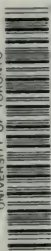


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THE PLAYS
OF
EURIPIDES

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INTRODUCTION.

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successful.

OF

EURIPIDES

[B.C. 455 TO B.C. 408]

I

ALCESTIS, AND OTHER PLAYS

II

THE BACCHANALS, AND OTHER PLAYS →

III

HECUBA, AND OTHER PLAYS

WITH INTRODUCTIONS BY HENRY MORLEY

LL.D., EMERITUS PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH LITERATURE
AT UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, LONDON

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ninety-two tragedies, of which fifteen were successful. There remain to us eighteen.

In these plays there is a philosophic spirit showing the action, with keen human sympathies. Euripides was once accused of impiety in a court of justice, and his faith in the gods of Greece had doubts and reservations that a hostile critic could detect. He realized to his own mind the legendary characters, and painted them as human beings really are. As Aristotle said, Sophocles painted men as they ought to be ; Euripides painted them as they are.

Of the plays given in this volume, "Alcestis" was produced in the year 438 B.C. and is the earliest of those which remain to us. It is based on the old Greek myth that set forth the true beauty of marriage, and caused our Chaucer to make Admetus and Alcestis, under Venus, king and queen of love. "Electra" was written probably almost twenty-five years later, and "Orestes" was produced in the year 408, thirty years after "Alcestis," and only two years before the poet's death. The "Trojan Dames" had been produced seven years earlier.

"Iphigenia in Aulis" was one of three plays brought out at the great Dionysia by the youngest son of Euripides after his father's death. The date of the "Iphigenia in Tauris" cannot be determined.

Fables about Euripides abound. He is said to have written his plays in a cavern. He is said to have had two wives who were both false to him, statements against

which there is a good deal of evidence, and for which there is none. The dogs who tore him to death are said to have been women; and their reason for picking him to pieces in that very decisive manner, was that he was going to an assignation (aged seventy-five). In the year 414, eight years before his death, he was bitterly attacked by Aristophanes in the "Thesmophoriazusæ," and the absence from the attack of any reference to the two bad wives is decisive against the fable. He was married to Chœrilla at least thirty years. Fables abound among the chatter of the world, and when the question is of a poet who was alive two thousand two hundred and fifty years ago, they are apt to be a little untrustworthy. They are not always exactly fitted to the facts when they concern one of us who are now living. On the whole, he is near truth who will think or speak no evil of any one except on evidence that would convince a jury.

H. M.

September 1887

I

	PAGE
ALCESTIS	9
ELECTRA	47
ORESTES	93
IPHIGENIA IN AULIS	145
IPHIGENIA IN TAURIS	199
THE TROJAN DAMES	245

EURIPIDES.

ALCESTIS.

ADMETUS and Alcestis were nearly related before their marriage. Æolus, the third in descent from Prometheus, was the father of Cretheus and Salmoneus; Æson the father of Jason, and Pheres the father of Admetus, were sons of Cretheus; Tyro, the daughter of Salmoneus, was by Neptune mother to Pelias, whose eldest daughter Alcestis was. The historian, who relates the arts by which Medea induced the daughters of Pelias to cut their father in pieces in expectation of seeing him restored to youth, tells us that Alcestis alone, through the tenderness of her filial piety, concurred not with her sisters in that fatal deed.—*Diodor. Sic.*

Pheres, now grown old, had resigned his kingdom to his son, and retired to his paternal estate, as was usual in those States where the sceptre was a spear. Admetus, on his first accession to the regal power, had kindly received Apollo, who was banished from heaven, and compelled for the space of a year to be a slave to a mortal; and the god, after he was restored to his celestial honours, did not forget that friendly house; but, when Admetus lay ill of a disease from which there was no recovery, prevailed upon the Fates to spare his life, on condition that some near relation would consent to die for him; but neither his father, nor his mother, nor any of his friends, was willing to pay this ransom. Alcestis, hearing this, generously devoted her own life to save her husband's.

Upon this wild and unpromising fable the poet has built this

pleasing drama. With a beautiful simplicity which characterizes the compositions of the ancients, and with a tenderness of which his own heart was peculiarly susceptible, he has given these scenes of domestic sensibility and distress their full effect. The interview indeed between Pheres and Admetus is harsh and indelicate; the Chorus acknowledges it to be so, and rebukes them both; but it is the natural result of the manners and ideas of the times, and therefore not offensive to an Athenian audience, though to us it must appear indecent: it shows what it was intended to show, the impassioned grief of Admetus, and in those times the passions spoke their own natural language without reserve; and, according to the ideas of those times, Pheres must be considered as guilty of the basest and most unnatural pusillanimity. Virgil, the most accurate observer of nature, gives even the unfeeling and savage Mezentius the softening of parental affection, and makes him exclaim, on the sight of his son, who died to save his father—

Tantane me tenuit vivendi, nate, voluptas,
 Ut pro me hostili paterer succedere dextræ
 Quem genui? tuane hæc genitor per vulnera servor,
 Morte tuâ viven?

The design of this tragedy is to recommend the virtue of hospitality, so sacred among the Grecians, and encouraged on political views, as well as to keep alive a generous and social benevolence: the refinement of a double moral ill agrees with the simplicity of the ancients.

The scene is in the vestibule of the house of Admetus.

Palæphatus has given this explanation of the fable: After the death of Pelias, Acastus pursued the unhappy daughters to punish them for destroying their father. Alcestis fled to Pheræ; Acastus demanded her of Admetus, who refused to give her up; he therefore advanced towards Pheræ with a great army, laying the country waste with fire and sword. Admetus marched out of the city to check these devastations, fell into an ambush, and was taken prisoner. Acastus threatened to put him to death. When Alcestis understood that the life of Admetus was in this danger on her account, she went voluntarily and surrendered herself to Acastus, who

discharged Admetus, and detained her in custody. At this critical time Hercules, on his expedition to Thrace, arrives at Pheræ, is hospitably entertained by Admetus, and, being informed of the distress and danger of Alcestis, immediately attacks Acastus, defeats his army, recovers the lady, and restores her to Admetus.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

APOLLO.
ORCUS.
ALCESTIS
ADMETUS.
EUMELUS.

HERCULES.
PHERES.
ATTENDANTS.
CHORUS OF PHERÆANS.

APOLLO.

THY royal house, Admetus, yet again
I visit, where a slave among thy slaves
Thy table, though a god, I deigned to praise ;
To this compelled by Jove, who slew my son,
The healing sage, launching against his breast
The flaming thunder ; hence enraged I killed
The Cyclops, that prepared his fiery bolts.
For this a penal task my vengeful sire
Assigned me, to a mortal doomed a slave
Perforce ; I hither came, and fed his herds,
Who friendly entertained me, guarding then,
And to this day, his hospitable house.
Holy the house, and holy is its lord,
The son of Pheres ; him from death I saved
The Fates beguiling ; for those ancient powers
Assented that Admetus should escape
Death then approaching, would some other go,
Exchanged for him, to the dark realms beneath.
His friends, his father, e'en the aged dame
That gave him birth, were asked in vain ; not one

Was found, his wife except ; for him she willed
 To die, and view no more th' ethereal light.
 She in the house, supported in their arms,
 Now sighs out her last breath : for she must die.
 And this the fate-appointed day : for this,
 Dear as it is, I leave the friendly mansion,
 Lest there pollution find me. But I see
 Orcus advancing near, priest of the dead ;
 He to the house of Pluto will conduct her :
 Observant of the stated time he comes,
 True to the day when she perforce must die.

ORCUS, APOLLO.

ORC. Why art thou here ? Why dost thou make this house
 Thy haunt, Apollo ? Thou dost wrong, again,
 Th' infernal realms defrauding of their honours,
 Torn from them, or delayed. Sufficed it not
 T' have snatched Admetus from his doom, the Fates
 With fraudulent arts deluding ? Now again,
 Armed with thy bow, why dost thou guard his wife,
 Daughter of Pelias, bound by solemn vow,
 Saving her husband's life, to die for him ?

APOL. Fear not ; thy right I reverence and just claim.

ORC. What means thy bow, if thou revere the right ?

APOL. It ever is my wont to bear these arms.

ORC. Ay, and unjustly to defend this house.

APOL. I mourn th' afflictions of the man I love.

ORC. Wouldst thou defraud me of this second dead ?

APOL. The first by violence I took not from thee.

ORC. How on the earth then walks he now alive ?

APOL. Ransomed by her, for whom thou now art come.

ORC. And I will lead her to the realms below.

APOL. Take her : I know not if I might persuade thee.

ORC. Him, whom I ought, to seize ; for that prepared.

APOL. No : but t' involve in death ripe, lingering age.

ORC. Full well I understand thy speech and zeal.

APOL. May then Alcestis to that age be spared ?

ORC. No : honour, be assured, delights e'en me.

APOL. Thou canst but take a single life, no more,

ORC. Greater my glory when the youthful die.

APOL. More sumptuous obsequies await her age.

ORC. This were a law in favour of the rich.

APOL. What secret meaning hath thy wisdom here?

ORC. They with their wealth would purchase to die old.

APOL. Wilt thou not then indulge me with this grace?

ORC. Not I indeed : go to : thou knowest my manners.

APOL. Hostile to mortals, hateful to the gods.

ORC. Thou canst not have all that thou shouldst not have.

APOL. Yet, ruthless as thou art, soon wilt thou cease

This contest ; such a man to Pheres' house

Comes, to the frozen continent of Thrace

Sent by Eurystheus for the savage steeds

Yoked to the tyrant's car. He, in this house

A welcome guest t' Admetus, will by force

Take his wife from thee ; and no thanks from me

Will be thy due ; yet what I now entreat

Then thou wilt yield, and I shall hate thee still.

ORC. Say what thou wilt, nothing the more for that

Shalt thou from me obtain : this woman goes,

Be sure of that, to Pluto's dark domain.

I go, and with this sword assert my claim,

For sacred to th' infernal gods that head,

Whose hair is hallowed, by this charmed blade.

CHORUS.

1st SEMICHOR. Before this royal mansion all is still :
What may this melancholy silence mean ?

2nd SEMICHOR. And not a friend is nigh, from whom to
learn

Whether we ought to wail the queen now dead,

Or lives she yet, yet sees the light of heaven,

For conjugal affection justly deemed

By me, by all, the noblest of her sex.

1st SEMICHOR. Hear you a cry, hear you a clash of hands
Within, or lamentations for the dead ?

2nd SEMICHOR. Not e'en a servant holds his station here

Before the gates. O, 'midst this awful gloom
Appear, bright Pæan, and dispel the storm !

1st SEMICHOR. If she were dead, they would not be thus
silent ;

Nor could the body vanish from the house.

2nd SEMICHOR. Whence is thy confidence ? My fears o'er-
come me.

1st SEMICHOR. A wife so honoured would Admetus bear
Without due pomp in silence to her tomb ?

2nd SEMICHOR. Nor vase of fountain water do I see
Before the doors, as custom claims, to bathe
The corse ; and none hath on the portal placed
His locks, in solemn mourning for the dead
Usually shorn ; nor does the younger train
Of females raise their sorrowing voices high.

1st SEMICHOR. Yet this the fatal day, when she must leave
The light of heaven.

2nd SEMICHOR. Why dost thou mention this ?
O, thou hast touched my heart, hast touched my soul.

1st SEMICHOR. When on the good afflictions fall, to grieve
Becomes the man that hath been prized as honest.

Strophe.

In vain, our pious vows are vain :
Make we the flying sail our care,
The light bark bounding o'er the main,
To what new realm shall we repair ?
To Lycia's hallowed strand ?
Or where in solitary state,
'Midst thirsty deserts wild and wide
That close him round on ev'ry side,
Prophetic Ammon holds his awful seat ?
What charm, what potent hand
Shall save her from the realms beneath ?
He comes, the ruthless tyrant Death :
I have no priest, no altar more,
Whose aid I may implore.

Antistrophe.

O that the son of Phœbus now
 Lived to behold th' ethereal light !
 Then might she leave the seats below,
 Where Pluto reigns in cheerless night :
 The Sage's potent art,
 'Till thund'ring Jove's avenging power
 Hurl'd his red thunders at his breast,
 Could from the yawning gulf releast
 To the sweet light of life the dead restore.
 Who now shall aid impart ?
 To ev'ry god at ev'ry shrine
 The king hath paid the rites divine :
 But vain his vows, his pious care ;
 And ours is dark despair.

CHORUS, FEMALE ATTENDANT.

CHOR. But of the female train one from the house
 Comes bathed in tears : what tidings shall I hear ?
 To weep, if aught of ill befalls thy lords,
 Becomes thee : I would know if yet she lives,
 Or sinks beneath the ruthless power of death.

ATT. As living I may speak of her, and dead.

CHOR. Living and dead at once, how may that be ?

ATT. E'en now she sinks in death, and breathes her last.

CHOR. Unhappy king, of what a wife bereft !

ATT. Nor knows our lord his suffering, ere it comes.

CHOR. Is there no hope then yet to save her life ?

