos was the ancestor of nature. Next to him were Ouranos and Gaia, or Heaven and Earth. Among the numerous progeny of this ancient pair were Oceanus and Iapetus. Oceanus married Tethys, who bore to him the Oceanides, or Sea-nymphs, of whom Iapetus married one, named Clymene. She gave birth to Atlas, Epimetheus, and Prometheus. Æschylus wrote three plays on the story of the latter. The subject of the first was the stealing of the celestial spark, and carrying back to mortals the sacred gift of fire, of which Jupiter had in his wrath deprived them. The second contains his punishment; and in the third he is rescued by Hercules, who killed the vulture set to prey upon his liver, and delivered him from bondage. Of these tragedies, the second only remains: it opens with the allegorical personages Strength and Force, sons of Styx and the giant Pallas, traversing the pathless wilds of Scythia with Prometheus in custody, whom they drag up the wild and desolate cliff of Caucasus, and compel Vulcan to gibbet him there, according to the command of Jove, to wither in the wind and sun, undying, for the space of thirty thousand years.

Even Mulciber is moved to pity, and deploras the victim's misery while he rivets his chains, but Strength remains inexorable, and taunts the sufferer with the

bitterest reproaches and derision, while he urges on the work. At length, when every fetter is securely rivetted, they depart, and Prometheus, who had hitherto observed a disdainful silence, now bursts forth into the following indignant soliloquy:

PROMETHEUS, *alone.*

Ethereal air, and ye swift-winged winds !
 Ye rivers springing from fresh founts, ye waves,
 That o'er the interminable ocean wreathe
 Your crisped smiles, thou all-producing earth,
 And thee, bright sun, I call, whose flaming orb
 Views the wide world beneath, see what, a god,
 I suffer from the gods ; with what fierce pains,
 Behold, what tortures for revolving ages
 I here must struggle ; such unseemly chains
 This new-raised ruler of the gods devised.
 Ah me ! That groan bursts from my anguish'd
 heart,
 My present woes and future to bemoan.
 When shall these suff'rings find their destined
 end ?
 But why that vain inquiry ? My clear sight
 Looks through the future ; unforeseen no ill
 Shall come on me : behoves me then to bear
 Patient my destined fate, knowing how vain
 To struggle with necessity's strong power.
 But to complain, or not complain, alike
 Is unavailing ; since for favours shown
 To mortal man I bear this weight of woe.
 Hid in a hollow cane the fount of fire
 I privately convey'd, of ev'ry art
 Productive, and the noblest gift to men :

And for this slight offence, woe, woe is me !
 I bear these chains, fix'd to this savage rock,
 Unsheltered from the sharp, inclement air.
 Ah me ! what sound, what softly-breathing
 odour
 Steals on my sense ? Be you divinities,
 Or mortal men, or of th' heroic race,
 Whoe'er have reach'd this wild rock's extreme
 cliff,
 Spectators of my woes, or what your purpose,
 Ye see me bound, a wretched god, abhorr'd
 By Jove, and ev'ry god that treads his courts,
 For my fond love to man. Ah me ! again
 I hear the sound of flutt'ring nigh ; the air
 Pants to the soft beat of light-moving wings :
 All, that approaches now, is dreadful to me.

PROMETHEUS, CHORUS.

CHOR. Forbear thy fears : a friendly train
 On busy pennons flutt'ring light,
 We come, our sire not ask'd in vain,
 And reach this promontory's height.
 The clanging iron's horrid sound
 Re-echoed through our caves profound ;
 And though my cheek glows with shame's crim-
 son dye,
 Thus with unsandall'd foot* with winged speed
 I fly.

* The nymphs of the waters wore no sandals ; hence Thetis is also styled by Homer the goddess with the snowy feet. The near relationship of the Oceanides to Prometheus, suggested the propriety of making them the persons of the chorus. They emerge from the sea, over which frowned the rifted crag where Prometheus was impaled.

PROM. Ye virgin sisters, who derive your race
 From fruitful Thetis, and th' embrace
 Of old Oceanus, your sire, that rolls
 Around the wide world his unquiet waves,
 Turn here your friendly eyes, behold
 With what a chain fix'd to this rugged steep
 My tort'ring vigils on the rock I keep.

CHOR. Alas! I see, and weep in vain,
 I see thy adamantine chain;
 In its strong grasp thy limbs confined,
 And parching in the withering wind:
 Such the stern power of heav'n's new-sceptred
 lord,
 And law-controlling Jove's irrevocable word.

PROM. Had his stern fury fix'd this rigid chain
 Beneath the gulfs of Tartarus, that spread
 Interminable o'er the dead,
 Nor gods nor man had triumph'd in my pain;
 But, pendent in th' ethereal air,
 The pageant gratifies my ruthless foes,
 Who gaze, insult, and glory in my woes.

CHOR. Is there a god, whose sullen soul
 Feels a stern joy in thy despair?
 Owns he not pity's soft control,
 And drops in sympathy the tear?
 All, all, save Jove; with fury driven
 Severe he tames the sons of heaven;
 And he will tame them, till some power arise
 To wrest from his strong hand the sceptre of
 the skies.

PROM. Yet he, e'en he,
 That o'er the gods holds his despotic reign,
 And rivets this disgraceful chain,
 Shall need my aid, the counsels to disclose

Destructive to his honour and his throne.
 But not the honied blandishment, that flows
 From his alluring lips, shall aught avail ;
 His rigid menaces shall fail ;
 Nor will I make the fatal secret known,
 Till his proud hands this galling chain unbind,
 And his remorse soothes my indignant mind.

CHOR. But say, relate at large for what offence
 Committed, doth the wrath of Jove inflict
 This punishment so shameful, so severe :
 Instruct us, if the tale sting not thy soul.

PROM. 'Tis painful to relate it, to be silent
 Is pain : each circumstance is full of woe.
 When stern debate amongst the gods appear'd,
 And discord in the courts of heaven was roused ;
 While against Saturn some conspiring will'd
 To pluck him from the throne, that Jove might
 reign ;

And some, averse, with ardent zeal opposed
 Jove's rising pow'r and empire o'er the gods ;
 My counsels, though discreetest, wisest, best,
 Moved not the Titans, those impetuous sons
 Of Ouranus and Terra, whose high hearts,
 Disdaining milder measures, proudly ween'd
 To seize by force the sceptre of the sky.
 Oft did my goddess mother, Themis now,
 Now Gaia, under various names design'd,
 Herself the same, foretell me the event,
 That not by violence, that not by power,
 But gentler arts, the royalty of heaven
 Must be obtain'd. Whilst thus my voice advised,
 Their headlong rage deign'd me not e'en a look.
 What then could wisdom dictate, but t' obey
 My mother, and with voluntary aid

Abet the cause of Jove? Thus by my counsels
 In the dark deep Tartarean gulph inclosed
 Old Saturn lies, and his confederate powers.
 For these good deeds the tyrant of the skies
 Repays me with these dreadful punishments.
 For foul mistrust of those that serve them best
 Breathes its black poison in each tyrant's heart.
 Ask you the cause for which he tortures me?
 I will declare it. On his father's throne
 Scarce was he seated, when upon the chiefs
 Of heaven he show'r'd down honours, to con-
 firm

His royalty; but for unhappy mortals
 Had no regard, and all the present race
 Will'd to extirpate, and to form anew.
 None, save myself, opposed his will; I dared;
 And boldly pleading saved them from destruc-
 tion,

Saved them from sinking to the realms of night.
 For this offence I bend beneath these pains,
 Dreadful to suffer, piteous to behold:
 For mercy to mankind I am not deem'd
 Worthy of mercy; but with ruthless hate
 In this uncouth appointment am fix'd here.

CHOR. Of iron is he form'd and adamant,
 Whose breast with social sorrow does not melt
 At thy afflictions: I nor wish'd to see,
 Nor can behold them without heartfelt an-
 guish.

But had the offence no further aggravation?

PROM. I hid from men the foresight of their fate.

CHOR. What couldst thou find to remedy that ill?

PROM. I sent blind Hope to live within their hearts.

CHOR. A blessing hast thou given to mortal man.

PROM. Nay more, with generous zeal I gave them
Fire.

CHOR. Do mortals now enjoy the blazing gift?

PROM. And by it shall give birth to various arts.

CHOR. For such offences doth the wrath of Jove
Thus punish thee, relaxing nought of pain?

And is no bound prescribed to thy affliction?

PROM. None else, but when his own will shall in-
cline.

CHOR. Who shall incline his will? Hast thou no
hope?

Bethink thee how thy ills may find an end.

PROM. How easy, when the foot is not entangled
In misery's thorny maze, to give advice
And precepts to the afflicted! Of these ills
I was not unforwarned. But cease your grief,
Wail not my present woes; on the rough point
Of this firm cliff descend, and there observe
What further may betide me, e'en the whole
Of my hard fate; indulge me, O indulge
This my request, and sympathize with me.

CHOR. Not to the unwilling are thy words addressed.
With light foot now this nimbly-moving seat,
This pure air, through whose liquid fields the
birds

Winnow their wanton way, I leave; and now
Alight I on this rude and craggy rock,
Anxious to hear all thy unhappy tale.

Enter OCEANUS, riding on a hippogriff.

OCEANUS, PROMETHEUS, CHORUS.

OCEA. Far distant, through the vast expanse of air,
To thee, Prometheus, on this swift-wing'd steed,

Whose neck unrein'd obeys my will, I come,
 In social sorrow sympathizing with thee.
 To this the near affinity of blood
 Moves me; and be assured, that tie apart,
 There is not who can tax my dear regard
 Deeper than thou: believe me this is truth,
 Not the false glozings of a flatt'ring tongue.
 Instruct me then how I may aid thy cause,
 For never shalt thou say thou hast a friend
 More firm, more constant than Oceanus.

PROM. Ah me! What draws thee hither? Art thou
 come

Spectator of my toils? How hast thou ventured
 To leave the ocean waves, from thee so call'd,
 Thy rock-roof'd grottoes arch'd by nature's
 hand,

And land upon this iron-teeming earth?
 Comest thou to visit and bewail my ills?
 Behold this sight, behold this friend of Jove,
 The assertor of his empire, bending here
 Beneath a weight of woes by him inflicted.

OCEA. I see it all, and wish to counsel thee,
 Wise as thou art, to milder measures: learn
 To know thyself; new model thy behaviour,
 As the new monarch of the gods requires.
 What if thy harsh and pointed speech should
 reach

The ear of Jove, though on his distant throne
 High-seated, might they not inflame his rage
 To inflict such tortures, that thy present pains
 Might seem a recreation and a sport?
 But now I go, and will exert my power,
 If haply I may free thee from thy pains.
 Meanwhile be calm; forbear this haughty tone:

Has not thy copious wisdom taught thee this,
That mischief still attends the petulant tongue?

PROM. Congratulate thy fortune, that on thee
No blame hath lighted, though associate with me
In all, and daring equally. But now
Forbear, of my condition take no care;
Thou wilt not move him; nothing moves his
rigour:

Take heed then, lest to go bring harm on thee.

OCEA. Wiser for others than thyself I find
Thy thoughts; yet shalt thou not withhold my
speed.

And I have hopes to free thee from these tor-
tures.

PROM. For this thou hast my thanks; thy courtesy
With grateful memory ever shall be honour'd.
But think not of it, the attempt were vain,
Nor would thy labour profit me; cease then,
And leave me to my fate: however wretched,
I wish not to impart my woes to others.

OCEA. No; for thy brother's fate, the unhappy Atlas,
Afflicts me: on the western shore he stands,
Supporting on his shoulders the vast pillar
Of heaven and earth, a weight of cumbrous
grasp.

Him too, the dweller of Cilicia's caves,
I saw, with pity saw, Earth's monstrous son,
With all his hundred heads subdued by Force,
The furious Typhon, who 'gainst all the gods
Made war; his horrid jaws with serpent-hiss
Breathed slaughter, from his eyes the Gorgon
glare

Of baleful lightnings flash'd, as his proud
force

Would rend from Jove his empire of the
sky.

But him the vengeful bolt, instinct with fire,
Smote sore, and dash'd him from his haughty
vaunts,

Pierced through his soul, and wither'd all his
strength.

Thus stretch'd out huge in length beneath the
roots

Of Ætna, near Trinacria's narrow sea,

Astonied, blasted, spiritless he lies ;

On whose high summit Vulcan holds his seat,
And forms the glowing mass. In times to
come

Hence streams of torrent-fire with hideous
roar

Shall burst, and with its wasteful mouths de-
vour

All the fair fields of fruitful Sicily.

Such rage shall Typhon, blasted as he is

With Jove's fierce lightning, pour incessant
forth

In smoking whirlwinds and tempestuous flame.

PROM. Thou art not inexperienced, nor hast need

Of my instruction ; save thyself, how best

Thy wisdom shall direct thee. I will bear

My present fate, till Jove's harsh wrath re-
lents.

OCEA. Thy misery shall be my monitor.

PROM. Go then, be cautious, hold thy present judge-
ment.

OCEA. Thy words add speed to my despatch. Long
since

My plumed steed his levell'd wings displays

To fan the liquid air, through fond desire
In his own lodge his wearied speed to rest.

Exit.

PROMETHEUS, CHORUS.