ATT. Th' inevitable day of fate is come.

CHOR. Have you prepared what the sad case requires ?

ATT. Each honour that may grace her obsequies.

CHOR. Illustrious in her death, the best of wives :

The sun in his wide course sees not her equal.

ATT. The best of wives indeed ; who will gainsay it ?

What could the brightest pattern of her sex

Do more ? What greater proof give of the honour

She bears her husband, than a ready will
To die for him ! This all the city knows.
How in the house she hath demeaned herself
Will claim thy admiration. When she knew
The destined day was come, in fountain water
She bathed her lily-tinctured limbs, then took
From her rich chests of odorous cedar formed
A splendid robe, and her most radiant dress ;
Thus gorgeously arrayed she stood before
The hallowed flames, and thus addressed her prayer :
“ O queen, I go to the infernal shades,
Yet, ere I go, with reverence let me breathe
My last request—Protect my orphan children,
Make my son happy with the wife he loves,
And wed my daughter to a noble husband :
Nor let them, like their mother, to the tomb
Untimely sink, but in their native land
Be blest through lengthened life to honoured age.”
Then to each altar in the royal house
She went, and crowned it, and addressed her vows,
Plucking the myrtle bough : nor tear, nor sigh
Came from her, neither did th’ approaching ill
Change the fresh beauties of her vermeil cheek.
Her chamber then she visits, and her bed ;
There her tears flowed, and thus she spoke : “ O bed,
To which my wedded lord, for whom I die,
Led me a virgin bride, farewell ! To thee
No blame do I impute, for me alone
Hast thou destroyed. Disdaining to betray
Thee, and my lord, I die. To thee shall come
Some other woman, not more chaste, perchance
More happy.” As she lay, she kissed the couch,
And bathed it with a flood of tears : that passed,
She left her chamber, then returned, and oft
She left it, oft returned, and on the couch
Fondly, each time she entered, cast herself.
Her children, as they hung upon her robes
Weeping, she raised, and clasped them to her breast
Each after each, as now about to die.

Each servant through the house burst into tears
 In pity of their mistress ; she to each
 Stretched her right hand ; nor was there one so mean
 To whom she spoke not, and admitted him
 To speak to her again. Within the house
 These are our griefs. Admetus must have died,
 Have perished ; but escaping is immersed
 In sorrows, which his heart shall ne'er forget.

CHOR. Well may the groan burst from him, thus to lose
 A wife with every excellence adorned.

ATT. He weeps indeed, and in his arms supports
 His much-loved wife, entreats her not to leave him,
 Asking impossibilities. She wastes
 And fades with her disease ; her languid limbs
 Supporting on his hand, yet while some breath
 Of life remains she wishes to behold
 The radiance of the sun, 'tis her last view,
 As never more to see his golden orb.
 I go to tell them thou art here : not all
 Bear to their lords that firm unshaken faith
 T' attend them in their ills ; but thou of old
 Hast to this house approved thyself a friend.

CHOR. Supreme of gods, is there no remedy
 To these afflictions, from the storms of fate
 No refuge to our lords ? Some means of safety
 Hast thou assigned ? Or must these locks be shorn,
 And sorrow robe me in her sable weeds ?

ATT. Too plain, my friends, too plain : yet to the gods
 Breathe we our vows, for great their power to save.
 O royal Pæan, for Admetus' ills
 Find some relief ; assist him, O assist him !
 As thou before didst save him, save him now
 From death ; repress the tyrant's murd'rous haste !

CHOR. Alas, alas ! Woe, woe is me ! Thou son
 Of Pheres, wilt thou bear to live, deprived
 Of such a wife ? Will not despair unsheath
 The self-destroying sword ? Will it not find
 Some means of violent death ? This day thy wife—
 Dear should I say ? nay, dearest to thy soul—

Shalt thou see dead. But she comes forth, and with her
 Her husband. Groan, thou land of Pheres, raise
 The cry of mourning ; for the best of women
 Wastes with disease, and drooping to the earth
 Sinks to th' infernal Pluto's dreary realms.
 Never will I pronounce the nuptial state
 To pleasure more allied than grief : of old
 This often have I noted, chiefly now
 Viewing my king's affliction, who, bereft
 Of this sweet excellence, is doomed to pass
 A solitary life estranged from joy.

ALCESTIS, ADMETUS, EUMELUS, CHORUS.

ALC. Thou sun, and thou fair light of day, ye clouds
 That in quick eddies whirl along the sky !

ADM. Sees thee and me most wretched, yet in nought
 Offending 'gainst the gods that thou shouldst die.

ALC. O earth, ye tow'ring roofs, thou bridal bed
 Raised in Iolcos, my paternal seat !

ADM. O thou poor sufferer, raise thee, leave me not ;
 Entreat the powerful gods to pity thee.

ALC. I see the two-oared boat, the Stygian barge ;
 And he, that wafts the dead, grasps in his hand
 His pole, and calls me, " Why dost thou delay ?
 Haste thee ; thou lingerest ; all is ready here.
 Charon impatient speeds me to begone."

ADM. A melancholy voyage this to me.
 O thou unhappy, what a fate is ours !

ALC. He drags me, some one drags me to the gates
 That close upon the dead ; dost thou not see him,
 How stern he frowns beneath his gloomy brows,
 Th' impetuous Pluto ? What wouldst thou with me ?
 Off, let me go ! Ah, what a dreary path,
 Wretched, most wretched, must I downwards tread !

ADM. To thy friends mournful, most to me, and these
 Thy children, who with me this sorrow share.

ALC. No longer hold me up, hold me no longer ;
 Here lay me down : I have not strength to stand :

Death is hard by, dark night creeps o'er my eyes.
My children, O my children, now no more,
Your mother is no more : farewell ! May you
More happy see the golden light of heaven !

ADM. Ah, what a mournful word is this ! To me
Than any death more painful. By the gods,
Forsake me not. Shouldst thou be taken from me,
I were no more ; in thee I live ; thy love,
Thy sweet society my soul reveres.

ALC. Thou seest, Admetus, what to me the Fates
Assign ; yet, ere I die, I wish to tell thee
What lies most near my heart. I honoured thee,
And in exchange for thine my forfeit life
Devoted ; now I die for thee, though free
Not to have died, but from Thessalia's chiefs
Preferring whom I pleased in royal state
To have lived happy here : I had no will
To live bereft of thee with these poor orphans ;
I die without reluctance, though the gifts
Of youth are mine to make life grateful to me.
Yet he that gave thee birth, and she that bore thee,
Deserted thee, though well it had beseemed them
With honour to have died for thee, t' have saved
Their son with honour, glorious in their death.
They had no child but thee, they had no hope
Of other offspring shouldst thou die ; and I
Might thus have lived, thou mightst have lived, till age
Crept slowly on, nor wouldst thou heave the sigh
Thus of thy wife deprived, nor train alone
Thy orphan children. But some god appointed
It should be thus : thus be it. Thou to me
Requite this kindness ; never shall I ask
An equal retribution, nothing bears
A value high as life : yet my request
Is just, thou wilt confess it ; for thy love
To these our children equals mine, thy soul
If wisdom tempers. In their mother's house
Let them be lords : wed not again, to set
A stepdame o'er my children, some base woman

That wants my virtues ; she through jealousy
Will work against their lives, because to thee
I bore them : do not this, I beg thee do not ;
For to the offspring of a former bed
A stepdame comes sharp as a serpent's tooth.
My son, that holds endearing converse with thee,
Hath in his father a secure protection.
But who, my daughter, shall with honour guide
Thy virgin years ? What woman shalt thou find,
New-wedded to thy father, whose vile arts
Will not with slanderous falsehoods taint thy name,
And blast thy nuptials in youth's freshest bloom
For never shall thy mother see thee led
A bride, nor at thy throes speak comfort to thee,
Then present when a mother's tenderness
Is most alive : for I must die ; the ill
Waits not a day, but quickly shall I be
Numbered amongst the dead. Farewell, be happy
And thou, my husband, mayst with honour boast
Thou hast been wedded to a virtuous wife ;
And you, my children, glory in your mother.

CHOR. Fear not : I boldly pledge my faith that this
He will perform, if reason holds her seat.

ADM. This shall be done, let not such fears disturb thee,
It shall be done ; for living thou wast mine,
And dead thou only shalt be called my wife.
Never in thy dear place Thessalian bride
Shall call me husband : no, nor other woman,
Though from a line of ancient kings she draws
Her noble blood, and boasts each peerless grace
Of native beauty. I am blest with children,
Nor wish I more ; in these I pray the gods
I may have joy, since all my joy in thee
Is lost. This mourning not one single year,
But to my life's last period, shall be borne.
How hateful are my parents ! for their words
Alone were friendly, not their deeds ; whilst thou,
Paying the dearest forfeit for my life,
Hast saved me. Shall I ever cease to mourn,

Deprived of such a wife? Hence I renounce
 The feast, the cheerful guest, the flow'ry wreath,
 And song that used to echo through my house :
 For never will I touch the lyre again,
 Nor to the Libyan flute's sweet measures raise
 My voice; with thee all my delights are dead.
 Thy beauteous figure, by the artist's hand
 Skilfully wrought, shall in my bed be laid ;
 By that reclining, I will clasp it to me,
 And call it by thy name, and think I hold
 My dear wife in my arms, and have her yet,
 Though now no more I have her : cold delight
 I ween ; yet thus th' affliction of my soul
 Shall I relieve, and visiting my dreams
 Shalt thou delight me ; for to see a friend
 Is grateful to the soul, come when he will,
 Though an unreal vision of the night.
 Had I the voice of Orpheus, and his skill
 Of power to soothe with my melodious strains
 The daughter of bright Ceres, or her husband,
 That from their realms I might receive thee back,
 I would go down ; nor should th' infernal dog,
 Nor the stern Charon, sitting at his oar
 To waft the dead, restrain me, till thy life
 I had restored to the fair light of day.
 But there await me till I die ; prepare
 A mansion for me, as again with me
 To dwell ; for in thy tomb will I be laid
 In the same cedar, by thy side composed ;
 For ev'n in death I will not be disjoined
 From thee, who hast alone been faithful to me.

CHOR. For her dear sake thy sorrows will I share
 As friend with friend ; and she is worthy of it.

ALC. You hear, my children, what your father's words
 Have promised, not to wed another woman
 To your discomfort, nor dishonour me.

ADM. I now repeat it ; firm shall be my faith.

ALC. On this, receive thy children from my hands.

ADM. A much-loved gift, and from a much-loved hand.

ALC. Be now, instead of me, a mother to them.

ADM. If they lose thee, it must indeed be so.

ALC. When I should live, I sink among the dead.

ADM. Ah me, what shall I do bereft of thee!

ALC. Time will abate thy grief, the dead is nothing.

ADM. O lead me, by the gods, lead me down with thee.

ALC. Enough, it is enough that I die for thee.

ADM. O fate, of what a wife dost thou deprive me!

ALC. A heavy weight hangs on my darkened eye.

ADM. If thou forsake me, I am lost indeed.

ALC. As one that is no more I now am nothing.

ADM. Ah, raise thy face : do not forsake thy children.

ALC. It must be so perforce : farewell, my children!

ADM. Look on them, but a look!

ALC. I am no more.

ADM. How dost thou? Wilt thou leave us then?

ALC. Farewell!

ADM. And what a wretch, what a lost wretch am I!

CHOR. She's gone; thy wife, Admetus, is no more.

EUM. O my unhappy fate!

My mother sinks to the dark realms of night,

Nor longer views this golden light;

But to the ills of life exposed

Leaves my poor orphan state.

Her eyes, my father, see, her eyes are closed,

And her hand nerveless falls.

Yet hear me, O my mother, hear my cries,

It is thy son that calls,

Who prostrate on the earth breathes on thy lips his sighs.

ADM. On one that hears not, sees not : I and you

Must bend beneath affliction's heaviest load.

EUM. Ah, she hath left my youth :

My mother, my dear mother, is no more,

Left me my sufferings to deplore;

Who shall my sorrows soothe?

Thou too, my sister, thy full share shalt know

Of grief, thy heart to rend.

Vain, O my father, vain thy nuptial vows,

Brought to this speedy end ;

For, when my mother died, in ruin sunk thy house.

CHOR. Admetus, thou perforce must bear these ills :
Thou'rt not the first, nor shalt thou be the last
Of mortal men, to lose a virtuous wife :
For know, death is a debt we all must pay.

ADM. I know it well ; not unawares this ill
Falls on me ; I foresaw, and mourned it long.
But I will bear the body hence ; attend :
And, whilst you wait, raise with alternate voice.
The pæan to the ruthless god that rules
Below : and through my realms of Thessaly
I give command that all in solemn grief
For this dear woman shear their locks, and wear
The sable garb of mourning ; from your steeds,
Whether in pairs they whirl the car, or bear
Single the rider's rein, their waving manes
Cut close ; nor through the city be the sound
Of flute or lyre for twelve revolving moons.
Never shall I entomb one dearer to me,
Or one more kind : these honours from my hands
She merits, for she only died for me.

Strophe 1.

Immortal bliss be thine,
Daughter of Pelias, in the realms below,
Immortal pleasures round thee flow,
Though never there the sun's bright beams shall shine.
Be the black-browed Pluto told,
And the Stygian boatman old,
Whose rude hands grasp the oar, the rudder guide,
The dead conveying o'er the tide,
Let him be told, so rich a freight before
His light skiff never bore ;
Tell him that o'er the joyless lakes
The noblest of her sex her dreary passage takes.

Strophe 2.

Thy praise the bards shall tell,
 When to their hymning voice the echo rings,
 Or when they sweep the solemn strings,
 And wake to rapture the seven-chorded shell,
 Or in Sparta's jocund bowers,
 Circling when the vernal hours
 Bring the Carnean feast, whilst through the night
 Full-orbed the high moon rolls her light ;
 Or where rich Athens proudly elevate
 Shows her magnificent state :
 Their voice thy glorious death shall raise,
 And swell th' enraptured strain to celebrate thy praise.

Antistrophe 1.

O that I had the power,
 Could I but bring thee from the shades of night
 Again to view this golden light,
 To leave that boat, to leave that dreary shore,
 Where Cocytus deep and wide
 Rolls along his sullen tide !
 For thou, O best of women, thou alone
 For thy lord's life daredst give thy own.
 Light lie the earth upon that gentle breast,
 And be thou ever blest !
 But should he choose to wed again,
 Mine and thy children's hearts would hold him in disdain.

Antistrophe 2.

When, to avert his doom,
 His mother in the earth refused to lie ;
 Nor would his ancient father die
 To save his son from an untimely tomb ;
 Though the hand of time had spread
 Hoar hairs o'er each aged head ;
 In youth's fresh bloom, in beauty's radiant glow,
 The darksome way thou daredst to go,

And for thy youthful lord's to give thy life.
 Be mine so true a wife ;
 Though rare the lot : then should I prove
 Th' indissoluble bond of faithfulness and love.

HERCULES, CHORUS.

HERC. Ye strangers, citizens of Pheræ, say
 If I shall find Admetus in the house.

CHOR. There is the son of Pheres, Hercules.
 But what occasion, tell us, brought thee hither
 To Thessaly ; to Pheræ why this visit ?

HERC. A toil imposed by the Tirynthian king.

CHOR. And whither roving ? on what journey bound ?

HERC. For the four steeds that whirl the Thracian's car.

CHOR. How to be won ; art thou a stranger there ?

HERC. A stranger, never on Bistonian ground.

CHOR. These horses are not won without strong contest.

HERC. The toil, whate'er it be, I could not shun.

CHOR. He must be slain, or death awaits thee there.

HERC. Not the first contest this I have essayed.

CHOR. Shouldst thou o'ercome their lord, what is the prize ?

HERC. His coursers to Eurystheus I shall lead.

CHOR. No slight task in their mouths to place the curb.

HERC. I shall, though from their nostrils they breathe fire.

CHOR. With their fierce jaws they rend the flesh of men.

HERC. So feeds the mountain savage, not the horse.

CHOR. Their mangers shalt thou see all stained with blood.

HERC. From whom does he that bred them draw his race ?

CHOR. From Mars this king of golden-shielded Thrace.

HERC. How is this toil assigned me by my fate,
 In enterprise so hazardous and high
 Engaged, that always with the sons of Mars
 I must join battle ? With Lycaon first,
 With Cygnus next ; now with these furious steeds
 And their proud lord another contest waits me :
 But never shall Alcmena's son be seen
 To tremble at the fierceness of a foe.

CHOR. But, see, the sceptred ruler of this land,
 Admetus, from his house advances to thee.

ADMETUS, HERCULES, CHORUS.

ADM. Hail, son of Jove, of Perseus' noble blood.

HERC. Hail thou, Admetus, king of Thessaly.

ADM. I am no stranger to thy friendly wishes.

HERC. Why are thy locks in sign of mourning shorn?

ADM. 'Tis for one dead, whom I must this day bury.

HERC. The god avert thy mourning for a child!

ADM. My children, what I had, live in my house.

HERC. Thy aged father, haply he is gone.

ADM. My father lives, and she that bore me lives.

HERC. Lies then thy wife Alcestis 'mongst the dead?

ADM. Of her I have in double wise to speak.

HERC. As of the living speakst thou, or the dead?

ADM. She is, and is no more: this grief afflicts me.

HERC. This gives no information, dark thy words.

ADM. Knowst thou not then the destiny assigned her?

HERC. I know that she submits to die for thee.

ADM. To this assenting is she not no more?

HERC. Lament her not too soon; await the time.

ADM. She's dead; one soon to die is now no more.

HERC. It differs wide to be, or not to be.

ADM. Such are thy sentiments, far other mine.

HERC. But wherefore are thy tears? What friend is dead?

ADM. A woman; of a woman made I mention.

HERC. Of foreign birth, or one allied to thee.

ADM. Of foreign birth, but to my house most dear.

HERC. How in thy house then did she chance to die?

ADM. Her father dead, she came an orphan hither.

HERC. Would I had found thee with no grief oppressed.

ADM. With what intent dost thou express thee thus?

HERC. To seek some other hospitable hearth.

ADM. Not so, O king; come not so great an ill.

HERC. To those that mourn a guest is troublesome.

ADM. Dead are the dead: but enter thou my house.

HERC. Shame that with those who weep a guest should feast.

ADM. We have apartments separate, to receive thee.

HERC. Permit me to depart, much will I thank thee.

ADM. It must not be; no, to another house

Thou must not turn aside. Go thou before;
 Ope those apartments of the house which bear
 A different aspect ; give command to those
 Whose charge it is to spread the plenteous table,
 And bar the doors between : the voice of woe
 Unseemly heard afflicts the feasting guest.

CHOR. What wouldst thou do, Admetus ? Such a grief
 Now lying heavy on thee, canst thou bear
 T' admit a guest ? Doth this bespeak thee wise ?

ADM. If from my house or city I should drive
 A coming guest, wouldst thou commend me more ?
 Thou wouldst not : my affliction would not thus
 Be less, but more unhospitable I ;
 And to my former ills this further ill
 Be added, I should hear my mansion called
 The stranger-hating house. Besides, to me
 His hospitable doors are always open,
 Whene'er I tread the thirsty soil of Argos.

CHOR. Why didst thou then conceal thy present grief,
 A stranger friend arriving, as thou sayst ?

ADM. My gate he would not enter, had he known
 Of my affliction aught : yet acting thus
 Some may perchance deem me unwise, nor hold me
 Worthy of praise ; yet never shall my house
 Know to dishonour or reject a guest.

CHORUS.

Strophe 1.

Yes, liberal house, with princely state
 To many a stranger, many a guest
 Oft hast thou oped thy friendly gate,
 Oft spread the hospitable feast.
 Beneath thy roof Apollo deigned to dwell,
 Here strung his silver-sounding shell,
 And mixing with thy menial train
 Deigned to be called the shepherd of the plain :

And as he drove his flocks along,
 Whether the winding vale they rove,
 Or linger in the upland grove,
 He tuned the pastoral pipe or rural song.

Strophe 2.

Delighted with thy tuneful lay
 No more the savage thirsts for blood ;
 Amidst thy flocks in harmless play
 Wantons the lynx's spotted brood ;
 Pleased from his lair on Othrys' rugged brow
 The lion seeks the vale below ;
 Whilst to thy lyre's melodious sound
 The dappled hinds in sportive measures bound ;
 And as the vocal echo rings,
 Lightly their nimble feet they ply,
 Leaving their pine-clad forests high,
 Charmed with the sweet notes of thy gladdening strings.

Antistrophe 1.

Hence is thy house, Admetus, graced
 With all that Plenty's hand bestows,
 Near the sweet-streaming current placed
 That from the lake of Bœbia flows.
 Far to the west extends the wide domain,
 Rich-pastured mead and cultured plain ;
 Its bound, the dark Molossian air,
 Where the Sun stations his unharnessed car,
 And stretching to his eastern ray,
 Where Pelion rising in his pride
 Frowns o'er th' Ægean's portless tide,
 Reaches from sea to sea thy ample sway.

Antistrophe 2.

Yet wilt thou ope thy gate e'en now,
 E'en now wilt thou receive this guest :
 Though from thine eye the warm tear flow,
 Though sorrow rend thy suffering breast :

Sad tribute to thy wife, who knew in death
 Lamented lies thy roof beneath.
 But Nature thus her laws decreed,
 The generous mind is prompt to generous deed ;
 For all the power of wisdom lies
 Fixed in the righteous bosom : hence
 My soul assumes this confidence,
 Fair to the virtuous shall Success arise.

ADMETUS, CHORUS.

ADM. Ye citizens of Pheræ, present here,
 Benevolent to me, my dead adorned
 With every honour, the attendant train
 Are bearing to the tomb and funeral pyre.
 Do you, for ancient usage so requires,
 Address her as she takes her last sad way.

CHOR. Thy father Pheres ! See, his aged foot
 Advances ; his attendants in their hands
 Bear gorgeous presents, honours to the dead.

PHERES, ADMETUS, CHORUS.

PHER. I come, my son, joint sufferer in thy griefs ;
 For thou hast lost a good and virtuous wife,
 None will gainsay it ; but thou must perforce
 Endure this, though severe. These ornaments
 Receive, and let her go beneath the earth :
 These honours are her due, since for thy life
 She died, my son ; nor would she I should be
 Childless, nor suffered me bereft of thee
 To waste in grief my sad remains of life.
 The life of all her sex hath she adorned
 With added lustre by this generous deed.
 O thou, that hast preserved my son, and raised
 Our sinking glories, hail ! E'en in the house
 Of Pluto be thou blest ! Such marriages
 Pronounce I good ; others of little worth.

ADM. Thou comest not to these obsequies by me

Invited, nor thy presence do I deem
Friendly. She never in thy ornaments
Shall be arrayed, nor wants she aught of thine
To grace her funeral rites. Then was the time
To show thy social sorrow, when my life
The Fates demanded : thou couldst stand aloof,
Old as thou art, and give a younger up
To die ; and wouldst thou now bewail her death ?
Art thou my father ? No ; nor she, who says
She brought me forth, my mother, though so called ;
But the base offspring of some slave thy wife
Stole me, and put me to her breast. Thy deeds
Show what thou art by plain and evident proof :
And never can I deem myself thy son,
Who passest all in mean and abject spirit.
At such an age, just trembling on the verge
Of life, that wouldst not—nay, thou daredst not—die
For thine own son : but you could suffer her,
Though sprung from foreign blood. With justice then
Her only as my father must I deem,
Her only as my mother ; yet this course
Mightst thou have run with glory, for thy son
Daring to die ; brief was the space of life
That could remain to thee. I then had lived
My destined time ; she too had lived, nor thus
Of her forsaken should I wail my loss.
Yet all that makes man happy hadst thou proved,
Blest through thy life : in royalty thy youth
Grew up ; I was thy son t' inherit from thee
Thy treasures, that not childless hadst thou died,
Leaving thy desolated house a prey
To plundering strangers. Neither canst thou say
Thou gavest me up to death as one that held
Thy age in rude contempt : I honoured thee
With holy reverence, requited thus
By thee and her that bore me. Other sons
Wilt thou not therefore speed thee to beget,
To cherish thy old age, to grace thee dead
With sumptuous vest, and lay thee in the tomb ?

That office never shall my hand perform,
For, far as in thee lay, I died ; if yet
I view this light, fortune presenting me
Other deliverer, his son I am,
With pious fondness to support his age.
Unmeaning is the old man's wish to die,
Of age complaining and life's lengthened course ;
For, at th' advance of death, none has the will
To die : old age is no more grievous to them.

CHOR. Forbear ; enough the present weight of woe.
My son, exasperate not a father's mind.

PHER. Me as some worthless Lydian dost thou rate,
My son, or Phrygian slave bought with thy gold ?
Dost thou not know I am Thessalian born,
Of a Thessalian father, truly free ?
Opprobrious are thy words, reviling me
With youthful insolence, not quitted so.
I gave thee birth, thence lord of my fair house ;
I gave thee nurture, that indeed I owed thee,
But not to die for thee : such law from nature
Received I not, that fathers for their sons
Should die, nor does Greece know it. For thyself,
Whether misfortune press thee, or thy state
Be happier, thou wast born : thou hast from me
Whate'er behoves thee : o'er an ample realm
Thou now art king, and I shall leave thee more,
A large extent of lands ; for from my father
These I received. In what then have I wronged thee ?
Or what deprived thee ? Die not thou for me,
Nor I for thee. Is it to thee a joy
To view the light of heaven ? and dost thou think
Thy father joys not in it ? Long I deem
The time below ? But little is the space
Of life, yet pleasant. Thou, devoid of shame,
Hast struggled not to die, and thou dost live
Passing the bounds of life assigned by fate,
By killing her. My mean and abject spirit
Thou dost rebuke, O thou most timid wretch,
Vanquished e'en by a woman, who for thee,

Her young and beauteous husband, freely died.
A fine device that thou mightst never die,
Couldst thou persuade who at the time might be
Thy wife to die for thee ; yet canst thou load
Thy friends with vile reproach, if they decline
To do it, base and timid as thou art.
But hold thy peace ; and think, if life be dear
To thee, it must be dear to all. On us,
If thou wilt throw reproaches, thou shalt hear
Enough of thy ill deeds, and nothing false.