CHOR. For thee I heave the heart-felt sigh,
My bosom melting at thy woes ;
For thee my tear-distilling eye
In streams of tender sorrow flows :
For Jove's imperious ruthless soul,
That scorns the power of mild control,
Chastens with horrid tort'ring pain
Not known to gods before his iron reign.
E'en yet this ample region o'er
Hoarse strains of sullen woe resound,
Thy state, thy brothers' * state deplore,
Age-honoured glories ruined round.
Thy woes, beneath the sacred shade
Of Asia's pastur'd forests laid,
The chaste inhabitant bewails
Thy groans re-echoing through his plaintive
vales.
The Colchian virgin, whose bold hand
Undaunted grasps the warlike spear ;
On earth's last verge the Scythian band,
The torpid lake Mæotis near ;
Arabia's martial race, that wield
The sharp lance in th' embattled field,
Through all their rock-built cities moan,
The crags of Caucasus return the groan.
One other, ere thy galling chain,
Of heaven's high sons with tortures quell'd,

* Prometheus had two brothers suffering under the extremity of Jove's vengeance, Menætius cast into Tartarus, and Atlas, condemned to bear the heavens on his shoulders.

That rack each joint, each sinew strain,
Titanian Atlas I beheld ;

His giant strength condemn'd to bear
The solid, vast, and pond'rous sphere.

The springs whose fresh streams swell
around,

The hoarse waves from their depths pro-
found,

And all the gloomy realms below,

Sigh to his sighs, and murmur to his woe.

PROM. It is not pride ; deem nobler of me, virgins ;

It is not pride, that held me silent thus ;

The thought of these harsh chains, that hang
me here,

Cuts to my heart. Yet who, as I, advanced

To their high dignity our new raised gods ?

But let me spare the tale, to you well known.

The ills of man you 've heard. I formed his
mind,

And through the cloud of barb'rous ignorance

Diffused the beams of knowledge. I will
speak,

Not taxing them with blame, but my own
gifts

Displaying, and benevolence to them.

They saw indeed, they heard ; but what avail'd

Sight, or the sense of hearing ? all things rolled

Like the unreal imagery of dreams,

In wild confusion mix'd. The lightsome wall

Of finer masonry, the rafter'd roof

They knew not ; but, like ants still buried,

delved

Deep in the earth, and scoop'd their sunless

caves.

Unmark'd the seasons changed, stern Winter
passed,

Flower-perfumed Spring, ripe Summer, mellow
Autumn,

Unheededly away. Chance ruled their works,
Till I instructed them to mark the stars,

Their rising, and, a harder science yet,
Their setting. The rich train of marshall'd
numbers

I taught them, and the meet array of letters.
To impress these precepts on their hearts I
sent

Memory, the active mother of all wisdom.

I taught the patient steer to bear the yoke,
In all his toils joint-labourer with man.

By me the harness'd steed was train'd to whirl

The rapid car, and grace the pride of wealth.

The tall bark, lightly bounding o'er the waves,

I taught its course, and wing'd its flying sail.

To man I gave these arts; yet want I now

With all my wisdom that one useful art

To free myself from these afflicting chains.

CHOR. Unseemly are thy sufferings, sprung from
error

And impotence of mind. And now inclosed

With all these ills, as some unskilful leach

That sinks beneath his malady, thy soul

Desponds, nor seeks medicinal relief.

PROM. Hear my whole story, thou wilt wonder more,
What useful arts, what science I invented.

This first and greatest: when the fell disease

Preyed on the human frame, relief was none,

Nor healing drug, nor cool refreshing draught,

Nor pain assuaging unguent; but they pined

Without redress, and wasted, till I taught
 To mix the balmy medicine, full of power
 To chase each pale disease, and soften pain.
 I taught the various modes of prophecy,
 What truth the dream portends, the omen what,
 Of nice distinction, what the casual sight
 That meets us on the way ; the flight of birds,
 When to the right, when to the left they take
 Their airy course, their various ways of life,
 Their feuds, their fondnesses, their social
 flocks.

I taught the haruspex to inspect the entrails,
 Their smoothness, and their colour to the gods
 Grateful, the gall, the liver streak'd with veins,
 The limbs involved in fat, and the long chine
 Placed on the blazing altar ; from the smoke
 And mounting flame to mark th' unerring omen.
 These arts I taught. And all the secret wealth
 Deep buried in the bowels of the earth,
 Brass, iron, silver, gold, their use to man,
 Let the vain tongue make what high vaunts it
 may,

Are my inventions all ; and, in a word,
 Prometheus taught each useful art to man.

CHOR. Let not thy love to man o'erleap the bounds
 Of reason, nor neglect thy wretched state :
 So my fond hope suggests thou shalt be free
 From these base chains, nor less in power than
 Jove.

PROM. Not thus, it is not in the Fates that thus
 These things should end : crush'd with a thou-
 sand wrongs,
 A thousand woes, I shall escape these chains.
 Necessity is stronger far than art.

CHOR. Who then is ruler of necessity?

PROM. The triple Fates and unforgetting Furies.

CHOR. Must Jove then yield to their superior power?

PROM. No more of this discourse; it is not time
Now to disclose that which requires the seal
Of strictest secrecy; by guarding which
I shall escape the misery of these chains.

CHORUS.

STROPHE.

Never, never may my soul
Jove's all-ruling power defy;
Never feel his harsh control,
Sovereign ruler of the sky.
When the hallow'd steer has bled*,
When the sacred feast is spread,
'Midst the crystal waves below,
Whence father Ocean's boundless billows
flow,
Let not my foot be slow:
There, th' ethereal guests among,
No rude speech disgrace my tongue;
May my mind this reverence keep;
Print it strong, and grave it deep.

ANTISTROPHE.

When through life's extended scene
Hope her stedfast lustre throws,
Swells the soul with joy serene,
With sublimest triumph glows.

* The Chorus here alludes to the solemn annual festival which the gods held with Oceanus, father of these nymphs, and at which they shewed their piety and reverence by their attendance and ministry. Pauw.

Seest thou this pure lustre shine ?
 Are these heart-felt raptures thine ?
 My cold blood curdles in my veins,
 To see thy hideous woes, thy tort'ring pains,
 And adamantine chains.
 Thy free soul, untaught to fear,
 Scorned the danger, threat'ning near ;
 And for mortals dared defy
 The sovereign monarch of the sky.

EPODE.

Vain thy ardour, vain thy grace,
 They nor force nor aid repay ;
 Like a dream man's feeble race,
 Short-lived reptiles of a day.
 Shall their weak devices move
 Th' order'd harmony of Jove ?
 Touch'd with pity of thy pain,
 All sad and slow I pour the moral strain ;
 Changed from that melting vein,
 When the light mellifluous measure
 Round thy bath, and round thy bed
 For our sea-nymph sister spread,
 Awoke young love and bridal pleasure,
 And poured the soul of harmony,
 To greet the bright Hesione.

Here the poet introduces Iö, daughter of Inachus, whom Jupiter, to conceal from the jealousy of Juno transformed into a heifer ; but the goddess discovering her disguise, sent Argus to watch her, and one of the furies, in the shape of a winged insect called a bryze, to hunt her through the world tor-

tured by its sting, and in her maddened flight she reaches Caucasus. At the entreaty of the Chorus she tells her tale to them and to Prometheus, of whose kindred she was, as Inachus, her father, was the son of Oceanus and Tethys. The Titan's son takes occasion to rail at large on the cruelty and tyranny of Jove, while he foretells all her future wanderings and misfortunes. In her peregrinations she is to visit, in the eastern regions of Scythia, three old hags, daughters of Phorcys, whose story will remind the reader of an Arabian tale.

One common eye have these, one common
tooth,
And never does the sun with cheerful ray
Visit them darkling, nor the moon's pale orb
That silvers o'er the night. The Gorgons
nigh,
Their sisters these, spread their broad wings,
and wreath
Their horrid hair with serpents, fiends ab-
horr'd,
Whom never mortal could behold, and live.

He prophesies that Iö shall cross the Mæotic strait, which thence is to be called the *Bosphorus*, or passage of the heifer, as the *Ionian* sea should also be so named from her. Finally, he describes her numerous descendants and their various exploits, not the least of which is, that one, (Hercules,)

“Third of her race, first numb'ring ten descents,”

should release him from his pains, sent by the will of Jove, when he learns that an ill-starred and fatal

marriage is impending over him, unless he be forewarned by Prometheus how to avert the calamity.

Then follows an ode of the Chorus, suggested by the tale of Io, on the miseries of ill-matched or ambitious love, and the impossibility of resisting the will of Jupiter, upon which Prometheus thus resumes :

PROM. Yet shall this Jove, with all his self-will'd
pride,
Learn humbler thoughts, taught by that fatal
marriage,
Which from the lofty throne of sovereign rule
Shall sink him to a low and abject state,
And on his head fulfil his father's curse,
The curse of Saturn, vented in that hour,
When from his ancient royalty he fell.
Of all the gods not one, myself except,
Can warn him of his fate, and how to shun
Th' impending ruin. I know all, and how.
Let him then sit, and glorying in his height
Roll with his red right hand his volley'd thunder
Falsely secure, and wreath his bick'ring flames.
Yet nought shall they avail him, nor prevent
His abject and dishonourable fall.
Such rival adversary forms he now
Against himself, prodigious in his might,
And unassailable ; whose rage shall roll
Flames that surpass his lightnings, fiercer bolts
That quash his thunders ; and from Neptune's
hand
Dash his trined mace, that from the bottom
stirs
The troubled sea, and shakes the solid earth.

Crush'd with this dreadful ruin shall he learn
How different to command and to obey.

CHOR. Thy ominous tongue gives utterance to thy
wish.

PROM. It is my wish, and shall be ratified.

CHOR. Dost thou not fear, vaunting this bold de-
sire?

PROM. What should I fear, by Fate exempt from
death?

CHOR. But he may add fresh tortures to thy pain.

PROM. Let him then add; I wait and scorn them all.

CHOR. Wise they, who reverence the stern power of
vengeance.

PROM. Go then, with prompt servility fall down
Before your lord, fawn, cringe, and sue for
grace.

For me, I value him at less than nothing.

Let him exert his brief authority,

And lord it whilst he may; his power in
heaven

Shall vanish soon, nor leave a trace behind.—

But see, his messenger hastes on amain,

The obsequious lackey of this new-made mo-
narch:

He comes, I ween, the bearer of fresh tidings.

MERCURY, PROMETHEUS, CHORUS.

MERC. To thee, grown old in craft, deep drench'd
in gall,

Disgustful to the gods, too prodigal

Of interdicted gifts to mortal man,

Thief of the fire of heaven, to thee my mes-
sage.

My father bids thee say what nuptials these

Thy tongue thus vaunts as threat'ning his high
power ;

And clearly say, couch'd in no riddling phrase,
Each several circumstance ; propound not
then

Ambiguous terms, Prometheus ; for thou seest
Jove brooks not such, unfit to win his favour.

PROM. Thou doest thy message proudly, in high
terms,

Becoming well the servant of such lords.

Your youthful power is new ; ye vainly deem

Your high raised towers impregnable to pain.

Have I not seen two sovereigns of the sky *

Sink from their glorious state ? And I shall
see

A third, this present lord, with sudden ruin

Dishonourably fall. What, seem I now

To dread, to tremble at these new-raised gods ?

That never shall their force extort from me.

Hence then, the way thou camest return with
speed :

Thy vain inquiries get no other answer.

MERC. Such insolence before, so fiery fierce,

Drew on thy head this dreadful punishment.

PROM. My miseries, be assured, I would not change

For thy gay servitude, but rather choose

To live a vassal to this dreary rock,

Than lackey the proud heels of Jove. These
words,

If insolent, your insolence extorts.

MERC. Truly thou seem'st delighted with thy woes.

* Ouranus dethroned by his son Saturn, and Saturn again by
his son Jupiter.

PROM. Delighted! Might I see mine enemies
Delighted thus! And thee I hold among them.

MERC. And why blame me for thy calamities?

PROM. To tell thee in a word, I hate them all,
These gods; well I deserved of them, and
they

Ungrateful and unjust, work me these ills.

MERC. Thy malady, I find, is utter madness.

PROM. If to detest my enemies be madness,
It is a malady I wish to have.

MERC. Were it well with thee, who could brook thy
pride?

PROM. Time, as its age advanceth, teaches all things.

MERC. All its advances have not taught thee wisdom.

PROM. True, else I should not thus waste words on
thee.

MERC. Why am I check'd, why rated as a boy?

PROM. A boy! thou art more simple than a boy,

If thou hast hopes to be inform'd by me.

Not all his tortures, all his arts shall move me

To unlock my lips, till this cursed chain be
loosed.

No, let him hurl his flaming lightnings, wing

His whitening snows, and with his thunders
shake

The rocking earth, they move not me to say

What force shall wrest the sceptre from his
hand*.

* Jupiter was in love with Thetis, daughter of Oceanus. It was in the fates, though known to Prometheus alone, that the son of Thetis should be greater than his father. This is the secret disclosed by him on his release. Thetis was given to Peleus, and the prophecy fulfilled in Achilles.

MERC. Weigh these things well, will these unloose
thy chains?

PROM. Well have they long been weigh'd, and well
consider'd.