CHOR. Too much of ill already hath been spoken :
Forbear, old man, nor thus revile thy son.

ADM. Say what thou wilt, I have declared my thoughts:
But if it gives thee pain to hear the truth,
Much it behoved thee not to wrong me thus.

PHER. Had I died for thee, greater were the wrong.

ADM. Is death alike then to the young and old ?

PHER. With one life ought we live, and not with two.

ADM. Mayst thou then live a greater age than Jove !

PHER. And dost thou, nothing injured, curse thy parents ?

ADM. I saw thee fondly coveting long life.

PHER. Her, that died for thee, wilt thou not entomb ?

ADM. These are the tokens of thy abject spirit.

PHER. By us she died not, that thou wilt not say.

ADM. Ah, mayst thou some time come to want my aid !

PHER. Wed many wives, that more may die for thee.

ADM. On thee be that reproach, thou wouldst not die.

PHER. Sweet is this light of heaven, sweet is this light.

ADM. Base is thy thought, unworthy of a man.

PHER. Would it not joy thee to entomb my age ?

ADM. Die when thou wilt, inglorious wilt thou die.

PHER. An ill report will not affect me dead.

ADM. Alas, alas, how shameless is old age !

PHER. She was not shameless, but thou foundst her mad.

ADM. Begone, and suffer me t' entomb the dead.

PHER. I go : thou shalt entomb her, as thyself
Her murderer. Look for vengeance from her friends.
Acastus is no man, if his hands fail
Dearly t' avenge on thee his sister's blood.

ADM. Why get thee gone, thou and thy worthy wife;
 Grow old together, as you well deserve,
 Childless, your son yet living; never more
 Meet me beneath this roof. Go! Were it decent
 To interdict thee by the herald's voice,
 I would forbid thee ever set thy foot
 Within this mansion of thy ancestors.

But let us go, since we must bear our ill,
 And place her body on the funeral pyre.

CHOR. O thou unhappy, nobly daring woman,
 Most generous, brightest excellence, farewell!
 Courteous my Hermes and th' infernal king
 Receive thee: in those realms if aught of grace
 Awaits the virtuous, be those honours thine,
 And be thy seat nigh Pluto's royal bride.

ATL. To many a guest ere now, from various realms
 Arriving, in this mansion have I spread
 The hospitable feast; but at this hearth
 A viler than this stranger never shared
 The bounty of Admetus: though he saw
 My lord oppressed with grief, it checked him not.
 He boldly entered; nor with sober cheer
 Took the refreshment offered, though he knew
 Th' affliction of the house. Is what he would
 We brought not on the instant, he enforced
 His harsh commands; and, grasping in his hands
 A goblet wreathed with ivy, filled it high
 With the grape's purple juice, and quaffed it off
 Unrestrained, till the glowing wine inflamed him;
 Then, binding round his head a myrtle wreath,
 Howls dismal discord: two displeasing strains
 We heard, his harsh notes, who in naught revered
 Th' afflictions of Admetus, and the voice
 Of sorrow through the family that wept
 Our mistress; yet our tearful eyes we showed not.
 Admetus so commanded, to the guest
 My office bids me wait, and in the house
 Receive this stranger, some designing knave.
 Or ruffian robber: she meantime is borne

Out of the house, nor did I follow her,
Nor stretched my hand lamenting my lost mistress :
She was a mother to me, and to all
My fellow-servants ; from a thousand ills
She saved us, with her gentleness appeasing
Our lord when angry : justly do I hate
This stranger then, who came amidst our grief.

HERCULES, ATTENDANT.

HERC. You fellow, why that grave and thoughtful look ?
Ill it becomes a servant's countenance
To frown on strangers, whom he should receive
With cheerfulness. A good friend of thy lord
Is present : all the welcome he can get
From thee, a sullen and contracted brow,
Mourning a loss that touches not this house.
Come hither, that thou mayst be wiser, friend ;
Knowst thou the nature of all mortal things ?
Not thou, I ween ; how shouldst thou ? Hear from me :
By all of human race death is a debt
That must be paid, and none of mortal men
Knows whether till to-morrow life's short space
Shall be extended : such the dark events
Of fortune ; never to be learned, nor traced
By any skill. Instructed thus by me
Bid pleasure welcome, drink, the life allowed
From day to day esteem thine own, all else
Fortune's. To Venus chief address thy vows—
Of all the heavenly powers she, gentle queen,
Kindest to man, and sweetest : all besides
Reckless let pass, and listen to my words,
If thou seest reason in them, as I think
Thou dost : then bid excessive grief farewell,
And drink with us ; master these present ills,
And bind thy brows with garlands ; well I know
The circling bowl will waft thy spirits to bliss,
Now sunk in dark and sullen melancholy.
Since we are mortal, be our minds intent

On mortal things ; to all the grave, whose brows
With cares are furrowed, let me judge for thee,
Life is no life, but a calamity.

ATT. These things we know ; but what becomes us now
Ill suits with festal revelry and mirth.

HERC. A woman dies, one unrelated ; check
Thy grief : the lords of this fair mansion live.

ATT. Live ! Knowst thou not th' afflictions of this house ?

HERC. Unless thy lord in something hath deceived me.

ATT. Liberal his mind, too liberal to the guest.

HERC. No : for a stranger dead he hath done well.

ATT. No stranger, but a near domestic loss.

HERC. Is it some sorrow which he told not me ?

ATT. Go thou with joy ; ours are our lord's afflictions.

HERC. These are not words that speak a foreign loss.

ATT. If such, thy revelry had not displeased me.

HERC. Then by my friendly host I much am wronged.

ATT. Thy coming was unseasonable ; this house
Wanted no guest : thou seest our locks all shorn,
Our grief and sable vests.

HERC. Who then is dead ?
One of his children, or his aged father ?

ATT. His wife Alcestis, stranger, is no more.

HERC. What sayst thou ? And e'en so could you receive me ?

ATT. It shamed him to reject thee from his house.

HERC. O wretch, of what a wife art thou bereft !

ATT. Not she alone, we all are lost with her.

HERC. I might have thought this when I saw his eye
Flowing with tears, his locks shorn off, and grief
Marked on his face : but he persuaded me,
Saying that one of foreign birth he mourned,
And bore her to the tomb : unwillingly
Ent'ring these gates I feasted in the house,
My hospitable friend with such a grief
Oppressed ; nay more, I revelled, and my head
With garlands shaded : but the fault was thine,
Who didst not tell me that a woe like this
Thy house afflicted. But inform me where
She is interred ; where shall I find her tomb ?

ATT. Right in the way that to Larissa leads
Without the city wilt thou find her tomb.

HERC. Now my firm heart, and thou, my daring soul,
Show what a son the daughter of Electryon,
Alcmena of Tirynthia, bore to Jove.

This lady, new in death, behoves me save,
And, to Admetus rend'ring grateful service,
Restore his lost Alcestis to his house.
This sable-vested tyrant of the dead
My eye shall watch, not without hope to find him
Drinking th' oblations nigh the tomb. If once
Seen from my secret stand I rush upon him,
These arms shall grasp him till his panting sides
Labour for breath; and who shall force him from me,
Till he gives back this woman? Should I fail
To seize him there, as coming not to taste
The spilt blood's thickening foam, I will descend
To the drear house of Pluto and his queen,
Which the sun never cheers, and beg her thence,
Assured that I shall lead her back, and place her
In my friend's hands, whose hospitable heart
Received me in his house, nor made excuse,
Though pierced with such a grief; this he concealed
Through generous thought and reverence to his friend.
Who in Thessalia bears a warmer love
To strangers? Who, through all the realms of Greece?
It never shall be said this generous man
Received in me a base and worthless wretch.

ADMETUS, CHORUS.

ADM. Ah me! Ah me! How mournful this approach!
How hateful to my sight this widowed house!
Ah, whither shall I go? where shall I rest?
What shall I say? or what forbear to say?
How may I sink beneath this weight of woe?
To misery was I born, wretch that I am;
I envy now the dead, I long for them,
Long to repose me in that house. No more

With pleasure shall I view the sun's fair beams,
 No more with pleasure walk upon this earth :
 So dear an hostage death has rent from me,
 And yielded to th' infernal king his prey.

CHOR. Go forward, yet go forward ; to thy house
 Retire.

ADM. Ah me !

CHOR. Thy sufferings do indeed
 Demand these groans.

ADM. O miserable me !

CHOR. Thy steps are set in sorrow, well I know,
 But all thy sorrow nought avails the dead.

ADM. Wretch that I am !

CHOR. To see thy wife no more,
 No more to see her face, is grief indeed.

ADM. O, thou hast touched on that which deepest wounds
 My mind : what greater ill can fall on man
 Than of a faithful wife to be deprived ?
 O that I ne'er had wedded, in the house
 Had ne'er dwelt with her ! The unmarried state
 I envy, and deem those supremely blest
 Who have no children ; in one single life
 To mourn is pain that may be well endured :
 To see our children wasting with disease,
 To see death ravaging our nuptial bed,
 This is not to be borne, when we might pass
 Our lives without a child, without a wife.

CHOR. Fate comes, resistless Fate.

ADM. Unhappy me !

CHOR. But to thy sorrows wilt thou put no bounds ?

ADM. Woe, woe, woe, woe !

CHOR. A ponderous weight indeed
 To bear, yet bear them. Thou art not the first
 That lost a wife : misery, in different forms
 To different men appearing, seizes all.

ADM. Ye lasting griefs, ye sorrows for our friends
 Beneath the earth ! Ah, why did ye restrain me ?
 I would have cast myself into the tomb,
 The gaping tomb, and lain in death with her,

The dearest, best of women ; there for one
Pluto had coupled two most faithful souls,
Together passing o'er th' infernal lake.

CHOR. I had a friend, by birth allied to me,
Whose son, and such a son as claimed his tears,
Died in the prime of youth, his only child ;
Yet with the firmness of a man he bore
His grief, though childless, and declining age
Led him with hasty steps to hoary hairs.

ADM. Thou goodly mansion, how shall I endure
To enter thee, how dwell beneath thy roof,
My state thus sunk ! Ah me, how changed from that,
When 'midst the pines of Pelion blazing round,
And hymeneal hymns, I held my way,
And led my loved Alcestis by her hand :
The festal train with many a cheerful shout
Saluted her, now dead, and me, and hailed
Our union happy, as descended each
From generous blood and high-born ancestry.
Now for the nuptial song, the voice of woe—
For gorgeous robes, this black and mournful garb—
Attends me to my halls, and to my couch,
Where solitary sorrow waits me now.

CHOR. This sorrow came upon thee 'midst a state
Of happiness, a stranger thou to ills :
Yet is thy life preserved : thy wife is dead,
Leaving thy love ; is there aught new in this ?
Many hath death reft of their wives before.

ADM. My friends, I deem the fortune of my wife
Happier than mine, though otherwise it seems ;
For never more shall sorrow touch her breast,
And she with glory rests from various ills.
But I, who ought not live, my destined hour
O'erpassing, shall drag on a mournful life,
Late taught what sorrow is. How shall I bear
To enter here ? To whom shall I address
My speech ? Whose greeting renders my return
Delightful ? Which way shall I turn ? Within
In lonely sorrow shall I waste away,

As widowed of my wife I see my couch,
 The seats deserted where she sate, the rooms
 Wanting her elegance. Around my knees
 My children hang, and weep their mother lost;
 These too lament their mistress now no more.
 This is the scene of misery in my house :
 Abroad, the nuptials of Thessalia's youth
 And the bright circles of assembled dames
 Will but augment my grief : ne'er shall I bear
 To see the loved companions of my wife.
 And if one hates me, he will say, " Behold
 The man, who basely lives, who dared not die,
 But, giving through the meanness of his soul
 His wife, avoided death, yet would be deemed
 A man : he hates his parents, yet himself
 Had not the spirit to die." These ill reports
 Cleave to me : why then wish for longer life,
 On evil tongues thus fallen, and evil days ?

CHORUS.

Strophe 1.

My vent'rous foot delights
 To tread the Muses' arduous heights ;
 Their hallowed haunts I love t' explore,
 And listen to their lore :
 Yet never could my searching mind
 Aught, like necessity, resistless find ;
 No herb of sovereign power to save,
 Whose virtues Orpheus joyed to trace,
 And wrote them in the rolls of Thrace ;
 Nor all that Phœbus gave,
 Instructing the Asclepian train,
 When various ills the human frame assail,
 To heal the wound, to soothe the pain,
 'Gainst her stern force avail.

Antistrophe 1.

Of all the powers divine
 Alone none dares approach her shrine ;
 To her no hallowed image stands,
 No altar she commands ;
 In vain the victim's blood would flow ;
 She never deigns to hear the suppliant vow.
 Never to me mayst thou appear,
 Dread goddess, with severer mien,
 That oft in life's past tranquil scene
 Thou hast been known to wear.
 By thee Jove works his stern behest :
 Thy force subdues e'en Scythia's stubborn steel :
 Nor ever does thy rugged breast
 The touch of pity feel.

Strophe 2.

And now, with ruin pleased,
 On thee, O king, her hands have seized,
 And bound thee in her iron chain :
 Yet her fell force sustain.
 For from the gloomy realms of night
 No tears recall the dead to life's sweet light ;
 No virtue, though to heaven allied,
 Saves from th' inevitable doom :
 Heroes and sons of gods have died,
 And sunk into the tomb.
 Dear, whilst our eyes her presence blest,
 Dear, in the gloomy mansions of the dead ;
 Most generous she, the noblest, best,
 Who graced thy nuptial bed.

Antistrophe 2.

Thy wife's sepulchral mound
 Deem not as common, worthless ground,
 'That swells their breathless bodies o'er
 Who die, and are no more.

No : be it honoured as a shrine
 Raised high, and hallowed to some power divine.
 The traveller, as he passes by,
 Shall thither bend his devious way,
 With reverence gaze, and with a sigh
 Smite on his breast, and say,
 "She died of old to save her lord ;
 Now blest among the blest : Hail, power revered ;
 To us thy wonted grace afford !"
 Such vows shall be preferred.
 But see, Admetus, to thy house, I ween,
 Alcmena's son bends his returning steps.

HERCULES, ADMETUS, CHORUS.

HERC. I would speak freely to my friend, Admetus,
 Nor what I blame keep secret in my breast.
 I came to thee amidst thy ills, and thought
 I had been worthy to be proved thy friend.
 Thou toldst me not the obsequies prepared
 Were for thy wife, but in thy house receivdst me
 As if thou grievdst for one of foreign birth.
 I bound my head with garlands, to the gods
 Pouring libations in thy house with grief
 Oppressed. I blame this : yes, in such a state
 I blame this : yet I come not in thine ills
 To give thee pain ; why I return in brief
 Will I unfold. This woman from my hands
 Receive to thy protection, till returned
 I bring the Thracian steeds, having there slain
 The proud Bistonian tyrant ; should I fail,
 Be that mischance not mine, for much I wish
 Safe to revisit thee, yet should I fail,
 I give her to the safeguard of thy house.
 For with much toil she came into my hands.
 To such as dare contend some public games,
 Which well deserved my toil, I find proposed,
 I bring her thence, she is the prize of conquest ;
 For slight assays each victor led away

A courser ; but for those of harder proof
The conqueror was rewarded from the herd,
And with some female graced ; victorious there,
A prize so noble it were base to slight.
Take her to thy protection, not by stealth
Obtained, but the reward of many toils ;
The time perchance may come when thou wilt thank me.

ADM. Not that I slight thy friendship, or esteem thee
Other than noble, wished I to conceal
My wife's unhappy fate ; but to my grief
It had been added grief, if thou hadst sought
Elsewhere the rites of hospitality ;
Suffice it that I mourn ills which are mine.
This woman, if it may be, give in charge,
I beg thee, king, to some Thessalian else,
That hath not cause like me to grieve ; in Pheræ
Thou mayst find many friends ; call not my woes
Fresh to my memory ; never in my house
Could I behold her but my tears would flow ;
To sorrow add not sorrow ; now enough
I sink beneath its weight. Where should her youth
With me be guarded ? for her gorgeous vests
Proclaim her young ; if mixing with the men
She dwell beneath my roof, how shall her fame,
Conversing with the youths, be kept unsullied ?
It is not easy to restrain the warmth
Of that intemperate age ; my care for thee
Warns me of this. Or if from them removed
I hide her in th' apartments late my wife's,
How to my bed admit her ? I should fear
A double blame ; my citizens would scorn me
As light, and faithless to the kindest wife
That died for me, if to her bed I took
Another blooming bride ; and to the dead
Behoves me pay the highest reverence
Due to her merit. And thou, lady, know,
Whoe'er thou art, that form, that shape, that air
Resembles my Alcestis. By the gods,
Remove her from my sight. It is too much,

I cannot bear it ; when I look on her,
Methinks I see my wife ; this wounds my heart,
And calls the tears fresh gushing from my eyes.
This is the bitterness of grief indeed.

CHOR. I cannot praise thy fortune ; but behoves thee
To bear with firmness what the gods assign.

HERC. O that from Jove I had the power to bring
Back from the mansions of the dead thy wife
To heaven's fair light, that grace achieving for thee !

ADM. I know thy friendly will. But how can this
Be done ? The dead return not to this light.

HERC. Check then thy swelling griefs ; with reason rule
them.

ADM. How easy to advise, but hard to bear !

HERC. What would it profit shouldst thou always groan ?

ADM. I know it ; but I am in love with grief.

HERC. Love to the dead calls forth the ceaseless tear.

ADM. O, I am wretched more than words can speak.

HERC. A good wife hast thou lost, who can gainsay it ?

ADM. Never can life be pleasant to me more.

HERC. Thy sorrow now is new, time will abate it.

ADM. Time, sayst thou ? Yes, the time that brings me
death.

HERC. Some young and lovely bride will bid it cease.

ADM. No more ; what sayst thou ? Never could I think——

HERC. Wilt thou still lead a lonely, widowed life ?

ADM. Never shall other woman share my bed.

HERC. And think'st thou this will aught avail the dead ?

ADM. This honour is her due, where'er she be.

HERC. This hath my praise, though near allied to frenzy.

ADM. Praise me, or not, I ne'er will wed again.

HERC. I praise thee that thou'rt faithful to thy wife.

ADM. Though dead, if I betray her may I die !

HERC. Well, take this noble lady to thy house.

ADM. No, by thy father Jove let me entreat thee.

HERC. Not to do this would be the greatest wrong.

ADM. To do it would with anguish rend my heart.

HERC. Let me prevail ; this grace may find its meed.

ADM. O that thou never hadst received this prize !

HERC. Yet in my victory thou art victor with me.

ADM. 'Tis nobly said : yet let this woman go.

HERC. If she must go, she shall : but must she go ?

ADM. She must, if I incur not thy displeasure.

HERC. There is a cause that prompts my earnestness.

ADM. Thou hast prevailed, but much against my will.

HERC. The time will come when thou wilt thank me for it.

ADM. Well, if I must receive her, lead her in.

HERC. Charge servants with her ! No, that must not be.

ADM. Lead her thyself then, if thy will incline thee.

HERC. No, to thy hand alone will I commit her.

ADM. I touch her not ; but she hath leave to enter.

HERC. I shall entrust her only to thy hand.

ADM. Thou dost constrain me, king, against my will.

HERC. Venture to stretch thy hand, and touch the stranger's.

ADM. I touch her, as I would the headless Gorgon.

HERC. Hast thou her hand ?

ADM. I have.

HERC. Then hold her safe.

Hereafter thou wilt say the son of Jove

Hath been a generous guest : view now her face,

See if she bears resemblance to thy wife,

And thus made happy bid farewell to grief.

ADM. O gods, what shall I say ? 'Tis marvellous,

Exceeding hope. See I my wife indeed ?

Or doth some god distract me with false joy ?

HERC. In very deed dost thou behold thy wife.

ADM. See that it be no phantom from beneath.

HERC. Make not thy friend one that evokes the shades.

ADM. And do I see my wife, whom I entombed ?

HERC. I marvel not that thou art diffident.

ADM. I touch her ; may I speak to her as living ?

HERC. Speak to her ; thou hast all thy heart could wish.

ADM. Dearest of women, do see I again

That face, that person ? This exceeds all hope :

I never thought that I should see thee more.

HERC. Thou hast her ; may no god be envious to thee.

ADM. O, be thou blest, thou generous son of Jove !

Thy father's might protect thee ! Thou alone

Hast raised her to me ; from the realms below
How hast thou brought her to the light of life ?

HERC. I fought with him that lords it o'er the shades.

ADM. Where with the gloomy tyrant didst thou fight ?

HERC. I lay in wait, and seized him at the tomb.

ADM. But wherefore doth my wife thus speechless stand ?

HERC. It is not yet permitted that thou hear
Her voice addressing thee, till from the gods

That rule beneath she be unsanctified

With hallowed rites, and the third morn return.

But lead her in : and as thou'rt just in all

Besides, Admetus, see thou reverence strangers.

Farewell : I go t' achieve the destined toil

For the imperial son of Sthenelus.

ADM. Abide with us, and share my friendly hearth.

HERC. That time will come again ; this demands speed.

ADM. Success attend thee ; safe mayst thou return.

Now to my citizens I give in charge,

And to each chief, that for this blest event

They institute the dance, let the steer bleed,

And the rich altars, as they pay their vows,

Breathe incense to the gods ; for now I rise

To better life, and grateful own the blessing.

CHOR. With various hand the gods dispense our fates :

Now showering various blessings, which our hopes

Dared not aspire to ; now controlling ills

We deemed inevitable ; thus the god

To these hath given an end exceeding thought.

Such is the fortune of this happy day.

ELECTRA.

THE subject of this Drama is the same with that of the *Choephoræ* of *Æschylus* ; the disposition of it is different, as might be expected from the different genius of the poets. The reader, who was struck with the sublime conception, the glowing imagery, and solemn magnificence of the *Choephoræ*, will here find his soul softened with compassion for the high-born *Electra* forcibly wedded to a peasant, dwelling in a sordid cottage, and compelled to the laborious offices of a menial slave. Our own history gives us an example of the like unfeeling insolence in the low-minded rulers of our unhappy kingdom about the year 1648, who intended to apprentice the Princess *Elizabeth* to a button-maker : the poor lady escaped their malice by dying in prison at *Carisbrooke Castle*. The gentleness of *Electra* in this humble state, and her faithful attention to the domestic concerns of *Auturgus*, throw an amiableness over her character, which neither *Æschylus* nor *Sophocles*, upon their plans, could give her, and interest us warmly in her favour ; and this is but a softer shade of the same generous mind, the same virtuous sense of duty, which shows itself so fierce and determined in encouraging and assisting her brother to revenge their father's murder. The three great poets have taken different methods in the discovery of *Orestes* to his sister : in *Æschylus* this has most dignity, in *Sophocles* it is most affecting, in *Euripides* most natural. In the circumstances which lead to the agnition, as the critics call it, our poet is thought to have reflected with an ill-natured severity on *Æschylus*. "*C'est une malice d'Euripide,*" says *P. Brumoy*, "*pour tourner la recon-*

noissance d'Eschyle en ridicule." If it be so, we are sorry for so ungenerous a return for the many obligations he is under to his great master ; but, after all, it may well be supposed that the circumstances here reprobated were the popular tradition ; for had *Æschylus* been left to his own invention, his rich imagination would have formed something better ; and that Euripides intended only to reject the weak proofs built on this tradition, which, like the prophecy of *Celæno* and the completion of it in the *Æneid*, could not be passed over unnoticed, we are led to this supposition by the following circumstance. To the surmise of the faithful preserver of *Orestes*, that he might have returned in secret, and have paid these honours at the tomb of his father, *Electra* says :

Unworthy of a wise man are thy words,
If thou canst think that to *Mycenæ's* realms
My brother e'er with secret step will come,
Fearing *Ægisthus*.

This is consistent with the high spirit of *Electra* ; but she censures as unwise not only the circumstances alleged in proof by the old man, but even the method dictated by the God of Wisdom ; and probably the whole passage intends only to show that *Electra* had no idea of her brother's return, and of course to heighten her surprise and joy at the discovery. The circumstances of *Clytemnestra's* death are managed by *Sophocles* with wonderful art : the scene, in which *Ægisthus* uncovers the body expecting to have found that of *Orestes*, and instantly perceives that vengeance is bursting upon him, is finely conceived, and affords an excellent subject for picture ; but the consequence of this is, that the death of *Ægisthus* has nothing in it affecting ; he is a malefactor led to execution. *Æschylus* describes the vindictive prince as rushing upon the adulterous murderer with impatient fury : Euripides is long and minute in his account ; some of the circumstances are pleasing, they all are curious, and highly valuable, as giving an exact picture of the manners and religion of the ancients. Euripides has with great judgment preserved the characters of *Orestes* and *Electra* throughout the drama, as they were at first designed by *Æschylus* ; this has not escaped the censure of some critics ; but the poet is defended with such strength of argument in the " Notes on the

Art of Poetry," v. 127, that any attempt to a further vindication here would be impertinent.

It may not be improper to observe that the word Auturgus signifies a man who does his own work with his own hands, and it is used by Euripides in that sense ; the translator hopes to be excused for converting it into a proper name.

The scene is near the bounds of the Argive territory, a mountainous country, and before the cottage of Auturgus.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

AUTURGUS.