MERC. Subdue, vain fool, subdue thy insolence,
And let thy miseries teach thee juster thoughts.

PROM. Thy counsels, like the waves that dash against
The rock's firm base, disquiet but not move
me.

Conceive not of me that, through fear what
Jove

May in his rage inflict, my fix'd disdain
Shall e'er relent, e'er suffer my firm mind
To sink to womanish softness, to fall prostrate,
To stretch my supplicating hands, entreating
My hated foe to free me from these chains.
Far be that shame, that abject weakness from
me.

MERC. I see thou art implacable, unsoften'd
By all the mild entreaties I can urge;
But like a young steed rein'd, that proudly
struggles,

And champs his iron curb, thy haughty soul
Abates not of its unavailing fierceness.
But pride, disdainng to be ruled by reason,
Sinks weak and valueless. Now mark me well,
If not obedient to my words, a storm,
A fiery and inevitable deluge.

Shall burst in threefold vengeance on thy head.
First, his fierce thunder wing'd with lightning
flames

Shall rend this rugged rock, and cover thee
With hideous ruin: long time shalt thou lie
Astonied in its rifted sides, till dragg'd

Again to light ; then shall the bird of Jove,
 The rav'ning eagle, lured with scent of blood,
 Mangle thy body, and each day returning,
 An uninvited guest, plunge his fell beak,
 And feast and riot on thy black'ning liver.
 Expect no pause, no respite, till some god
 Comes to relieve thy pains, willing to pass
 The dreary realms of ever-during night,
 The dark descent of Tartarus profound.
 Weigh these things well : this is no fiction drest
 In vaunting terms, but words of serious truth.
 The mouth of Jove knows not to utter false-
 hood,

But what he speaks is fate. Be cautious then,
 Regard thyself ; let not o'erweening pride
 Despise the friendly voice of prudent counsel.

CHOR. Nothing amiss we deem his words, but
 fraught

With reason, who but wills thee to relax
 Thy haughty spirit, and by prudent counsels
 Pursue thy peace : be then advised ; what shame
 For one so wise to persevere in error ?

PROM. All this I knew e'er he declared his mes-
 sage,

That enemy from enemy should suffer
 Extreme indignity, is nothing strange.
 Let him then work his horrible pleasure on me ;
 Wreathe his black curling flames, tempest the
 air

With volley'd thunders and wild warring winds,
 Rend from its roots the firm earth's solid base,
 Heave from the roaring main its boisterous
 waves,

And dash them to the stars ; me let him hurl,

Caught in the fiery tempest, to the gloom
Of deepest Tartarus ; not all his power
Can quench the ethereal breath of life in me.

MERC. Such counsels, such wild vauntings might you
hear,

From moon-struck madness raving to the
winds.

Were he at ease, would he abate his phrensy ?
But you, whose gentle hearts with social sorrow
Melt at his suff'rings, from this place remove,
Remove with speed, lest the tempestuous roar
Of Jove's fierce thunder strike your souls with
horror.

CHOR. To other themes, to other counsels turn
Thy voice, where pleaded reason may prevail :
This is ill urged, and may not be admitted.

Wouldst thou solicit me to deeds of baseness ?
Whate'er betides, with him will I endure it.
The vile betrayer I have learn'd to hate ;
There is no fouler stain, my soul abhors it.

MERC. Remember you are warn'd ; if ill betide
Accuse not Fortune, lay not blame on Jove,
As by his hand sunk in calamities
Unthought of, unforeseen : no, let the blame
Light on yourselves ; your folly not unwarn'd,
Not unawares, but 'gainst your better know-
ledge,

Involved you in the inextricable toils.

PROM. He fables not ; I feel in very deed
The firm earth rock ; the thunder's deep'ning
roar

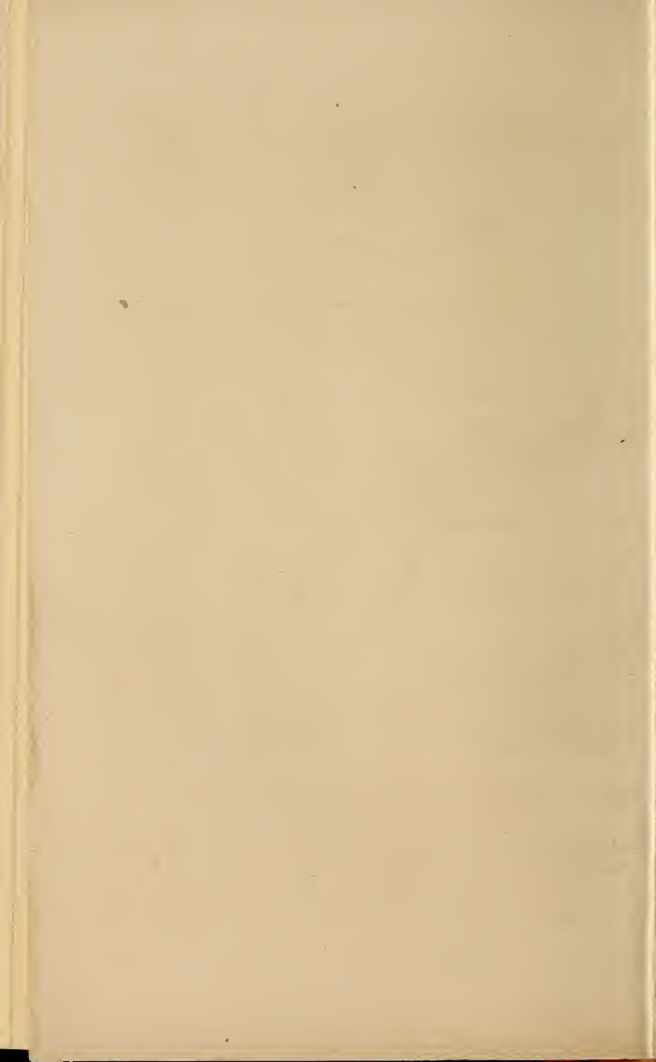
Rolls with redoubled rage ; the bick'ring flames
Flash thick ; the eddying sands are whirled on
high ;



J. Macmillan del.

Prometheus
Temples of the Ocean

th' impetuous start to
Keds all its terrible fury on my head
Prometheus Chained



In dreadful opposition the wild winds
 Rend the vex'd air ; the boist'rous billows rise
 Confounding sea and sky ; th' impetuous storm
 Rolls all its terrible fury on my head.
 Seest thou this, awful Themis ; and thou, Ether,
 Through whose pure azure floats the general
 stream
 Of liquid light ? you see what wrongs I suffer !

END OF PROMETHEUS CHAINED.

The Prometheus is perhaps the most exquisite of all the "high imaginings" that remain to us of the genius of Æschylus. There is a moral grandeur that cannot be surpassed in the spectacle of intellectual energy defying and triumphing over all the might of nature, exhibited in the most fearful agonies of bodily pain. If the end of tragedy be to purify the affections by subduing the senses to the soul, and to teach the calm endurance of misery by a hopeful anticipation of the period when "this tyranny shall be overpast," this drama more effectually attains its end, and more powerfully embodies that sublime sentiment, than any other uninspired composition of antiquity. We must ever bear in mind, however, that all which the most sublime efforts of the Pagan philosophy *could* teach, was to bear evils with fortitude because they were inevitable. That "hope which is full of immortality" it was incapable of reaching, and it was reserved for revelation to inform us that patient submission

to the divine will is the discipline appointed by Heaven, as the means of forming in us that character and disposition which may fit us for the future enjoyment, through faith, of "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

To inspire the people with a hatred of tyranny was probably the more immediate object of the poet, and this was a sentiment which could not fail to be popular as well as patriotic in such a state as Athens.

THE
PERSIANS.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

ATOSSA.

MESSENGER.

GHOST OF DARIUS.

XERXES.

CHORUS, THE PERSIAN COUNCIL OF
STATE.

INTRODUCTION.

THE subject of this play has been already noticed in the life of Æschylus. The Persians had been wholly defeated at Marathon by most disproportionate numbers. To wipe off this disgrace, Xerxes invaded Greece in person, at the head of an amazing armament, with which he meant to overwhelm all resistance. The first check he received in his career was at the famous pass of Thermopylæ, where Leonidas, at the head of a small Greek force, successfully resisted his efforts to penetrate the defile, for three successive days, till he was betrayed by the perfidy of Ephialtes, a Trachinian, who led a detachment of the Persians by a secret path up the western ridge of mountains, from which they fell upon the rear of Leonidas, and cut to pieces his little band, now reduced to 300 Spartans and a small body of Thespians. Not a man survived. Having thus forced the pass of Thermopylæ, Xerxes wasted Attica and set fire to Athens, which had been deserted at his approach. The Greeks retired into Trœzene and Salamis. But their leaders, under the command of Eurybiades, were reluctant to engage in a conflict in which, from the overwhelming force of the enemy, they anticipated only defeat. During this indecision, Themistocles, fearful of the defection of some of the squadrons, and eager to prevent the voluntary dispersion of the Grecian

powers, resolved upon a very extraordinary measure. He secretly sent a trusty messenger to the Persian fleet, with certain intelligence of the dissensions that prevailed among the allied chiefs, and apprising the Asiatic admiral that if the present opportunity of destroying the Greek navy were neglected, such another might never again occur. That very night, in consequence of this intelligence, the Persian fleet formed in a crescent, stretching from the point of Salamis to the port of Munychia: the Egyptian squadron was detached to block up the western passage, a force was landed upon the little island Psyttaleia to aid such Persian vessels as might be driven upon it, and infest those of Greece, and the Attic shore was lined with troops to co-operate with the naval forces. By day-break (it was the 20th Oct. B.C. 480.), the whole armament was in motion: as the sun rose, trumpets sounded, pæans were sung, and the Grecian leaders, forced by necessity to exertion, used every effort to excite among their forces that courage and animation which their timid and divided counsels hitherto had so tended to repress. A trireme returning from Ægina, and shut out from her companions by the enemy's line, endeavoured to force a passage; she was attacked, and an Athenian galley, commanded by Ameinias, brother of our poet, advanced to the rescue. The engagement soon became general and raged with unabated fury, till the combined squadrons of Athens and Ægina broke through the Persian line, close to the galley which began the fight. Numbers of Persian vessels, not yet called into action, now pressed on to support their countrymen, and by their forward zeal contributed rather

to disorder than assist them, while the Greeks preserved the steadiest discipline, though straining every nerve for victory. Many of the Ionian troops in the service of the Persian secretly favoured the struggles of their countrymen, the confusion became general in the unwieldy armament; such vessels as could disengage themselves before being sunk or taken, escaped by flight, and the sea was scarcely visible through the heaps of wreck and corpses with which it was strewn. Amid the total rout, Aristides, who had returned from exile at Ægina only the night before, landed a body of Athenians on Psyttaleia, and put the Persians there to the sword, before the eyes of their helpless monarch.

The surviving Asiatics, deprived of supplies by the destruction of their fleet, attempted to retreat through Bœotia and Thessaly into Thrace; but they had no victuals. Other sustenance failing, they ate the grass of the field and the bark and leaves from the trees. In the words of Herodotus, "they left nothing." Æschylus has added, "none of them was left." Most of those who escaped the ravages of hunger and pestilence perished by the sword.

Atossa, who makes so prominent a figure in this noble tragedy, was the daughter of Cyrus the Great, and is by some supposed to be the Vashti of Scripture.

The scene of the tragedy is at Susa, in front of the building in which the Persian council of state assembled. The reader will bear in mind that the Chorus is composed of members of this state-council.

CHORUS.

Whilst o'er the fields of Greece th' embattled
 troops
 Of Persia march, with delegated sway
 We o'er their rich and gold-abounding seats
 Hold faithful our firm guard; to this high charge
 Xerxes, our royal lord, th' imperial son
 Of great Darius, chose our honour'd age.
 But for the king's return, and his arm'd host
 Blazing with gold, my soul presaging ill
 Swells in my tortured breast: for all her force
 Hath Asia sent, and for her youth I sigh.
 No horseman spurs, nor messenger arrives
 With tidings to this seat of Persia's kings.
 The gates of Susa and Ecbatana
 Pour'd forth their martial trains; and Cissia sees
 Her ancient towers forsaken, whilst her youth,
 Some on the bounding steed, the tall bark some
 Ascending, some with painful march on foot,
 Haste on, t' arrange the deep'ning files of war.

STROPHE 1.

Already o'er the adverse strand
 In arms the monarch's martial squadrons spread;
 Wide-threatening ruin shakes the land,
 And each tall city bows its tower'd head.
 Bark bound to bark, their wond'rous way
 They bridge across the indignant sea;
 The narrow Hellespont's vex'd waves disdain,
 His proud neck taught to wear the chain.
 Now has the peopled Asia's warlike lord,
 By land, by sea, with foot, with horse,
 Resistless in his rapid course,
 O'er all their realms his warring thousands
 pour'd;

Now his intrepid chiefs surveys,
 And glitt'ring like a god his radiant state displays.

ANTISTROPHE 1.