ELECTRA.

ORESTES.

PYLADES.

TUTOR.

MESSENGER.

CASTOR AND POLLUX.

CHORUS OF MYCENÆAN VIRGINS.

AUTURGUS.

THOU ancient glory of this land, famed stream
Of Inaches, thou sawst the mighty host,
When in a thousand ships to Phrygia's strand
The royal Agamemnon bore the war.
The Dardan monarch slain, the towers of Troy
And the proud city levelled with the ground,
To Argos he returned, and many spoils
From the barbarians rent triumphant fixed
In the high temples. There his toils were crowned
With conquest ; but by Clytemnestra's wiles,
His wife, and by Ægisthus' murdering hands,
Son of Thyestes, in his house he died ;
Leaving the ancient sceptre, from the hand
Of Tantalus to him derived, he fell.
And now Ægisthus lords it o'er the land,
His royal throne possessing, and his wife,

Daughter of Tyndarus. He, when for Troy
He sailed, his son Orestes in his house
And young Electra's budding beauties left.
Orestes, by Ægisthus marked for death,
The guardian of his father's youth by stealth
To Strophius bore, that in the Phocian land
He might protect him. In her father's house
Remained Electra : her, when youth's warm bloom
Glowed on her cheek, the high-born chiefs of Greece
In marriage sought : through fear lest she should bear
To any Argive sons that might revenge
The death of Agamemnon, in the house
Ægisthus held her, and repulsed the suit
Of ev'ry wooer. But his gloomy fears
Still prompting that by stealth she might bear sons
To one of noble lineage, he resolved
To kill her ; but her mother, though her soul
Was fierce and ruthless, saved her from his hands :
She for her husband's murder had some plea
To urge, but dreaded from her children's blood
Public abhorrence. Then Ægisthus framed
These villainous designs : he offered gold,
The son of Agamemnon, from this land
Escaped, whoe'er would kill ; to me espoused
He gives Electra ; from Mycenæ sprung
My parents, thus far no reproach is mine,
My race illustrious, but not blest with wealth,
And poverty obscures my noble birth.
To one thus sunk he gave her, that his fears
Might likewise sink ; for should she wed a man
Whose high rank gives him lustre, he might rouse
The murder of her father, sleeping now,
And vengeance then might on Ægisthus fall.
Yet, Venus be my witness, by my touch
She hath not been dishonoured ; she is still
A virgin. In my humble state I scorn
Such insult to the daughters of the great.
I grieve too for Orestes, hapless youth,
To me in words allied, should he return

To Argos, and behold his sister placed
 In marriage so unworthy of her birth.
 This some may deem a folly, to receive
 A virgin in my house, and touch her not ;
 But let such know that by distorted rules
 They measure continence, themselves depraved.

ELECTRA, AUTURGUS.

ELEC. O dark-browed Night, nurse of the golden stars,
 In thee this vase sustaining on my head
 I to the flowing river bend my steps
 (Not by necessity to this compelled,
 But to the gods to show the insolent wrongs
 I suffer from Ægisthus), and my griefs
 For my lost father to the wide extent
 Of ether breathe : for from the royal house
 Me my destructive mother hath driven forth,
 To gratify her husband : having borne
 T' Ægisthus other children, she hath made
 Me and Orestes outcasts from the house.

AUT. Why wilt thou thus, unhappy lady, toil,
 For my sake bearing labours, nor desist
 At my desire ? Not thus hast thou been trained.

ELEC. Thee equal to the gods I deem my friend ;
 For in my ills thou hast not treated me
 With insult. In misfortunes thus to find,
 What I have found in thee, a gentle power
 Lenient of grief, must be a mighty source
 Of consolation. It behoves me then,
 Far as my power avails, to ease thy toils,
 That lighter thou mayst feel them, and to share
 Thy labour, though unbidden : in the fields
 Thou hast enough of work ; be it my task
 Within to order well. The lab'rer, tired
 Abroad, with pleasure to his house returns,
 Accustomed all things grateful there to find.

AUT. Go then, since such thy will : nor distant far
 The fountain from the house. At the first dawn

My bullocks yoked I to the field will drive,
And sow my furrows : for no idle wretch,
With the gods always in his mouth, can gain
Without due labour the support of life.

ORESTES, PYLADES.

ORES. O Pylades, thee first of all mankind
Faithful and friendly I esteem ; alone
Hast thou received Orestes, held me high
In thy dear love, thus with misfortunes pressed
And suffering, as I suffer, dreadful ills,
Wrought by Ægisthus, whose accursed hand,
And my destructive mother joined her aid,
Murdered my father. But the Argive soil,
Commanded by the god's oracular voice,
No mortal conscious to my steps, I tread,
His murder on his murd'ers to avenge.
This night my father's tomb have I approached,
Poured the warm tear, presented my shorn locks,
And offered on the pyre the victim's blood,
Secret from those who lord it o'er this land.
The walls I enter not, a double charge
At once emprising ; to the Argive bounds
I come, that by the tyrant's spies if known
I to another's realms may soon retire ;
And seek my sister ; for they say that here
In marriage joined she dwells, a virgin now
No more : with her I would hold converse, her
Take my associate in this deed, and learn
All that hath passed within the walls. But now,
For now the grey morn opes her radiant eye,
Retire we from this public path : perchance
Some ploughman, or some female slave, from whom
We may gain knowledge, may in sight appear.
And see, a female slave, her tresses shorn,
Bears from the spring her vase ; sit we awhile,
And question her, if haply from her words
We may learn aught for which we hither came.

ELECTRA.

Strophe.

Begin, begin, for this the hour,
 The mournful measures weeping pour.
 Is there a wretch like me on earth?
 The royal Agamemnon gave me birth,
 My mother Clytemnestra—shame
 Fall on that odious name!
 And me each tongue within Mycenæ's walls
 Th' unhappy, lost Electra calls.
 My soul to grief a prey,
 My hated life in anguish wastes away:
 My tears for thee, my father, flow,
 For in the shades below,
 By cursed Ægisthus and his barb'rous wife—
 Ah me, ah me, my miseries!—
 Basely deprived of life,
 The royal Agamemnon lies.
 Yet once more raise the tearful strain,
 The sweetly-mournful measures soothe my pain.

Antistrophe.

Begin, begin, for this the hour,
 The mournful members weeping pour.
 Unhappy brother, in what state,
 What house is cruel servitude thy fate,
 Thy sister, in those rooms confined
 Once by her sire assigned
 The chaste retirement of her happier years,
 Thy wretched sister left to tears,
 Tears which incessant flow
 From the deep anguish of severest woe?
 O mayst thou come (O Jove, O Jove,
 Hear from thy throne above!)

To soothe the pangs my tortured heart that rend !
T' avenge thy father basely slain,
Mayst thou to Argos bend
Thy weary, wand'ring foot again.
Take from my head this vase, that high
May swell the mournful nightly melody.

Epode.

The dismal song, the song of death,
To thee, my father, will I raise,
To thee among the shades beneath :
So pass my mournful days.
For thee my bleeding breast I tear,
And beat my head, and rend my hair,
Shorn as an off'ring to the dead :
Yes, poor Electra beat thy head.
As some broad-rolling stream along,
For his lost father torn away,
Caught in the wily net a prey,
The tuneful cygnet pours the song ;
So thee, my father, I lament,
In thy last bath deprived of breath,
Stretched on the bed of death :
So I deplore the curst intent
Formed 'gainst thy sad return from Troy,
The keen axe furious to destroy.
For thee no crown thy wife designed,
No festive wreath thy brows to bind,
But the relentless trenchant sword :
And, by her raging passions led,
Aids the base murd'rer's deed abhorred,
Then takes him to her bed.

ELECTRA, CHORUS.

CHORUS.

Strophe 1.

Daughter of Agamemnon, I with speed,
Electra, to thy rustic cottage fly :
For one, whose herds on these rude mountains feed,
A swain, on whose good faith we firm rely,
 Came, from Mycenæ came ;
 The Argives, thus he says, proclaim
 Three days of festal rites divine,
And all the virgins haste to Juno's shrine.

ELECTRA.

Strophe 2.

No more, my friends, the gorgeous vest,
Which in her happier hours Electra graced,
 No more the gem in gold enchased,
With vivid radiance sparkling on my breast,
 Delight my mind : my feet no more
 The mazy-winding dance shall tread,
No more the train of Argive virgins lead.
 In tears, ah me : I melt away ;
In tears, sad solace of each wretched day,
 My ceaseless mis'ries I deplore.
 My sordid toils these locks defile,
 Around me see these vestments vile :
Of Agamemnon's daughter this the fate ?
 Where now my father's royal state ?
 Where the proud glories of his name,
And Troy recording sad her conqueror's mighty fame ?

CHORUS.

Antistrophe 1.

Great is the goddess : go then, with us go ;
 Receive whate'er thy beauties may improve,
 The gold, the vests with various dyes that glow.
 Thinkst thou with tears th' unhonoured gods to move ?
 Not won by sighs their aid,
 But by pure vows with rev'rence paid,
 The gods, to crush thy foes, will send,
 And blessings on thy future days t' attend.

ELECTRA.

Antistrophe 2.

My cries, my vows, no god will hear,
 Nor heeded they my father's spouting gore.
 Ah me ! the murdered I deplore,
 And for the living exile pour the tear :
 He, distant from his native land,
 Wanders, poor outcast, o'er the earth,
 And seeks mean refuge at some servile hearth,
 Dragging from realm to realm his woes,
 Though in his veins the blood of monarchs flows.
 I, by oppression's iron hand
 Driven from my father's royal seat,
 Dwell in this low obscure retreat,
 Here waste in toils my wretched life away,
 Or o'er the rugged mountains stray :
 Whilst, glorying in her impious deeds,
 My mother to her bed the blood-stained murd'rer leads.

CHOR. The sister of thy mother, Helena,
 Hath been the cause of many ills to Greece,
 And to thy house.

ELEC. Ah me ! ye female train,
 My measures I break off : some strangers, lodged

Nigh to the cottage, from their ambush rise.
Fly by the path, I to the house will fly ;
Let us be swift t' escape their ruffian hands.

ORESTES, PYLADES, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

ORES. Stay, thou unhappy ; fear not aught from me.
ELEC. Thee, Phœbus, that I die not, I implore.
ORES. Others more hated would I rather kill.
ELEC. Away, nor touch one whom thou oughtst not touch.
ORES. There is not whom more justly I may touch.
ELEC. Why with thy sword in ambush near my house ?
ORES. Stay, hear ; not vain thy stay thou soon shalt own.
ELEC. I stay ; the stronger thou, I in thy power.
ORES. Bearing thy brother's words to thee I come.
ELEC. Most welcome. Breathes he yet this vital air ?
ORES. He lives : I first would speak what brings thee joy.
ELEC. O, be thou blest for these most grateful words !
ORES. To both in common this I give to share.
ELEC. Where is th' unhappy outcast wand'ring now ?
ORES. He wastes his life not subject to one state.
ELEC. Finds he with toil what life each day requires ?
ORES. Not so ; but mean the wand'ring exile's state.
ELEC. But with what message art thou from him charged ?
ORES. T' inquire, if living, where thou bearest thy griefs.
ELEC. First, then, observe my thin and wasted state.
ORES. Wasted with grief, so that I pity thee.
ELEC. Behold my head, its crispéd honours shorn.
ORES. Mourning thy brother or thy father dead ?
ELEC. What can be dearer to my soul than these ?
ORES. Alas ! What deemst thou are thy brother's thoughts ?
ELEC. He, though far distant, is most dear to me.
ORES. Why here thy dwelling from the city far ?
ELEC. O stranger, in base nuptials I am joined.
ORES. I feel thy brother's grief. To one of rank ?
ELEC. Not as my father once to place me hoped.
ORES. That hearing I may tell thy brother ; speak.
ELEC. This is his house : in this I dwell remote.
ORES. This house some digger or some herdsman suits.

ELEC. Generous, though poor, in reverence me he holds.

ORES. To thee what reverence doth thy husband pay?

ELEC. He never hath presumed t' approach my bed.

ORES. Through sacred chastity, or from disdain?

ELEC. Scorning my noble parents to disgrace.

ORES. How in such nuptials feels he not a pride?

ELEC. Him, who affied me, not my lord he deems.

ORES. Thinking Orestes might revenge the wrong?

ELEC. This too he fears; yet modest is his mind.

ORES. A generous man, and one who merits much.

ELEC. If to his house the absent e'er returns.

ORES. But this debasement could thy mother brook?

ELEC. Their husbands, not their children, wives regard.

ORES. Why did Ægisthus offer this base wrong?

ELEC. Thus placing me, he wished my children weak.

ORES. That from thee no avengers might arise.

ELEC. For this design may vengeance on him fall.

ORES. That yet thou art a virgin dost he know?

ELEC. He knows it not. This undisclosed we hold.

ORES. Are these, who hear us, faithful, and thy friends?

ELEC. Never thy words or mine will they disclose.

ORES. What should Orestes do, if he return?

ELEC. Canst thou ask this? How base. The time now calls—

ORES. But how thy father's murd'ers should he slay?

ELEC. Daring to do what they, who slew him, dared.

ORES. Couldst thou, with him, thy mother bear to kill?

ELEC. With the same axe, by which my father fell.

ORES. This may I tell him, and thy soul resolved?

ELEC. My mother's blood first shedding, might I die!

ORES. O, were Orestes nigh, to hear these words!

ELEC. If seen, I should not know him, stranger, now.

ORES. No wonder, for when parted both were young.

ELEC. Nor by my friends, save one, would he be known.

ORES. Who bore him, as they say, by stealth from death?

ELEC. The aged guardian of my father's youth.

ORES. Was thy dead father honoured with a tomb?

ELEC. As he was honoured, from the house cast forth.

ORES. Alas the barbarous deed! A sense of ills,

Which strangers suffer, wounds the human heart.
But speak, that to thy brother I may bear,
By thee informed, words which perchance may wound
His ear, but which concerns him much to know.
Those, who have knowledge, feel the tender touch
Of pity, not th' unknowing ; yet to know
Too much is oft the bitter source of grief.

CHOR. My soul is with the same desire inflamed.
For, from the city distant, nought I know
Of the ills there ; I wish to be informed.

ELEC. I would speak, if I might ; and to a friend
May I not speak my suff'ring father's wrongs,
And mine ? But, stranger, since to this discourse
Thou dost enforce me, I conjure thee tell
Orestes his calamities, and mine.

Tell him in what mean garb thou seest me clad,
How sordid, and beneath what lowly roof,
Born as I was to royalty, I lodge.

I, labouring at the loom the lengthened robe,
Shall want the vest to clothe my nakedness :
And, bearing water from the flowing fount,
No more partaker of the feast, no more
Myself a virgin, 'midst the virgin train
Leading the dance, to them I bid adieu ;
To Castor also bid adieu, to whom,
Ere to the gods advanced, I was betrothed,
As from the same illustrious lineage sprung.
Meantime my mother 'midst the Phrygian spoils
Sits on her throne, the Asiatic dames,
Made by my father's conquest slaves, attend
Her state, their rich Idæan vests confined
With clasps of gold, my father's clodded gore
Yet putrid in the house ; and the same car,
In which my father rode, his murderer mounts
The sceptre, ensign of his kingly sway
O'er Greece in arms confederate, he with pride
Grasps in his bloody hands. The monarch's tomb
Unhonoured nor libations hath received,
Nor myrtle bough ; no hallowed ornament

Hath dignified the pyre. Inflamed with wine
 My mother's husband, the illustrious lord,
 For so they call him, tramples on the earth
 Insultingly where Agamemnon lies ;
 And hurling 'gainst his monument a stone,
 Thus taunts us with proud scorn : " Where is thy son,
 Orestes where ? Right noble is thy tomb
 Protected by his presence." Thus he mocks
 The absent : but, O stranger, tell him this,
 Suppliant I beg thee. Many give the charge,
 And I interpret it ; my hands, my tongue,
 My mind desponding with its grief, my head
 Shorn of its tresses, and his father. Shame,
 Base shame it were if, when his father's arm
 Subdued the Trojans, he should want the power
 Alone to hurl his vengeance on one man,
 Now in youth's prime, and from a nobler sire.

CHOR. But see, the man, thy husband, to his toils
 Giving a respite, hastens to his house.

AUTURGUS, ELECTRA, ORESTES, PYLADES, CHORUS.

AUT. Ha ! who these strangers, whom before my doors
 I see ? Why come they to these rustic gates ?
 Of me aught want they ? With young men to stand
 Abroad, a woman's honour ill beseems.

ELEC. Thou faithful friend, let no suspicion touch
 Thy mind : their converse truly shalt thou know.
 These by Orestes charged, are come to me.
 Strangers, forgive what he hath said amiss.

AUT. What say they ? Lives he ? Is he yet a man ?

ELEC. He lives, they say, and speak what wins my faith.

AUT. Remembers he his father, and thy wrongs ?

ELEC. This lives in hope : an exile's state is weak.

AUT. What from Orestes come they to relate ?

ELEC. He sent them secret to observe my ills.

AUT. Some they behold, and some thou mayst relate.

ELEC. They know them, of each circumstance informed.

AUT. Then long ago my lowly doors to them

Should have been opened. Enter ye the house ;
And for your welcome tidings you shall share
Such hospitable viands as the stores
Of my poor mansion yield. You, who attend,
What for their journey needful they have brought
Bear in : nor you refuse ; for you are come
Friends to a friendly man ; poor though I am,
A sordid spirit never will I show.

ORES. Now by the gods, is this the man who holds
Thy marriage in such holy reverence,
Scorning to do Orestes shameful wrong ?

ELEC. The poor Electra's husband this is called.

ORES. Nature hath giv'n no outward mark to note
The generous mind : the qualities of men
To sense are indistinct. I oft have seen
One of no worth a noble father shame,
And from vile parents worthy children spring,
Meanness oft grov'ling in the rich man's mind,
And oft exalted spirits in the poor.
How then discerning shall we judge aright ?
By riches ? Ill would they abide the test ;
By poverty ? On poverty awaits
This ill, through want it prompts to sordid deeds ;
Shall we pronounce by arms ? But who can judge,
By looking on the spear, the dauntless heart ?
Such judgment is fallacious ; for this man,
Nor great among the Argives, nor elate
With the proud honours of his house, his rank
Plebeian, hath approved his liberal heart.
Will you not then learn wisdom, you whose minds
Error with false presentments leads astray ?
Will you not learn by manners and by deeds
To judge the noble ? Such discharge their trust
With honour to the state, and to their house :
Mere flesh, without a spirit, is no more
Than statues in the forum : nor in war
Doth the strong arm the dang'rous shock abide
More than the weak : on nature this depends,
And an intrepid mind. But we accept

Thy hospitable kindness : for the son
 Of Agamemnon, for whose sake we come,
 Present or not, is worthy : to this house
 Go, my attendants ; I must enter it :
 This man, though poor, more cheerful than the rich
 Receives me ; to his kindness thanks are due.
 More would it joy me if thy brother, blest
 Himself, could lead me to his prosperous house ;
 Yet haply he may come ; th' oracular voice
 Of Phœbus firmly will be ratified :
 Lightly of human prophecies I deem.

[ORESTES and his attendants enter the house.]

CHOR. Ne'er till this hour, Electra, were our hearts
 So warmed with joy : for fortune now perchance,
 Though slow in her advance, may firmly stand.

ELEC. Why, thou unhappy, of thy humble house
 Knowing the penury, wouldst thou receive
 Such guests, of rank superior to thine own ?

AUT. Why not ? If they are noble, so their port
 Denotes them, will they not alike enjoy
 Contentment, be their viands mean or rich ?

ELEC. Since thou hast done what suits not thy low state,
 To my loved father's aged guardian go ;
 He near the river Tanus, which divides
 The realms of Argos from the Spartan land,
 An outcast from the city, leads his herds ;
 Entreat him to attend thee to thy house,
 Supplying what may entertain thy guests.
 He will rejoice, presenting to the gods
 His vows, when he shall hear the son, preserved
 By him, yet lives ; for from my father's house
 We from my mother nothing should receive ;
 And bitter were the tidings, should she learn,
 What most would grieve her, that Orestes lives.

AUT. These words, since such thy pleasure, I will bear
 To the old man. But enter thou the house
 With speed, and all things set in order there ;
 For many things a woman, be her thoughts
 Intent, may find to form the grateful feast ;

And in the house such plenty yet remains,
 As for one day may well supply their wants.
 Yet on such subjects when my thoughts are turned,
 I deem of wealth as having mighty power
 To give the stranger welcome, and to aid
 The body when afflicted with disease ;
 But of small moment to the daily food
 Which nature craves ; for to supply her wants
 An equal measure serves the rich and poor.

CHORUS.

Strophe 1.

Ye gallant ships, that o'er the main
 Rushed with innumerable oars,
 Dancing amidst the Nereid train
 To Troy's detested shores,
 Your dark-beaked prows, whilst wanton round
 The pipe enamoured dolphins bound,
 The son of Thetis pleased to guide
 Achilles, leaping on the strand
 (With Agamemnon's martial band),
 Where Simois rolls his tide.

Antistrophe 1.

The Nereids left th' Eubæan shore,
 And arms divinely bright
 For Vulcan's golden anvils bore :
 O'er Pelion's rocky height,
 O'er sacred Ossa's wood-crowned brow,
 Which shows the nymphs the plains below,
 They passed, the warlike father where
 Th' heroic son of Thetis bred,
 The pride of Greece, by glory led
 Th' Atridæ's toils to share.

Strophe 2.

One, who the spoils of Troy had shared,
 I saw in Nauplia's port, and raptured hung,
 O son of Thetis, on his tongue,
 Whilst he the glories of thy shield declared ;
 On its bright orb what figures rise,
 Terrific to the Phrygians' eyes :
 Grasping the Gorgon's head, the verge around,
 With waving wings his sandals bound,
 A sculptured Perseus rises o'er the main :
 Protector of the pastured plain,
 Hermes, the messenger of Jove,
 Seems with the favoured chief his golden wings to move.

Antistrophe 2.

Full in the midst the orb of day
 In all its radiance blazes through the sky ;
 The fiery coursers seem to fly,
 And silent rolling o'er the ethereal way
 The stars refulgent through the night,
 To Hector's eyes a dreadful sight ;
 High on the helmet Sphinxes glow in gold,
 Who, whilst their prey their talons hold,
 In triumph seem their barb'rous song to pour
 The richly burnished hauberk o'er ;
 Breathing fierce flames, with horrid speed
 The dire Chimæra springs to seize Pirene's steed.

Epode.

Dreadful the blood-stained spear ; the car
 Four coursers whirl amidst the war,
 Behind them clouds of dust black-rising roll.
 Such martial chiefs the monarch led ;
 Yet by a hand accursed he bled,
 By his wife's hand : her noble blood
 From the rich streams of Tyndarus flowed,

But deeds of horror darken on her soul.
Yet may the gods' avenging power
On thee their righteous fury shower ;
Yet may thy neck the falchion wound,
Yet may I see thy blood distain the ground !

OLD TUTOR, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

TUT. Where is my honoured mistress, my loved child,
Daughter of Agamemnon, once my charge ?
Steep to her house and difficult th' ascent ;
With pain my age-enfeebled feet advance,
Yet lab'ring onwards with bent knees I move
To seek my friends. O daughter, for mine eyes
Before the house behold thee, I am come,
Bringing this tender youngling from my fold,
These garlands, from the vases these fresh curds,
And this small flask of old and treasured wine
Of grateful odour ; scanty the supply,
Yet, with aught weaker if allayed, the cup
Will yield a grateful bev'rage. Let one bear
Into the house these presents for thy guests.
I with these tattered vests meanwhile will wipe
Mine eyes, for they are wet with gushing tears.

ELEC. Why, good old man, thus wet thy tearful eyes ?
After this length of time dost thou recall
The memory of my ills ? or mourn the flight
Of poor Orestes, or my father's fate,
Whom, in thy hands sustaining, once thy care
Nurtured, to thee and to thy friends in vain ?

TUT. In vain : but this my soul could not support ;
For to his tomb, as on the way I came,
I turned aside, and falling on the ground,
Alone and unobserved, indulged my tears ;
Then of the wine, brought for thy stranger guests,
Made a libation, and around the tomb
Placed myrtle branches ; on the pyre I saw
A sable ewe, yet fresh the victim's blood,
And clust'ring auburn locks shorn from some head ;

I marvelled, O my child, what man had dared
Approach the tomb, for this no Argive dares :
Perchance with secret step thy brother came,
And paid these honours to his father's tomb.
But view these locks, compare them with thine own,
Whether like thine their colour : nature loves
In those who from one father draw their blood
In many points a likeness to preserve.

ELEC. Unworthy of a wise man are thy words,
If thou canst think that to Mycenæ's realms
My brother e'er with secret step will come,
Fearing Ægisthus : then between our locks
What can th' agreement be ? To manly toils
He in the rough palaestra hath been trained,
Mine by the comb are softened ; so that hence
Nothing may be inferred : besides, old man,
Tresses like-coloured often mayst thou find
Where not one drop of kindred blood is shared.

TUT. Trace but his footsteps, mark th' impression, see
If of the same dimensions with thy feet.

ELEC. How can th' impression of his foot be left
On hard and rocky ground ? But were it so,
Brother and sister never can have foot
Of like dimensions : larger is the man's.

TUT. But hath thy brother, should he come, no vest
Which thou wouldst know, the texture of thy hands,
In which, when snatched from death, he was arrayed ?

ELEC. Knowst thou not, when my brother from this land
Was saved, I was but young ? But were his vests
Wrought by my hands, then, infant as he was,
How could he now, in his maturer age,
Be in the same arrayed, unless his vests
Grew with his person's growth ? No ; at the tomb
Some stranger, touched with pity, sheared his locks,
Or native, by the tyrant's spies unmarked.