Fierce as the dragon scaled in gold
 Through the deep files he darts his glowing eye ;
 And pleased their order to behold,
 His gorgeous standard blazing to the sky,
 Rolls onward his Assyrian car,
 Directs the thunder of the war,
 Bids the wing'd arrows' iron storm advance,
 Against the slow and cumbrous lance.
 What shall withstand the torrent of his sway,
 When dreadful o'er the yielding shores
 Th' impetuous tide of battle roars,
 And sweeps the weak-opposing mounds away ?
 So Persia with resistless might
 Rolls her unnumber'd hosts of heroes to the
 fight.

EPODE.

Crush'd beneath th' assailing foe,
 Her golden head must Cissia bend ;
 Whilst her pale virgins, frantic with despair,
 Through all her streets awake the voice of
 woe ;
 And, flying with their bosoms bare,
 Their purpled stoles in anguish rend :
 For all her youth in martial pride,
 Like bees that, clust'ring round their king,
 Their dark embodied squadrons bring,
 Attend their sceptred monarch's side,
 And stretch across the wat'ry way
 From shore to shore their long array.

The Persian dames with many a tender fear
 In grief's sad vigils pass the midnight hour;
 Shed on the widow'd couch the streaming tear,
 And the long absence of their loves deplore.
 Each lonely matron feels her pensive breast
 Throb with desire, with aching fondness
 glow,
 Since in bright arms her daring warrior drest,
 Left her to languish in her love-lorn woe.

Enter ATOSSA.

Behold our monarch's mother, goddess-like!
 Imperial consort of Darius, hail!
 But yonder speeds a Persian messenger,
 See where he comes, betokening by his haste
 Tidings of high import, for good or ill.

ATOSSA, CHORUS, MESSENGER.

MESS. Woe to the towns thro' Asia's peopled realms!
 Woe to the land of Persia, once the port
 Of boundless wealth, how is thy glorious state
 Vanish'd at once, and all thy spreading honours
 Fall'n, lost! Ah me! unhappy is his task
 That bears unhappy tidings: but constraint
 Compels me to relate this tale of woe.
 Persians, the whole barbaric host is fall'n.

CHOR. O horror, horror! What a baleful train
 Of recent ills! Ah Persians, as he speaks
 Of ruin, let your tears stream to the earth.

MESS. It is e'en so, all ruin; and myself,
 Beyond all hope returning, view this light.

CHOR. How tedious and oppressive is the weight
 Of age, reserved to hear these hopeless ills!

MESS. I speak not from report; but these mine eyes
 Beheld the ruin which my tongue would utter.

CHOR. Woe, woe is me! Then has the iron storm,
That darken'd from the realms of Asia, pour'd
In vain its arrowy shower on sacred Greece.

MESS. In heaps th' unhappy dead lie on the strand
Of Salamis, and all the neighbouring shores.

CHOR. Unhappy friends, sunk, perish'd in the sea;
Their bodies, 'midst the wreck of shatter'd
ships,

Mangled, and rolling on th' encumber'd waves!

MESS. Nought did their bows avail, but all the
troops

In the first conflict of the ships were lost.

CHOR. Raise the funereal cry, with dismal notes
Wailing the wretched Persians. Oh, how ill
They plann'd their measures, all their army
perish'd!

MESS. O Salamis, how hateful is thy name!
And groans burst from me when I think of
Athens.

CHOR. How dreadful to her foes! Call to re-
membrance

How many Persian dames, wedded in vain,
Hath Athens of their noble husbands widow'd!

ATOS. Astonied with these ills, my voice thus long
Hath wanted utterance: griefs like these ex-
ceed

The power of speech or question: yet e'en
such,

Inflicted by the Gods, must mortal man
Constrain'd by hard necessity endure.

But tell me all, without distraction tell me,

All this calamity, though many a groan
Burst from thy labouring heart. Who is *not*
fallen?

What leader must we wail? What sceptred
chief

Dying hath left his troops without a lord?

MESS. Xerxes himself yet lives, and sees the light.

ATOS. That word beams comfort on my house, a ray
That brightens through the melancholy gloom.

MESS. Artembares, the potent chief that led
Ten thousand horse, lies slaughter'd on the
rocks

Of rough Sileniæ. The great Dadaces,
Beneath whose standard march'd a thousand
horse,

Pierced by a spear, fell headlong from the ship.

Tenagon, bravest of the Bactrians, lies
Roll'd on the wave-worn beach of Ajax' isle.

Lilæus, Arsames, Argestes, dash
With violence in death against the rocks
Where nest the silver Doves*. Arcteus, that
dwelt

Near to the fountains of Ægyptian Nile,
Adeues, and Pheresba, and Pharnuchus,
Fell from one ship. Matallus, Chrysa's chief,
That led his dark'ning squadrons, thrice ten
thousand,

On jet-black steeds, with purple gore distain'd
The yellow of his thick and shaggy beard.

The Magian Arabus, and Artames
From Bactra, mould'ring on the dreary shore
Lie low. Amistris, and Amphistreus there
Grasps his war-wearied spear; there prostrate
lies

* Salamis was the birth-place of Ajax and sacred to Venus, whence white doves are said to nestle there.

Th' illustrious Ariomardus ; long his loss
 Shall Sardis weep : the Mysian Sisames,
 And Tharybis, that o'er the burden'd deep
 Led five times fifty vessels ; Lerna gave
 The hero birth, and manly grace adorn'd
 His shapely form, but low in death he lies,
 Unhappy in his fate. Syennesis,
 Cilicia's warlike chief, who dared to front
 The foremost dangers, singly to the foes
 A terror, there too found a glorious death.
 These chieftains to my sad remembrance rise,
 Relating but a few of many ills.

ATOS. This is the height of ill, ah me ! and shame
 To Persia, grief, and lamentation loud.
 But what the number of the Grecian fleet,
 That in fierce conflict their bold barks should
 dare

Rush to encounter with the Persian hosts ?

MESS. Know that in numbers the Barbaric fleet
 Was far superior : in ten squadrons, each
 Of thirty ships, Greece plough'd the deep ; of
 these

One held a distant station. Xerxes led
 A thousand ships ; their number well I know ;
 Two hundred more, and seven, that swept the
 seas

With speediest sail : this was their full amount.
 And in th' engagement seem'd we not secure
 Of victory ? But unequal fortune sunk
 Our scale in fight, discomfiting our host.

ATOS. The Gods preserved the city of Minerva.

MESS. The walls of Athens are impregnable,
 Their firmest bulwarks her heroic sons.

ATOS. Which navy first advanc'd to the attack ?

MESS. Our evil Genius, lady, or some God
 Hostile to Persia, led to ev'ry ill.
 Forth from the troops of Athens came a Greek *,
 And thus address'd thy son, th' imperial
 Xerxes ;

“ Soon as the shades of night descend, the
 Greeks

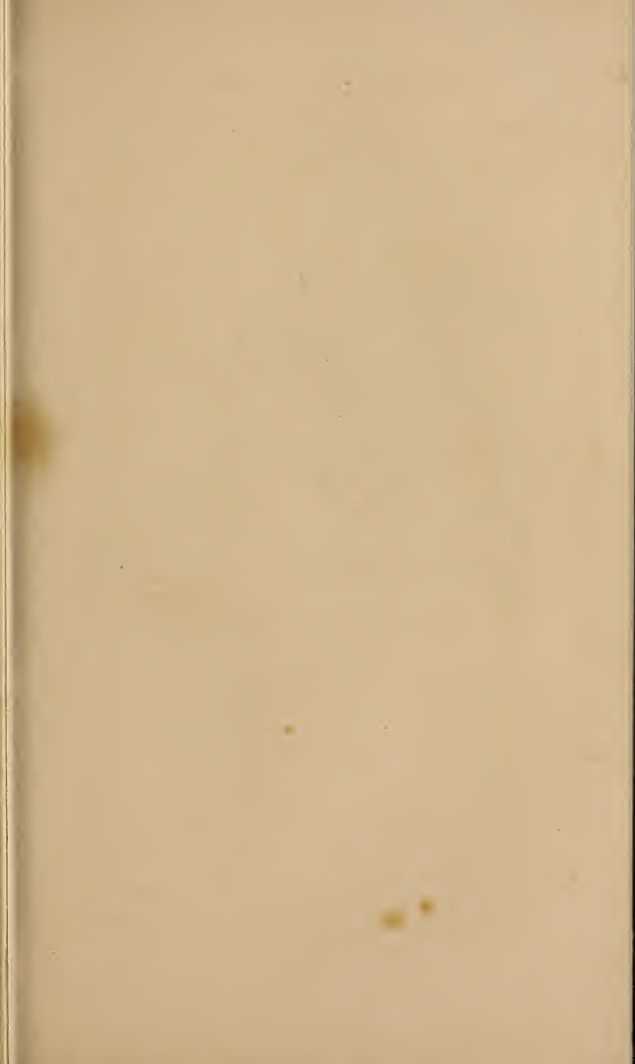
Will quit their station ; rushing to their oars
 They mean to separate, and in secret flight
 Seek safety.” At these words the royal chief,
 Little conceiving of the wiles of Greece,
 And Gods averse, to all the naval leaders
 Gave his high charge ; “ Soon as yon sun shall
 cease

To dart his radiant beams, and dark'ning night
 Ascends the temple of the sky, arrange
 In three divisions your well-order'd ships,
 And guard each pass, each out-let of the seas :
 Others en-ring this sea-born rocky isle
 Of Salamis : should Greece escape her fate,
 And work her way by secret flight, your heads
 Shall answer the neglect.” This harsh command
 He gave, exulting in his mind, nor knew
 What Fate design'd. With martial discipline
 And prompt obedience, snatching a repast,
 Each mariner fix'd well his ready oar.

Soon as the golden sun was set, and night
 Advanced, each train'd to ply the dashing oar
 Assumed his seat ; in arms each warrior stood,
 Troop cheering troop through all the ships of
 war.

Each to th' appointed station steers his course :
 And through the night his naval force each chief

* See Introduction, p. 236.





A. E. LAMMAN DEL.

The morn. all beatificous to behold
Drawn by white steeds bounds o'er th' unshapen'd earth;

The Persians. 2.

E. FINDER SCULPT.

Fix'd to secure the passes. Night advanced,
But not by secret flight did Greece attempt
T' escape. The morn, all beauteous to behold,
Drawn by white steeds bounds o'er th' en-
lighten'd earth ;

At once from every Greek with glad acclaim
Burst forth the song of war, whose lofty notes
The echo of the island rocks return'd,
Spreading dismay through Persia's hosts thus
fallen

From their high hopes ; no flight this solemn
strain

Portended, but deliberate valour bent
On daring battle, whilst the trumpet's sound
Kindled the flames of war. But when their
oars,

The pæan ended, with impetuous force
Dash'd the resounding surges, instant all
Rush'd on in view ; in orderly array
The squadron on the right first led, behind
Rode their whole fleet ; and now distinct we
heard

From every part this voice of exhortation,
“ Advance, ye sons of Greece, from thralldom
save

Your country, save your wives, your children
save,

The temples of your Gods, the sacred tombs
Where rest your honour'd ancestors ; this day
The common cause of all demands your
valour.”

Meantime from Persia's hosts the deep'ning
shout

Answer'd their shout ; no time for cold delay ;

But ship 'gainst ship its brazen beak impell'd.
 First to the charge a Grecian galley rush'd ;
 Ill the Phœnician bore the rough attack,
 Its sculptur'd prow all shatter'd. Each ad-
 vanced

Daring an opposite. The deep array
 Of Persia at the first sustain'd th' encounter ;
 But their throng'd numbers, in the narrow seas
 Confined, lacked room for action ; and, de-
 prived

Of mutual aid, beaks clash with beaks, and each
 Breaks all the other's oars : with skill disposed
 The Grecian navy circled them around
 With fierce assault ; and rushing from its height
 The inverted vessel sinks ; the sea no more
 Wears its accustomed aspect, with foul wrecks
 And blood disfigured ; floating carcasses
 Roll on the rocky shores : the poor remains
 Of the barbaric armament to fight
 Ply every oar, inglorious : onward rush
 The Greeks amid the ruins of the fleet,
 As through a shoal of fish caught in the net,
 Spreading destruction : the wide ocean o'er
 Wailings are heard, and loud laments, till night
 With darkness on her brow brought grateful
 truce.

Should I recount each circumstance of woe,
 Ten times on my unfinished tale the sun
 Would set ; for be assured that not one day
 Could close the ruin of so vast a host.

ATOS. Ah, what a boundless sea of woe hath burst
 On Persia, and the Asiatic race !

MESS. These are not half, not half our ills ; on these
 Came an assemblage of calamities,

That sunk us with a double weight of woe.

ATOS. What fortune can be more unfriendly to us
Than this? Say on, what dread calamity
Sunk Persia's host with greater weight of woe.

MESS. Whoe'er of Persia's warriors glowed in prime
Of vig'rous youth, or felt their generous souls
Expand with courage, or for noble birth
Shone with distinguish'd lustre, or excell'd
In firm and duteous loyalty, all these
Are fallen, ignobly, miserably fallen.

ATOS. Alas their ruthless fate, unhappy friends;
But in what manner, tell me, did they perish?

MESS. Full against Salamis an isle arises *,
Of small circumference, to the anchor'd bark
Unfaithful; on the promontory's brow,
That overlooks the sea, Pan loves to lead
The dance: to this the monarch sent these
chiefs,

That when the Grecians from their shattered
ships
Should here seek shelter, these might hew them
down

An easy conquest, and secure the strand
To their sea-wearied friends; ill judging what
The event; but when the favouring God to
Greece

Gave the proud glory of this naval fight,
Instant in all their glittering arms they leap'd
From their light ships, and all the island round
Encompassed, that our bravest stood dismay'd;

* Psyttaleia, a rough uncultivated rock between Salamis and the continent. Pan is always represented as haunting mountain tops and stony summits.

Whilst broken rocks, whirled with tempestuous
force,

And storms of arrows crushed them ; then the
Greeks

Rush to the attack at once, and furious spread
The carnage, till each mangled Persian fell.

Deep were the groans of Xerxes, when he saw
This havoc ; for his seat, a lofty mound
Commanding the wide sea, o'erlooked his
hosts*.

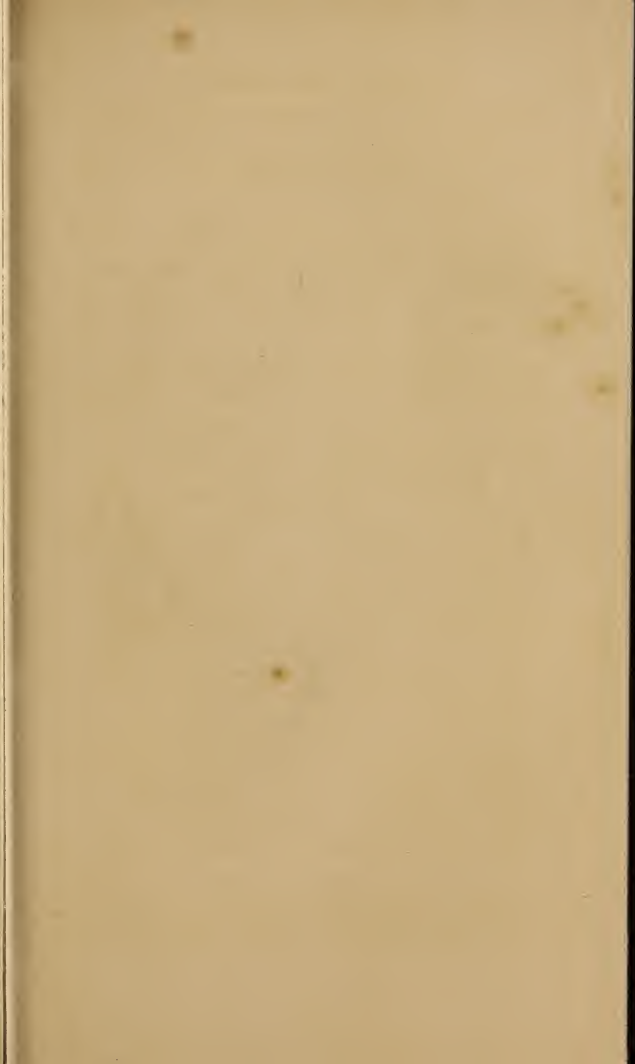
With rueful cries he rent his royal robes,
And through his troops embattled on the shore
Gave signal of retreat ; then started wild,
And fled disordered. To the former ills
These are fresh miseries to awake thy sighs.

ATOS. Invidious Fortune, how thy baleful power
Hath sunk the hopes of Persia ! Bitter fruit
My son hath tasted from his purposed ven-
geance

On Athens famed for arms ; the fatal field
Of Marathon, red with barbaric blood,
Sufficed not ; that defeat he sought t' avenge,
And plucked this hideous ruin on his head.
But tell me, if thou canst, where didst thou leave
The ships that happily escaped the wreck ?

MESS. The poor remains of Persia's scattered fleet
Spread every sail for flight, as the wind drives,
In wild disorder. And on land no less
The ruined army ; in Bœotia some,
With thirst oppressed, at Crene's cheerful rills

* Xerxes viewed this fight from Ægialus, a mountain on the opposite shore : the silver chair on which he sat, was afterwards placed in the temple of Minerva at Athens, and dedicated to that Goddess, as was the golden-hilted scymitar of Mardonius.





B. Pind in sculp.

Perseus.

J. B. Swanwick del.

*Whilst broken rocks whirled with tempestuous force,
And storms of arrows rush'd them;*

The Persians, 3.

Were lost ; fore-spent with breathless speed
some pass

The fields of Phocis, some the Doric plain,
And near the gulf of Melia, the rich vale
Through which Sperchius rolls his friendly
stream.

Achaia thence and the Thessalian state
Received our famished train ; the greater part,
Through thirst and hunger perished there, op-
pressed

At once by both : but we our painful steps
Held onwards to Magnesia, and the land
Of Macedonia, o'er the ford of Axius,
And Bolbe's sedgy marshes, and the heights
Of steep Pangæos, to the realms of Thrace.
That night, ere yet the season, stern and chill
Rushed winter, and with ice encrusted o'er
The flood of sacred Strymon : such as owned
No God till now, awe-struck, with many a prayer
Adored the earth and sky. When now the troops
Had ceased their invocations to the Gods,
O'er the stream's solid crystal they began
Their march ; and we, who took our early way,
Ere the sun darted his warm beams, passed
safe ;

But when his burning orb with fiery rays
Unbound the middle current, down they sunk
Each over other ; happiest he who found
The speediest death : the poor remains, that
'scaped,

With pain through Thrace dragged on their toil-
some march,

A feeble few, and reached their native soil.

CHOR. O Fortune, heavy with affliction's load,

How hath thy foot crushed all the Persian race !
 Xerxes sent forth the unwise command,
 The crowded ships unpeopled all the land ;
 That land, o'er which Darius held his reign,
 Courting the arts of peace, in vain,
 O'er all his grateful realms adored,
 The stately Susa's gentle lord.

Black o'er the waves his burdened vessels sweep,
 For Greece elate the warlike squadrons fly ;
 Now crushed, and whelmed beneath the indig-
 nant deep

The shattered wrecks and lifeless heroes lie :
 Whilst, from the arms of Greece escaped, with
 toil

The unsheltered monarch roams o'er Thracia's
 dreary soil.

With sacred awe

The Persian law

No more shall Asia's realms revere ;

To their lord's hand,

At his command,

No more the exacted tribute bear.

Who now falls prostrate at the monarch's throne ?

His regal greatness is no more.

Now no restraint the wanton tongue shall own,

Free from the golden curb of power ;

For on the rocks, washed by the beating flood,

His awe-commanding nobles lie in blood.

ATOSSA, CHORUS.

Atos. Whoe'er, my friends, in the rough stream of
 life

Hath struggled with affliction, thence is taught
 That when the flood begins to swell, the heart

Fondly fears all things : when the favouring
gale

Of fortune smooths the current, it expands
With unsuspecting confidence, and deems
That gale shall always breathe. So to my eyes
All things now wear a formidable shape,
And threaten from the Gods : my ears are
pierced

With sounds far other than of song. Such ills
Dismay my sickening soul : hence from my
house

Nor glitt'ring car attends me, nor the train
Of wonted state, whilst I return, and bear
Libations soothing to the father's shade
In the son's cause ; delicious milk, that foams
White from the sacred heifer : liquid honey,
Extracts of flowers ; and from its virgin fount
The running crystal ; this pure draught, that
flowed

From th' ancient vine, of power to bathe the
spirits

In joy ; the yellow olive's fragrant fruit,
That glories in its leaves' unfading verdure ;
With flowers of various hues, earth's fairest
offspring,

Enwreathed. But you, my friends, amidst
these rites

Raise high your solemn warblings, and invoke
Your lord, divine Darius : I meanwhile
Will pour these off'rings to th' infernal Gods.

CHOR. Yes, royal lady, Persia's honoured grace,
To earth's dark chambers pour thy off'rings :
We

With choral hymns will supplicate the powers

That guide the dead to be propitious to us.
 And you, that o'er the realms of night extend
 Your sacred sway, thee mighty earth, and thee
 Hermes; thee chief, tremendous king, whose
 throne

Awes with supreme dominion, I adjure :
 Send, from your gloomy regions, send his shade
 Once more to visit this ethereal light ;
 That he alone, if aught of dread event
 He sees yet threat'ning Persia, may disclose
 To us poor mortals Fate's extreme decree.

Great and good, Darius, rise :
 Lord of Persia's lord, appear :
 Thus invoked with thrilling cries
 Come, our tale of sorrow hear !
 Woe her Stygian pennons spreads,
 Brooding darkness o'er our heads ;
 For stretched along the dreary shore
 The flower of Asia lies distained with gore.
 Rise, Darius, awful power,
 Long for thee our tears shall flow ;
 Why thy ruined empire o'er
 Swells this double flood of woe ?
 Sweeping o'er the azure tide
 Rode thy navy's gallant pride ;
 Navy now no more, for all
 Beneath the whelming wave —— *

GHOST of DARIUS, ATOSSA, CHORUS.

DAR. Ye faithful Persians, honoured now in age,
 Once the companions of my youth, what ills

* The ghost of Darius here rises suddenly, and interrupts the unfinished hymn.

Afflict the state? The firm earth groans, it
opes,

Disclosing its vast deeps; and near my tomb
I see my wife: this shakes my troubled soul
With fearful apprehensions; yet her off'rings
Pleased I receive. And you around my grave
Chanting the lofty strain, whose solemn air
Draws forth the dead, with grief-tempered
notes

Mournfully call me: not with ease the way
Leads to this upper air; and the stern Gods,
Prompt to admit, yield not a passage back
But with reluctance: much with them my power
Availing, with no tardy step I come.

Say then, with what new ill doth Persia groan?

CHOR. My wonted awe* o'ercomes me; in thy pre-
sence

I dare not raise my eyes, I dare not speak.

DAR. Since fear hath chained his tongue, high-ho-
noured dame,

Once my imperial consort, check thy tears,
Thy griefs; and speak distinctly. Mortal man

* Nothing could be more agreeable to the republican spirit of the Athenians, than to see their proud invaders represented under this servile awe. The Persians, when they approached the royal presence, fell on their faces to the ground, as in this adoration of their king, they adored the image of God the preserver of all things.—But the Greeks had so great an abhorrence of this custom, that Conon, though sent to the Persian court by his friend Pharnabazus, and charged with a commission of the greatest consequence to the welfare of Greece, refused to be introduced to Artaxerxes, that he might not disgrace his country by complying with it. The reader may remember a similar circumstance occurring more than once in modern diplomacy, in our intercourse with the court of China.

Must bear his lot of woe ; afflictions rise
 Darkling, from sea and land alike, if life
 Haply be measured through a lengthen'd course.

ATOS. O thou, that graced with fortune's choicest
 gifts

Surpassing mortals, whilst thine eye beheld
 Yon sun's ethereal rays, liv'dst like a God
 Blest 'midst thy Persians ; blest I deem thee
 now

In death, ere sunk in this abyss of ills ;
 Darius, hear at once our sum of woe,
 Ruin through all her states hath crushed thy
 Persia ;

Near Athens all our choicest troops have
 fallen.

DAR. Say, of my sons which led the forces thither ?

ATOS. Impetuous Xerxes, thinning all the land.

DAR. By sea or land dared he this rash attempt ?

ATOS. By both : a double front the war presented.

DAR. A host so vast what march conducted o'er ?

ATOS. From shore to shore he bridged the Hellespont.

DAR. What ! could he chain the mighty Bosphorus ?

ATOS. E'en so, some God assisting his design.

DAR. Some God of power to cloud his better
 sense.

ATOS. The event now shows what mischiefs he
 achieved.

Susa, through all her streets, mourns her lost
 sons ;

In Bactra age and grief are only left.

DAR. Ah, what a train of warlike youth is lost !

ATOS. Xerxes, astonished, desolate, alone——

DAR. How will this end ? Nay, pause not. Is he
 safe ?

ATOS. Fled o'er the bridge, that joined the adverse
strands,

And reached this shore in safety.

DAR. With what a winged course the oracles
Haste their completion? With the lightning's
speed

Jove on my son hath hurled his threatened ven-
geance;

Yet I implored the Gods that it might fall
In time's late progress: but when rashness
drives

Impetuous on, the scourge of Heaven upraised
Lashes the Fury forward; hence these ill
Pour headlong on my friends. Not weighing
this,

My son, with all the fiery pride of youth,
Hath quickened their arrival, whilst he hoped
To bind the sacred Hellespont, to hold
The raging Bosphorus, like a slave, in chains*,
And dared th' advent'rous passage, bridging firm
With links of solid steel his wondrous way,
To lead his numerous host; and, swelled with
thoughts

Presumptuous, deemed, vain mortal, that his
power

* Authors have been careful to transmit to us an account of the presumptuous pride of Xerxes. When the first bridge, which he formed over the Hellespont, was broken by the waves, he ordered the sea to be scourged for having dared to disobey his will, and threw chains into it, signifying that he would bind it as his slave in fetters: but it has not been observed that the peculiar aggravation of this folly arose from the impiety of it; for, as the Persians revered water as particularly sacred, Xerxes by his arrogance insulted the divinity of the sea.

Should rise above the Gods, and Neptune's
might.

ATOS. This from too frequent converse with bad
men

Impetuous Xerxes learned: These caught his
ear

With thy great deeds, as winning for thy sons
Vast riches with thy conquering spear, whilst
he,

Tim'rous and slothful, never save in sport
Lifted his lance, nor added to his greatness.

DAR. Great deeds have they achieved, and me-
morable

For ages! Never hath this wasted state
Suffered such ruin, since Heaven's awful king
Gave to one lord Asia's extended plains
White with innumerable flocks, and to his hands
Consigned th' imperial sceptre. Her brave hosts
A Mede first led. The virtues of his son
Fixed firm the empire, for his temperate soul
Breathed prudence. Cyrus next, by fortune
graced,

Adorned the throne, and blessed his grateful
friends

With peace. He to his mighty monarchy
Joined Lydia, and the Phrygians; to his power
Ionia bent reluctant; but the Gods
With victory his gentle virtues crowned.

His son then wore the regal diadem.

Next, to disgrace his country, and to stain
The splendid glories of this ancient throne,
Rose Mardus: him with righteous vengeance
fired

Artaphrenes, and his confederate chiefs,

Crushed in his palace : Maraphis assumed
 The sceptre : after him Artaphrenes.
 Me next to this exalted eminence,
 Crowning my great ambition, fortune raised ;
 In many a glorious field my glittering spear
 Flamed in the van of Persia's numerous hosts ;
 But never wrought such ruin to the state.
 Xerxes, my son, in all the pride of youth
 Listens to youthful counsels, my commands
 No more remembered : hence, my hoary friends,
 Not the whole line of Persia's sceptred lords,
 You know it well, so wasted her brave sons.

CHOR. Why this ? To what fair end are these thy
 words

Directed ? Sovereign lord, instruct thy Persians
 How, 'midst this ruin, best to guide their state.

DAR. No more 'gainst Greece lead your embattled
 hosts ;

Not though your deep'ning phalanx spreads
 the field

Out-numb'ring theirs : their very earth fights
 for them.

Not even those who still in Greece survive
 Shall e'er revisit safe the Persian shore.

They have their station where Asopus flows
 Wat'ring the plain, whose grateful currents roll
 Diffusing plenty through Bœotia's fields.

There misery waits to crush them with the load
 Of heaviest ills, in vengeance for their proud
 And impious daring : for where'er they held
 Through Greece their march, they feared not
 to profane

The statues of the Gods ; their hallowed shrines,
 Fired from their firm foundations, to the ground

Levelled their temples : Such their frantic deeds,
 Nor less their suff'rings: greater still await
 them ;

For vengeance hath not wasted all her stores,
 The heap yet swells : for in Plataea's plains
 Beneath the Doric spear the clotted mass
 Of carnage shall arise, that the high mounds,
 Piled o'er the dead, to late posterity
 Shall give this silent record to men's eyes,
 That proud aspiring thoughts but ill beseem
 Weak mortals : for oppression, when it springs,
 Puts forth the blade of vengeance, and its fruit
 Yields a ripe harvest of repentant woe.

Behold this vengeance, and remember Greece,
 Remember Athens : henceforth let not pride,
 Her present state disdaining, strive to grasp
 Another's, and her treasured happiness
 Shed on the ground : such insolent attempts
 Awake the vengeance of offended Jove*.

But you, whose age demands more temperate
 thoughts,

With words of well-placed counsel teach his
 youth

To curb that pride, which from the Gods calls
 down

Destruction on his head. And thou, whose age
 The miseries of thy Xerxes sink with sorrow,
 Go to thy house, thence choose the richest robe,
 And meet thy son ; for through the rage of
 grief

* The intention of the poet in the noble reflection here ascribed to Darius, was, it is said, to incline the Athenians to accept the Persian monarch's proposal of peace, which Themistocles alone still continued to oppose.

His gorgeous vestments from his royal limbs
 Are foully rent. With gentlest courtesy
 Sooth his affliction; for his duteous ear,
 I know, will listen to thy voice alone.
 Now to the realms of darkness I descend.
 My ancient friends, farewell, and 'midst these
 ills
 Each day in pleasures bathe your drooping
 spirits,
 For treasured riches nought avail the dead.

ATOSSA, CHORUS.

CHOR. These many present, many future ills
 Denounced on Persia, sink my soul with grief.
 ATOS. Unhappy fortune, what a tide of ills
 Bursts o'er me! Chief this foul disgrace, which
 shows
 My son divested of his rich attire,
 His royal robes all rent, distracts my thoughts.
 But I will go, choose the most gorgeous vest,
 And haste to meet my son. Ne'er in his woes
 Will I forsake whom my soul holds most dear.

CHORUS.

STROPHE 1.

Ye powers that rule the skies,
 Memory recals our great, our happy fate,
 Our well-appointed state,
 The scenes of glory opening to our eyes,
 When this vast empire o'er
 The good Darius, with each virtue blest
 That forms a monarch's breast,

Shielding his subjects with a father's care,
 Invincible in war,
 Extended like a God his awful power.
 Then spread our arms their glory wide,
 Guarding to peace her golden reign ;
 Each towered city saw with pride
 Safe from the toils of war her homeward-
 marching train.

ANTISTROPHE 1.

Nor Halys' shallow strand
 He passed, nor from his palace moved his state ;
 He spoke ; his word was Fate :
 What strong-based cities could his might with-
 stand ?
 Not those that lift their heads
 Where to the sea the floods of Strymon pass,
 Leaving the huts of Thrace ;
 Nor those, that far th' extended ocean o'er
 Stand girt with many a tower ;
 Nor where the Hellespont his broad wave
 spreads ;
 Nor the firm bastions' rampir'd might,
 Whose foot the deep Propontis laves ;
 Nor those, that glorying in their height
 Frown o'er the Pontic sea, and shade his
 darkened waves.

STROPHE 2.

Each sea-girt isle around
 Bowed to this monarch : humbled Lesbos
 bowed ;

Paros, of its marble proud ;
 Naxos with vines, with olives Samos crowned ;
 Him Myconus adored ;
 Chios, the seat of beauty ; Andros steep,
 That stretches o'er the deep
 To meet the wat'ry Tenos ; him each bay
 Bound by th' Icarian sea,
 Him Melos, Gnidus, Rhodes confessed their
 lord :

O'er Cyprus stretched his sceptred hand :
 Paphos and Solos owned his power,
 And Salamis, whose hostile strand,
 The cause of all our woe, is red with Persian gore.

ANTISTROPHE 2.

E'en the proud towns, that reared
 Sublime along th' Ionian coast their towers,
 Where wealth her treasures pours,
 Peopled from Greece, his prudent reign revered.
 With such unconquered might
 His hardy warriors shook th' embattled fields,
 Heroes that Persia yields,
 And those from distant realms that took their
 way,
 And wedged in close array
 Beneath his glitt'ring banners claimed the fight.
 But now these glories are no more ;
 Farewell the big war's plumed pride :
 The Gods have crushed this trophied
 power,
 Sunk are our vanquished arms beneath th' in-
 dignant tide.

Enter XERXES.

XERXES, CHORUS.

XERX. Ah me, how sudden have the storms of
 Fate,
 Beyond all thought, all apprehension, burst
 On my devoted head! O Fortune, Fortune!
 With what relentless fury hath thy hand,
 Hurl'd desolation on the Persian race!
 Woe insupportable! The tort'ring thought
 Of our lost youth comes rushing on my heart,
 And sinks me to the ground. O Jove, that I
 Had died with those brave men that died in
 fight!

CHOR. Proud Asia sinking on her knee, O king,
 Humbled, with griefs oppressed, bends to the
 earth.

XERX. And I, O wretched fortune, I was born
 To crush, to desolate my ruined country.

CHOR. I have no voice, no swelling harmony,
 No descant save these notes of woe,
 Harsh, and responsive to the sullen sigh,
 Rude strains, that unmelodious flow,
 To welcome thy return.

XERX. Then bid them flow, bid the wild measures
 flow,
 Hollow, unmusical, the notes of grief;
 They suit my fortune, and dejected state.

CHOR. Yes, at thy royal bidding shall the strain
 Pour the deep sorrows of my soul;
 The suff'rings of my bleeding country plain,
 And bid the mournful measures roll.
 Again the voice of wild despair
 With thrilling shrieks shall pierce the air;

For high the God of War his flaming crest
 Raised, with the fleet of Greece surrounded,
 The haughty arms of Greece with conquest
 blest,

And Persia's wither'd force confounded,
 Dash'd on the dreary beach her heroes slain,
 Or whelm'd them in the darken'd main.

CHOR. O woe, woe, woe! Unutterable woe
 The Demons of Revenge have spread;
 And Ate from her drear abode below
 Rises to view the horrid deed.

XERX. Dismay, and rout, and ruin, ills that wait
 On man's afflicted fortune, sink us down.

CHOR. Dismay, and rout, and ruin on us wait,
 And all the vengeful storms of Fate:
 Ill flows on ill, on sorrow sorrows rise;
 Misfortune leads her baleful train;
 Before the Ionian squadrons Persia flies,
 Or sinks ingulfed beneath the main:
 Fall'n, fall'n is her imperial power,
 And, conquest on her banners waits no more.

XERX. At such a fall, such troops of heroes lost,
 How can my soul but sink in deep despair!

CHOR. Is all thy glory lost, are all thy powers
 In ruin crushed?

XERX. No satrap guards me now.

CHOR. Where are thy valiant friends? Thy chief-
 tains where?

XERX. Weep, weep their loss, and lead me to my
 house;

Answer my grief with grief, an ill return
 Of ills for ills. Yet once more raise that strain
 Lamenting my misfortunes; beat thy breast,

Strike, heave the groan; awake the Mysian
strain

To notes of loudest woe; rend thy rich robes,
Pluck up thy beard, tear off thy hoary locks,
And bathe thine eyes in tears: thus through
the streets

Solemn and slow with sorrow lead my steps;
Lead to my house, and wail the fate of Persia.

CHOR. Yes, at thy bidding shall the dirge again
Pour the deep sorrows of my soul;
The suff'rings of my bleeding country plain,
And bid the Mysian measures roll.
Again the voice of wild despair
With thrilling shrieks shall pierce the air;
For high the God of War his flaming crest
Raised, with the fleet of Greece surrounded,
The haughty arms of Greece with conquest
blest,
And Persia's withered force confounded,
Dashed on the dreary beach her heroes slain,
Or whelmed them in the darkened main.

END OF THE PERSIANS OF ÆSCHYLUS.

THE
SUPPLIANTS.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

DANAUS.

PELASGUS, KING OF SICYON.

HERALD.

CHORUS, THE DAUGHTERS OF DANAUS.



INTRODUCTION.

DANAUS and Ægyptus, sons of Belus, were fourth in descent from Iö. The first had fifty daughters, the latter as many sons. Ægyptus deemed it his interest to unite their families and kingdoms still more closely, by the marriage of his sons with the daughters of his brother. Danaus and his children thought this connection so unlawful and impious that they sailed from Egypt and sought refuge in Greece. Mr. Potter well observes, that "the provident wisdom of their father Danaus, the calm but firm dignity of Pelasgus, the inviolable attachment to the laws of hospitality, the solemn sense of religion, and the chasteness of sentiment through the whole, must please every mind that is capable of being touched with the gracious simplicity of ancient manners." The religious peace that reigns throughout it, contrasts too, very agreeably, with the din of arms which pervaded the last tragedy.

The scene is near the shore, in an open grove, beside the altar and images of the gods presiding over the sacred games, with a view of the sea and the ships of Ægyptus on one side, and of the towers of Argos on the other.

The point at which the action commences, is when the Suppliants have just landed on the coast of Greece, which, after duly invoking Jupiter, the god of Suppliants, to protect them, they thus proceed to address :

CHOR. Ye royal towers, thou earth, and ye fair
streams

Of orient crystal, ye immortal gods
In the high heavens enthroned, ye awful powers
That deep beneath hold your tremendous seats,
Jove the preserver, guardian of the roof
Of pious men, receive your suppliants,
Breathe o'er these realms your gracious in-
fluence,

And form them to receive this female train !
But for those men, that proud injurious band
Sprung from Ægyptus, ere they fix their foot
On this moist shore, drive them into the deep,
With all their flying streamers and quick oars,
There let them meet the whirlwind's boist'rous
rage,

Thund'rings, and lightnings, and the furious
blasts

That harrow up the wild tempestuous waves,
And perish in the storm, ere they ascend
Our kindred bed, and seize against our will
What nature and the laws of blood deny.

Ye rising hills that crown this shore,
Where Apis* reign'd in years of yore,
Propitious hear me, nor disdain
To let your echoes learn this strain :
Barbaric though my voice and rude,
Well may its notes be understood ;

* Apis, a son of Apollo, the most ancient King of Peloponnesus, from which he is said to have expelled all venomous reptiles. Hence Nestor, in the 270th line of the 1st Iliad, says he came from the *Apian* land afar, to aid the Lapithæ against the Centaurs ; Pylos, now *Navarin*, was situate on the west coast of Peloponnesus.

Barbaric though this purfled stole,
 Flounc'd around with linen roll :
 This blushing veil though Sidon gave,
 Ye hills of Apis hear, and save !

The dashing oar, the swelling sail,
 That caught the favourable gale,
 Safe from the storms, let none complain,
 Wafted our frail bark o'er the main.
 All-seeing sovereign sire, defend,
 And guide us to a prosp'rous end ;
 Save us, O save the seed divine
 Of our great mother's sacred line ;
 From man's rude touch O set us free,
 And help insnared chastity !

Thou, virgin daughter of high Jove,
 A virgin's vows hear, and approve ;
 Holding thy sober, awful state,
 Protect us from the touch we hate ;
 From bold incontinence secure,
 Pure thyself, preserve us pure ;
 Save us, O save the seed divine
 Of our great mother's sacred line ;
 From man's rude touch O set us free,
 And help insnared chastity !

DANAUS, CHORUS.

DAN. Daughters, this hour demands your utmost
 prudence ;
 Your father's care, your old and faithful pilot,
 Hath held your helm safe o'er the dangerous
 deep ;
 Behoves you, now at land, with provident heed
 To form your counsels, and attentive mark
 My words. Yon cloud of dust, though tongue-
 less, speaks

An army nigh ; I hear their wheels of brass
Loud rattling on their axles ; now I view
Chariots and horse distinct, and shields, and
spears

Far gleaming o'er the plain ; the lords per-
chance

That rule these realms, inform'd of our arrival,
Advance ; but bring they to us minds of peace,
Guiltless of violence, or with ruthless rage
Rush on this train, best sit together, virgins,
Around this altar sacred to the Gods

Presiding o'er the games* : a surer refuge
Than tower or shield war-proof, an altar gives.
Go then with speed, and reverent in your
hands

Hold forth these supplicating branches, crown'd
With snowy wreaths, ensigns of awful Jove.

With modest, grave, and decent speech receive
These strangers, as beseems the wretched state
Of unknown suppliants ; declare at once
Distinct and brief the motives of your flight.

CHOR. Wise are thy counsels, and with reverent
heed

Shall be remember'd, father ; and may Jove,
The author of our race, look gracious on us.

Enter PELASGUS.

PELASGUS, DANAUS, CHORUS.

PEL. What female train address we here, and
whence,

Gorgeously vested in barbaric stoles
That float in many a fold ? Our Argos sees not

* These gods were Jupiter as presiding over the Olympic games, Neptune over the Isthmian, and Apollo as institutor of the Pythian.



Her daughters thus array'd, nor Greece through
all

Its states. That thus without some previous
herald,

The public hospitality not ask'd,

Without safe conduct, you have boldly ven-
tured

To land upon our coasts, it is most strange.

Only these boughs, as suppliants are wont,

You lay before these Gods that o'er the games

Preside: hence Greece forms only one con-
jecture,

Of all besides uncertain what to think,

Till your distinct relation clears our doubts.

CHOR. How am I to address thee, as a man

Of private station, or with hallow'd charge

Presiding here, or chieftain of the state?

PEL. Nay, answer me, and speak with confidence:

Pelasgus bids you, sovereign of this land:

My sire Palæchthon, of high ancestry

Original with th' earth: from me, their king,

The people take their name, and boast them-
selves

Pelasgians. O'er a wide extent of land,

Through which the Algeus flows, and Strymon
west,

From the Perrhæbians o'er the sacred heights

Of Pindus, to Pæonia, and beyond

The mountains of Dodona, spacious realms,

My empire stretches, bounded by the sea.

Now speak, and tell with speed your purpose
here;

But know we brook not the long pomp of words.

CHOR. Brief will I be, and plain. Of Argive race

We boast ourselves, and draw our vaunted lineage

From her, the lowing mother *, in her son †
Supremely blest. All this my words shall prove.

PEL. Unplausible your tale. Can it be, strangers,
That you're of Argive race? Liker, I ween,
To Libyan damsels, in no wise resembling
Our daughters, such perchance the Nile might rear,

Such in the glowing tint the artist's hand
Might mark the Colchian dame; and such, I
hear,

The wan'dring Indians, mounted on their
camels,

Along the tented plains out-stretching wide
To Æthiopia's cities; such the troops
Of warlike Amazons; and were your hands
Arm'd with the polish'd bow, I might conjecture
You were of these; therefore I thirst to know
More fully, how you are of Argive race.

CHOR. Fame speaks of Iö, in this Argive land,
Relating that the Thunderer, of her charms
Enamour'd, with a mortal mix'd the god.

PEL. What angry measures form'd his royal consort?

CHOR. The Argive queen transformed her to a
heifer;

An herdsman she assigned starr'd round with
eyes.

PEL. What herdsman this, and how starr'd round
with eyes?

CHOR. The earth-born Argus: but him Hermes
slew.

* Iö.

† Epaphus.

PEL. What new device to vex the wretched heifer?

CHOR. A winged pest, arm'd with a horrid sting:

Those on the banks of Nile call it the brize.

PEL. And drove her in long wand'rings from this
land?

CHOR. Thy words, according well, speak this for me.

PEL. Reach'd she Canobus, and the walls of Mem-
phis?

CHOR. There Jove with gentle hand sooth'd her to
rest;

There planted his illustrious progeny.

PEL. Who from this heifer boasts his race divine?

CHOR. Hence Epaphus received his name; from him
Libya, whose fair domains extended wide.

PEL. What other branch sprang from this mighty
root?

CHOR. Belus, the father of two sons; my sire,
Behold, is one.

PEL. Declare the sage's name.

CHOR. Danaus: his brother, whom by name they
call

Ægyptus, is the sire of fifty sons.

Thus have I shewn thee our high ancestry;

Protect us then, support an Argive train.

PEL. You seem indeed to draw your origin
Of old from hence: but say, how have you
dared

To leave your father's house? What chance
constrain'd you?

CHOR. King of Pelasgia, various are the ills
Of mortal man; and never may'st thou see
Misfortune mounting on the self-same wing.
Who would have thought we should have
wing'd our flight

Thus unexpected to the coast of Argos
 Allied of old, amazement in our van,
 And strong abhorrence of the nuptial bed !

PEL. In what would you engage my honour to you ?

CHOR. Not to enthral us to Ægyptus' sons,
 Should they demand us.

PEL. Arduous is the task
 Thou wouldst enjoin me, to provoke new wars.

CHOR. O'er him that succours, Justice holds her
 shield.

PEL. Struck with religious awe I thus behold
 These branches shade this consecrated seat.

CHOR. Dread then the wrath of Jove, who guards
 the suppliant.

Son of Palæchthon, hear me ; with a heart
 Prompt to relieve, king of Pelasgia, hear.
 Behold me suppliant, an exile, wand'ring,
 Like the poor lamb, that on the craggy steep
 Raises her mournful voice, secure of help,
 And warns her faithful keeper of her danger.

PEL. To me in private make not your request,
 Ere consultation with the people held
 Warrant the sanction of the public faith.

CHOR. Thou art the state ; the public thou ; thy
 voice,

Superior to control, confirms the sanction
 This altar gives ; thy sole authority,
 High-sceptred monarch of a sovereign throne,
 Is here obeyed : religion's voice pleads for us ;
 Revere it, nor profane these hallow'd seats.

PEL. That profanation to mine enemies.
 To grant you my protection cannot be
 But with much danger ; to reject your prayers,
 Humanity forbids : perplex'd I fear

To act, or not to act, and fix my choice.

CHOR. On heaven's high throne he sits whose
watchful eye

Regards the afflicted, when unfeeling pride
Denies that justice which the law asks for them.
Reverence his power; for when the sufferer
groans

With pangs unpitied, the fix'd wrath of Jove,
Protector of the suppliant, burns severe.

PEL. If by your country's laws Ægyptus' sons,
As next of blood, assert a right in you,
Who should oppose them? It behoves thee then
By your own laws to prove such claim unjust.

CHOR. Ah never may I be perforce a thrall
To man! By heaven-directed flight I break
The wayward plan of these detested nuptials.
Arm justice on thy side, and with her aid
Judge with that sanctity the Gods demand.

PEL. No easy province: make not me your judge.
Great though my power, it is not mine to act,
I told thee so, without my people's voice
Assenting; lest, if ill arise, they say
"Rash-judging king! thou hast undone thy
country."

CHOR. Deliberate then with prudent care:
To thy counsels take with thee
Heaven-commercing piety,
And be stedfast justice near.
Hark! methinks I hear them say,
Do not, mighty king, betray
Wretched exiles wand'ring far.
See me not with ruffian hand,
Outragèd at this shrine, profaned,
Learn what boist'rous man may dare.

See me not, with ruffled vest
 Rent unseemly from my breast,
 Loose my tresses waving round,
 Bridled with this golden brede,
 Led, like a reluctant steed,
 From the Gods that guard this ground.
 See each hallowed image here,
 And the awful powers revere :
 At thy feet thy suppliant laid,
 Mighty monarch hear and aid !

And know, to thee, thy house, thy rising race
 Impartial justice shall repay the deed ;
 With glory's radiant crown thy virtues grace,
 And righteous Jove shall sanctify the meed.

PEL. Well ; I have paused and pondered ; but each
 thought

Tells me the fluctuating tide perforce
 Will drive me on a war with these, or those :
 And, like a ship with all its anchors out,
 I must abide the storm : nor will this end
 Without calamity, and loss, and woe.

CHOR. Hear the last words of desperate modesty.
 Seest thou these braided zones that bind our
 robes ?

PEL. What would thy words intend ? Explain thyself.

CHOR. If honour shall not guard this female train—

PEL. How can these binding zones secure your
 safety ?

CHOR. Hanging new trophies on these images.

PEL. Mysterious are thy words ; speak plainly to
 me.

CHOR. To tell thee plainly then, I mean ourselves.

PEL. I hear the language of an anguished heart.

CHOR. Be sure of that ; I speak our firm resolves.

PEL. On every side inevitable ills
Surround me, like a flood whose dang'rous
surge

Drives me into a vast and gulfy sea,
Where no kind harbour shelters from the storm.
Should I not yield you refuge, thou hast named
A deed of horror not to be surpassed :
If with Ægyptus' sons, whose veins are rich
With kindred blood, before our walls I try
The chance of war, what else, but bitter loss
Can be th' event, when in a woman's cause
Men shed their warm blood on th' embattled
plain ?

Yet strong constraint compels me to revere
The wrath of Jove, whose hospitable power
Protects the suppliant, awfully severe.
And thou, age-honoured father of these virgins,
Take in thy hands these boughs, place them
with speed

On other altars of our country Gods ;
That all the citizens may see the signs
Of your arrival ; but of me be sure
Speak not a word : for this free people love
To tax authority with blame.

CHOR. For him
Thou hast ordered well ; but what becomes of
me ?

PEL. Seest thou that unfenced grove ? Take shelter
there.

CHOR. How should th' unconsecrated grove protect
me ?

PEL. Let them have wings, we leave you not their
prey.

CHOR. Be all thy words, be all thy actions happy !

PEL. Your father will not long be absent from you.
 Meanwhile will I persuade the assembled
 people,
 If haply I may move them, to receive you
 With gen'rous pity : him will I instruct
 How best t' address his speech. Await th'
 event,
 And supplicate the Gods whose guardian power
 Is worshipped here to grant your hearts' warm
 wish.

This done, I will return ; and may persuasion
 Hang on his tongue, and wait upon my steps.
 CHOR. To whom, for justice when I raise the strain,
 To whom, save Jove, should I complain ?
 Great, awful author of our ancient line,
 Creative parent, independent lord,
 Disposer of the world, righteous, benign,
 Sovereign, above the highest high adored ;
 Whene'er he deigns to grace some favoured
 head,
 Easy alike to him the will, the word, the deed.

DANAUS, CHORUS.

DAN. Be of good courage, daughters ; a decree,
 Such as you wish, this gen'rous state has passed.

CHOR. Dear to my soul, with grateful tidings fraught,
 Hail, reverend parent ! But inform us how
 Passed the decree ; what numbers favoured us ?

DAN. Not one discordant voice jarred in their coun-
 cils.

The fire of youth glowed in these aged veins,
 When the whole people their uplifted hands
 Waved in the air, to witness their assent
 That we might be permitted here to dwell

Free, irreclaimable, inviolate :
 That none presume, native or stranger, hence
 To lead us ; and should force be used, whoe'er
 Assists not, him the public sentence drives,
 With infamy, an exile from his country.
 This the Pelasgian king advised, to us
 Benevolent, declaring the fierce wrath
 Of Jove, protector of the suppliant,
 Could not permit this firm and prosp'rous state
 To flourish ; but such double insult, offered
 To every law of hospitality
 Sacred and civil, would with twofold vengeance
 Draw ruin on it. When the Argives heard
 These arguments of winning eloquence,
 Impatient of the usual forms, they gave
 With hands uplifted their concordant suffrage
 Friendly to us : thus Jove decreed th' event.

CHOR. Come then, my sisters, for these pious Ar-
 gives

Breathe we some pious prayer, whose solemn
 strain

May reach the ear of Jove. And thou, Su-
 preme,

God of the stranger, hear a stranger's voice
 Sincere, unblamed ; and ratify our vows !

STRO. Ye progeny of Jove, whose awful power
 In yon ethereal plain

Fixes the glories of your reign,

Bend from your radiant seats your ear,

Attentive to a virgin's prayer,

And on this gen'rous race your choicest bless-
 ings shower.

Never may war, whose wanton rage

The thund'ring falchion joys to wield,

Joys, when embattled hosts engage,
 To mow with ruthless arm the field ;
 Never with rude discordant roar
 Affright the echoes of this shore ;
 Never with hostile hand
 Wave round these glitt'ring towers the blazing
 brand.

Soft-eyed humanity dwells here,
 That melting to the suppliant's tear
 Asserts our hopeless cause ;
 And spotless piety, whose breast
 Humbly reveres Jove's high behest,
 And hospitable laws.

Your sacred spirit fires the free
 To form the gen'rous, bold decree,
 Man's rude force to disdain ;
 To cast on heaven's dread lord their eye,
 The terrors of his vengeance fly,
 Nor scorn our female train :

He o'er the impious roof his thunder rolls,
 And awful in his wrath appals the guilty souls.

ANTIS. Our kindred train, suppliants of holy
 Jove,

Pelasgia's sons revere,
 And make our wrongs their gen'rous care.

For this at every hallowed shrine
 Propitious be each power divine ;

For this beneath this solemn-shaded grove
 Our raptured invocations rise,

And Heaven shall hear the pious strains.

Ah ! never may malignant skies

Blast the fresh glories of your plains :

Nor pestilence with pois'nous breath,

Waste your thin towns with livid death :

Nor war's stern power deface
The blooming flowers that youth's fair season
 grace.

Still may your chiefs, a reverend band,
Around the hallowed altars stand ;

 And ardent for the state

Pour the warm vow to Heaven's high Lord,
The great, the just ; whose will adored

 With hoar law tempers fate *.

Still rise new chiefs, a lengthened line,
(Kind on their birth, Diana, shine !)

 The brave, the wise, the good :

But never discord's dread alarms

Your madd'ning cities rouse to arms,

 And stain your streets with blood :

Nor pale disease her sickly dew's display,

Touched by thy golden beams, ambrosial fount
 of day.

EPOD. Fav'ring seasons grace the year,
Crown with rich fruits your cultured plains ;
 The joyful flock, the sportive steer,
Bound wanton o'er your wide domains.
 Each immortal show'ring treasures,
Wake the soft melodious measures ;
Let the chastely-warbled lay
The muses' rapture-breathing shell obey.
Firm may the honours of your laws remain,
And prudence in your counsels reign :
Just to yourselves and to the stranger kind,
 May peace to sleep consign the bloodless
 sword ;

* Hoar law is an expression significant of the purity of justice, to which the *cana fides* of the Latins corresponds.

Each honour to your country's Gods assigned;
 Each laurell'd shrine with hallow'd rites
 adored;
 The parent's hoary head with reverence crown-
 ed;
 View this, ye righteous Gods, and stretch pro-
 tection round!

DANAUS, CHORUS.

DAN. I like this well; wise are these votive strains.
 But though your father brings unwelcome
 tidings,
 New, and unlook'd for, fear not you th' event.
 From yon high mound, where first you sup-
 pliant stood,
 I saw a ship, I mark'd its waving streamer,
 Its swelling sails, and all its gallant trim:
 Its prow with heedful eye observes its way,
 Obedient to the helm that guides behind;
 Unfriendly sight! the sailors too I mark'd,
 Conspicuous in white robes their sable limbs,
 Th' attendant vessels, proudly riding, sweep
 The watery way; she, foremost, near the land
 Now furls her sails, and all the shouting crew
 Bend to the eager oar. Behoves you now
 Sedate and sage attention, nor neglect
 These Gods. I haste to bring their gen'rous
 aid,
 The patrons, the protectors of your cause.
 Haply some herald may be sent, with charge
 To claim you as their prize: it shall not be:
 Argos, I know, will arm in your defence.

CHOR. Fatally fierce they are, and on their pride
 Destruction waits, and never-sated war,

These sons of old Egyptus, not to thee
 Unknown: E'en now their firm-compacted ships
 Black o'er the angry deep insulting ride,
 Eager to land their sable-tinctured hosts.

DAN. And they shall find a host, whose toil-strung
 arms

Relax not in the sun's meridian heat.

CHOR. Forsake me not, ah, leave me not alone,
 I pray thee, father; a forsaken woman
 Is very weak: their wily, faithless minds,
 Like obscene birds, spare not the hallow'd
 altar.

DAN. Now fair befall our cause, if their mad rage,
 Insulting thee, my child, insults the Gods.

CHOR. Neither these tridents, nor this solemn scene
 Will awe them to refrain their impious hands.
 They scorn the Gods, and with unhallowed force
 Rush madly on, like savage, rav'ning dogs.

STRO. Oh might I sit sublime in air,
 Where wat'ry clouds the freezing snows pre-
 pare!

Or on a rock whose threat'ning brow,
 Th' aerial vulture's unreach'd seat,
 In solitary state

Frowns ruinous o'er th' affrighted waste below:
 Roll'd headlong down its rugged side,
 A mangled carcass let me lie,
 Ere dragg'd a pale, unwilling bride,
 Victim to sad necessity;

And my indignant heart
 Feel the keen wounds of sorrow's tort'ring dart.

ANTIS. Throw me, ere that detested day,
 To prowling dogs and rav'nous birds a prey.

No form of death affrights me now :
 O thou, assigned the wretch's friend,
 To bid his miseries end,
 And in oblivion's balm to steep his woe ;
 Come, gentle death, ere that sad hour
 Which drags me to the nuptial bed ;
 And let me find in thy soft power
 A refuge from the force I dread ;
 O spread thy sable cloud,
 And in its unpierced gloom our sorrows shroud !

EPOD. Higher let your voices rise,
 And swell the choral descant to the skies,
 Notes of such a lofty vein
 That Gods may listen to the solemn strain !
 Eternal Sire, from Heaven's high throne,
 If thy indignant eye-balls glow
 With vengeance at foul deeds below,
 Look down, thou Sovereign of the World, look
 down :
 Ægyptus' sons, a ruffian race,
 Our flying footsteps chase ;
 And on our trembling, weeping band,
 Advance to lay their vengeful hand :
 Extend thy golden scales,
 For without thee what mortal worth avails ?
 By land, by sea,
 They seek their prey ;
 Oh, ere they seize it, may the ruffians die !
 Again I raise the mournful cry.
 They come, they come, the haughty foes :
 These are but preludes to my woes,
 To yon strong rampires bend your flight ;
 By sea, by land they rush severe,

And with their stern and threat'ning air,
 The softness of our sex affright.
 Look down, thou Sovereign of the World, and
 save !

Enter the Egyptian herald.

HERALD, CHORUS.

HER. Hence to the ship, hence with your utmost
 speed.

CHOR. No, never, never ; slay, stab me to death,
 Rend from these mangled limbs my bleeding
 head.

HER. Hence, I command you, to the rolling vessel
 Instantly hence : if one presume to linger,
 I pay no reverence to your crisped locks,
 This hand perforce shall drag her by her
 tresses.

CHOR. Ye rulers of the city, Force o'erpow'rs me.

HER. You shall see many rulers, doubt not, soon,
 Ægyptus' sons ; no anarchy is here.

CHOR. Unlook'd for ruin comes, O king, upon us.

HER. I must use force, I see, and pluck you hence
 Dragg'd by the locks, since my words move
 you not.

PELAGUS, HERALD, CHORUS.

PEL. Whence these outrageous deeds ? How dares
 thy pride

Offer this insult to the land, where dwell
 Pelasgian men ? Or didst thou deem that
 women

Alone inhabit here ? Thy savage acts,
 Barbarian, touch the dignity of Greece.

Learn thy mistake then, and thine high offence.

HER. A stranger, here I found whom I had lost ;
 These lead I hence ; and who shall take them
 from me ?

PEL. Dare but to touch them, dearly shalt thou rue
 it.

HER. Is this your hospitality to strangers ?

PEL. I owe the ruffian none, that robs the Gods.

HER. Then let me speak, and plainly ; it becomes
 A herald's office to speak all things plain,
 Many shall shed their dear blood in the dust,
 Many lie low on earth, and bite the ground,
 Ere you shall see this dreadful quarrel end.

PEL. Hear then what honour prompts, what justice
 dictates,

And bear it to the partners of thy voyage.

If these approve, if their free will incline
 them,

Lead them, if gentle words win their assent.

This firm decree the suffrage of the state
 Has render'd sacred, not by force to yield

A train of females ; this resolve, be sure
 Is strongly fixed, and never can be shaken.

Though not engraved on tablets, nor enrolled
 In seal-stamped volumes, my free voice de-
 clares it

In words of plainest import. Take thy answer ;
 Hence from my sight, with thy best speed be
 gone.

HER. Know then a rising war awaits thy choice ;
 Valour and conquest crown the helms of men.

PEL. You shall be met by men, whose lively blood
 Dull draughts of barley wine have never
 clogged.

Now virgins, with your train of faithful
 friends,
 Dismiss your fears; enter this town, whose
 walls
 Strong-built, and crowned with many a bul-
 wark, lift
 Their towered heads impregnable: within
 This state has many structures; nor is mine
 A small or lonely dwelling; such a house,
 Where cheerful numbers live in wealth and
 splendour,
 May haply please you: if a private mansion,
 Devoted to your use, be more your wish,
 The best of these, the most approved, is
 yours.

Make your free choice: I will protect you all.

CHOR. For these thy bounties may the bounteous
 Gods

Shower blessings on thy head, thou generous
 king

Of brave Pelasgia! But benevolent
 Send us our father Danaus, on whose firm
 And provident counsels we rely. His care,
 And sage advice is needful, where to choose
 Our dwelling, our secure retreat. The tongue
 Of slander is too prompt with wanton malice
 To wound the stranger: act we then with cau-
 tion.

PEL. With honour, lovely virgins, with the voice
 Of fair-applauding fame amidst our city
 Shall your appointment be, where'er your father
 Assigns to each her mansion and attendants.

Enter DANAUS.

DANAUS, CHORUS.

DAN. Daughters, it well becomes you to these Ar-
gives,

As to th' immortal Gods, to offer vows,
Libation, sacrifice, and every rite
Religion knows; so liberal their protection,
So readily they lent their friendly ears,
And favoured all my deeds against these youths,
These kindred youths, whose headlong pride
thus haunts you.

Behold these spears around, to me assigned
An honourable guard, that no rude hand
With barbarous rage may lift the secret sword,
And with my blood pollute the pious land.

CHOR. O may the powers of Heaven in all besides
Be gracious to us; in our virgin honour
Have confidence: be their high wills un-
changed,
I shall not deviate from my mind's fixed plan.

No more to Nile's deep floods belong
The warbled voice, the raptured song;
Our praise Pelasgia's towns demand;
And each fresh fount that loves to lead
His humid train through grove, through
mead,

And rolls luxuriance through the land.
Virgin Diana, bend thine eye,
And piteous of a virgin's woes,
O save ensnared chastity,
From the rude touch of hated foes:
Nor see thy struggling votaries led
Where Venus decks the bed!

Nor, Queen of Love, shall our mellifluous lays
Be silent in thy praise :

For thou, next Heaven's imperial queen,
In highest grace with Jove art seen,

And mighty deeds declare thy power ;
The passions hear thy soft control ;
Thy sweet voice melts the willing soul,
Enchanted with thy honied lore.

Round thee, where'er thou lead'st the way,
Joyful the frolic Cupids rove :

And as their antic sports they play,
Whisper the harmony of love.

But what have I with love or joy ?

My peace wild fears annoy,
The miseries of flight, pursuit's alarms,
And slaughter-threatening arms :

Why else the quick, the fav'ring gales
Waft o'er the waves their flying sails ?

SEMICH. This is the fixed decree of fate ;
And thus high Heaven's unbounded Lord,
Pronounced th' irrevocable word,
And doom'd us to the nuptial state.

CHOR. Ah, never may his sovereign will
Me to Ægyptus' sons unite !

SEMICH. This is to grasp at shadows still,
And sooth thy soul with vain delight.

CHOR. Know'st thou his will ? Or has thine eye
Looked through futurity ?

SEMICH. His mind I dare not scan, immense, pro-
found :

And thou thy wishes bound ;
'Gainst Heaven's high will exclaim no more,
But in mute meekness learn t' adore.

CHOR. Almighty Sire, whose healing hand
Sooth'd thy loved Iô's soul to rest,
With comfort cheer this sorrowing breast,
And save us from this hostile band!
For me through fortune's cloud hope beams
her ray,
And from that cloud grows brightening like
the sun;
So right succeeding right shall force its way,
And the good Gods complete what Greece
begun.

END OF THE SUPPLIANTS.

WE have thus gone through the Seven Tragedies that remain to us of ÆSCHYLUS, in the manner that was proposed. Much has been curtailed from all, and much that in the original is interesting and exquisitely beautiful has been omitted, but it is hoped that the volume has been rendered as complete, and as suitable to the taste of English readers, as its nature and limits would permit. It may be safely affirmed, that those who read it with any degree of attention and pleasure, will have a juster notion of the nature and scope of Greek Tragedy, and of the genius of its great founder, than most of those who at much expense of time and pains toil through one of these plays even in the language of Æschylus himself, but presently abandon their task before they have acquired any relish whatever for their author, and just when the study might, if properly pursued, become both useful and very delightful to them.

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