TUT. Where are these strangers ? I would see them : much
Touching thy brother wish I to inquire.

ELEC. See, from the house with hast'ning step they come.

ORESTES, PYLADES, ELECTRA, TUTOR, CHORUS.

TUT. Their port is noble : but th' exterior form
Of cheats the eye ; many of noble port
Are base : yet will I bid the strangers hail.

ORES. Hail, hoary sire ! Electra, of what friend
Doth chance present us the revered remains ?

ELEC. The guardian, strangers, of my father's youth.

ORES. Is this the man who bore thy brother hence ?

ELEC. The man who saved him this, if yet he lives.

ORES. Why doth he scan me with that curious eye,
As if inspecting some bright impress marked
On silver ? Some resemblance doth he trace ?

ELEC. In thee he pleased may mark my brother's years.

ORES. A much-loved man. Why wheels he round me thus ?

ELEC. I too am struck with wonder, seeing this.

TUT. My dear, my honoured child, address the gods.

ELEC. For what ? Some absent, or some present good ?

TUT. To hold the treasure, which the god presents.

ELEC. See, I address the gods : what wouldst thou say ?

TUT. Look now on him, my child, that dearest youth.

ELEC. I feared before thy senses were not sound.

TUT. My sense not sound, when I Orestes see !

ELEC. Why speakest thou what all my hopes exceeds ?

TUT. In him beholding Agamemnon's son.

ELEC. What mark hast thou observed, to win my faith ?

TUT. That scar above his eyebrow, from a fall
Imprinted deep, as in his father's house
He long ago, with thee, pursued a hind.

ELEC. I see the mark remaining from his fall.

TUT. Why the most dear delayst thou yet t' embrace ?

ELEC. No longer now will I delay : the marks
By thee discovered are persuasive proofs.
O thou at length returned, beyond my hopes
Thus I embrace thee.

ORES. And my arms at last
Thus fondly clasp thee.

ELEC. This I never thought ;

ORES. Nor could I hope it.

ELEC. Art thou he indeed?

ORES. Alone to thee in firm alliance joined,
If well this net, my present task, I draw.

ELEC. I am assured; or never must we more
Believe that there are gods, if impious wrongs
Triumphant over justice bear the sway.

CHOR. Yes, thou art come, O ling'ring day,
At length art come, and beaming bright
Showst to Mycenæ's state his glorious light,
Who, from his father's palace chased,
A wretched wand'rer long disgraced,
Cheers us with his returning ray.
Some god, some god, my royal friend,
Back our own radiant victory leads.
Raise then thy hands, and to the skies
Let for thy brother suppliant vows arise,
That, as with daring foot he treads,
Success, success may on his steps attend.

ORES. So may it be. With joy thy dear embrace
I now receive: at length the time will come
When it shall be repeated. But, old man,
For opportune thy coming, tell me now
What I shall do on the base murd'rer's head,
And on my mother's, who impurely shares
His nuptial bed, t' avenge my father's death.
Have I no friend at Argos? not one left
Benevolent? Are, with my fortunes, all
Entirely lost? To whom shall I apply?
Doth the night suit my purpose, or the day?
Or which way shall I turn against my foes?

TUT. Amidst thy ruined fortunes, O my son,
Thou hast no friend. Where shall the man be found
Prompt in a prosp'rous or an adverse state
Alike to share? But learn this truth from me,
For of thy friends thou wholly art bereft,
Nor doth e'en hope remain; in thine own hand
Now, and in fortune, thou hast all wherewith
To gain thy father's house and regal state.

ORES. What shall we do t' effect this glorious end?

TUT. Ægisthus and thy mother thou must kill.

ORES. For that I come : but how obtain that crown?

TUT. Thou canst not enter, if thou wouldst, the walls.

ORES. With guards defended, and with spear-armed hands?

TUT. Ay ; for he fears thee, nor untroubled sleeps.

ORES. Well ; let thine age some counsel then impart.

TUT. Hear me ; this now hath to my thought occurred.

ORES. Mayst thou point out and I perceive some good !

TUT. I saw Ægisthus, hither as I came.

ORES. I am attentive to thee : in what place ?

TUT. Near to those meadows where his coursers feed.

ORES. What doing ? Hope arises from despair.

TUT. A feast, it seems, preparing to the Nymphs.

ORES. Grateful for children born, or vows for more ?

TUT. I know but this, the victims were prepared.

ORES. With him what men ? Or with his slaves alone ?

TUT. No Argive there, but his domestic train.

ORES. Is there who would discover me, if seen ?

TUT. No : these are slaves who never saw thy face.

ORES. To me, if I prevail, they might be friends.

TUT. Such the slave's nature : but this favours thee.

ORES. How to his person near shall I approach ?

TUT. Beneath his eye pass when the victims bleed.

ORES. That way, it seems, some pastured fields are his.

TUT. That he may call thee to partake the feast.

ORES. A bitter guest, if so it please the gods.

TUT. Then, as th' occasion points, thy measures form.

ORES. Well hast thou said. But where my mother now ?

TUT. At Argos ; but the feast she soon will grace.

ORES. Why not together with her husband come ?

TUT. Dreading the people's just reproach, she stayed.

ORES. She knows then the suspicions of the state ?

TUT. She does : the impious woman all abhor.

ORES. How then together shall I slay them both ?

ELEC. I will form measures for my mother's death.

ORES. Fortune shall guide them to a good event.

ELEC. May she in this be aiding to us both !

ORES. It shall be so ; but what dost thou devise ?

ELEC. To Clytemnestra go, old man, and say
To a male child Electra hath giv'n birth.

TUT. That she long since, or lately bore this child?

ELEC. Tell her the days require the lustral rites.

ORES. And how thy mother's death doth this effect?

ELEC. Hearing my child-bed illness, she will come.

TUT. She hath no tenderness for thee, my child.

ELEC. Nay, my parturient honours she will weep.

TUT. Perchance she may : but brief thy purpose speak.

ELEC. Death, certain death awaits her, if she comes.

TUT. Within these gates then let her set her feet.

ELEC. Soon to the gates of Pluto shall she turn.

TUT. Might I see this, with pleasure I would die.

ELEC. First then, old man, conduct him to the place.

TUT. The hallowed victims where Ægisthus slays?

ELEC. Then meet my mother, and relate my words.

TUT. That she shall think them uttered by thy lips.

ELEC. Now is thy task : by thee he first must bleed.

ORES. Had I a guide, this instant would I go.

TUT. Thy steps with ready zeal I will direct.

ORES. God of my country, god of vengeance, Jove !
O, pity us ! Our sufferings pity claim.

ELEC. Pity us, for our race from thee we draw !

ORES. And thou, whose altars at Mycenæ blaze,
Imperial Juno, give us victory,
If in a righteous cause we ask thy aid !

ELEC. O, give us to avenge our father's death !

ORES. And thou, my father, who beneath the earth
Hast thy dark dwelling, through unholy deeds—
And thou, O Earth, to whom I stretch my hands,
Great queen—protect thy children, O protect
Thy most dear children : come, and with thee bring,
To aid our cause, each mighty dead, that shook
The spear with thee, and with thee conquered Troy !
Hearst thou, so foully by my mother wronged,
And all, the impious murderers who abhor ?

ELEC. All this, I know, my father hears ; but now
The time demands thee. Go ! By thy bold hand,
I charge thee, let the vile Ægisthus die :

For in the fatal contest shouldst thou fall,
 My life too ends ; nor say thou that I live,
 For I will plunge the sword into my throat.
 This go I to prepare. If glad report
 Of thy success arrive, then all the house
 Shall echo to my joy : but shouldst thou die,
 All otherwise. Thou hearst what I resolve.

ORES. I know it all.

ELEC. In this behoves thee much
 To be a man. Ye women, let your voice
 Give signal, like a flaming beacon, how
 The contest ends : I will keep watch within,
 Holding the keen sword ready in my hands ;
 For never shall my body from my foes,
 If I must fall, indecent outrage bear.

CHORUS.

Strophe 1.

The Argive mountains round,
 'Mongst tales of ancient days
 From age to age recorded, this remains :
 Tuned to mellifluous lays
 Pan taught his pipe to sound,
 And as he breathed the sprightly swelling strains,
 The beauteous ram with fleece of gold,
 God of shepherds on he drove.
 The herald from the rock above
 Proclaims, "Your monarch's wonders to behold,
 Wonders to sight, from which no terrors flow,
 Go, Mycenæans, to th' assembly go."
 With rev'rence they obey the call,
 And fill th' Atridæ's spacious hall.

Antistrophe 1.

Its gates with gold o'erlaid
 Wide oped each Argive shrine,

And from the altars hallowed flames arise ;
 Amidst the rites divine,
 Joying the Muse to aid,
 Breathed the brisk pipe its sweet notes to the skies ;
 Accordant to the tuneful strain
 Swelled the loud-acclaiming voice,
 Now with Thyestes to rejoice :
 He, all on fire the glorious prize to gain,
 With secret love the wife of Atreus won,
 And thus the shining wonder made his own ;
 Then to th' assembly vaunting cried,
 " Mine is the rich Ram's golden pride."

Strophe 2.

Then, oh then, indignant Jove
 Bade the bright sun backward move,
 And the golden orb of day,
 And the morning's orient ray :
 Glaring o'er the western sky
 Hurl'd his ruddy lightnings fly :
 Clouds, no more to fall in rain,
 Northward roll their deep'ning train :
 Libyan Ammon's thirsty seat,
 Withered with the scorching heat,
 Feels nor showers nor heavenly dews
 Grateful moisture round diffuse.

Antistrophe 2.

Fame hath said (but light I hold
 What the voice of fame hath told)
 That the sun, retiring far,
 Backward rolled his golden car,
 And his vital heat withdrew,
 Sick'ning man's bold crimes to view.
 Mortals, when such tales they hear,
 Tremble with a holy fear,

And th' offended gods adore :
 She, this noble pair who bore,
 Dared to murder, deed abhorred !
 This forgot, her royal lord.

CHOR. Ah me, ah me ! Heard you a noise, my friends ?
 Or doth imagination startle me
 With vain alarms ? Not indistinct the sounds,
 Like Jove's low-mutt'ring thunder, roll along.
 Come from the house, revered Electra, come.

ELECTRA, CHORUS.

ELEC. What hath befall'n, my friends, what danger comes ?

CHOR. This only know I, death is in that noise.

ELEC. I heard it, distant, yet it reached my ear.

CHOR. The sound comes rolling from afar, yet plain.

ELEC. Comes from an Argive, or my friends, the groan ?

CHOR. I know not : for confused the voices rise.

ELEC. This must to me be death ; why then delay ?

CHOR. Forbear : that clear thou mayst thy fortunes know.

ELEC. No : we are vanquished : none with tidings comes.

CHOR. They will : not light t' effect a monarch's death.

MESSENGER, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

MESS. To you, ye virgins of Mycenæ, joy
 I bring ; to all his friends my message speaks :
 Orestes is victorious, on the ground
 Ægisthus, Agamemnon's murd'rer, lies.
 Behoves you then address th' immortal gods.

ELEC. And who art thou ? How wilt thou prove thy truth ?

MESS. Thy brother's servant knowst thou not in me ?

ELEC. O thou most welcome, through my fears I scarce
 Distinguished thee : I recognize thee now.

What, is my father's hated murd'rer dead ?

MESS. Twice, what thou wishest, I his death announce.

CHOR. All-seeing justice, thou at length art come.

ELEC. What was the manner of his death? How fell
This vile son of Thyestes? I would know.

MESS. Departing from this house, the level road
We entered soon, marked by the chariot-wheel
On either side. Mycenæ's noble king
Was there, amidst his gardens with fresh streams
Irriguous walking, and the tender boughs
Of myrtles, for a wreath to bind his head,
He cropt. He saw us; he addressed us thus
Aloud: "Hail, strangers! Who are ye, and whence,
Come from what country?" Then Orestes said,
"Thessalians, victims to Olympian Jove
We, at the stream of Alpheus, go to slay."
The king replied, "Be now my guests, and share
The feast with me; a bullock to the Nymphs
I sacrifice; at morn's first dawn arise,
Then you shall go: but enter now my house."
Thus as he spoke, he took us by the hand,
And led us nothing loth: beneath his roof,
Soon as we came, he bade his slaves prepare
Baths for the strangers, that the altars nigh,
Beside the lustral ewers, they might stand:
Orestes then, "With lavers from the pure
And living stream we lately have been cleansed:
But with thy citizens these rites to share,
If strangers are permitted, we, O king,
Are ready, to thy hospitable feast
Nothing averse." The converse here had end.
Their spears, with which they guard the king, aside
Th' attendants laid; and to their office all
Applied their hands: some led the victim, some
The basket bore, some raised the flames, and placed
The cauldrons on the hearth: the house resounds.
Thy mother's husband on the altars cast
The salted cakes, and thus addressed his vows:
"Ye Nymphs that haunt the rocks, these hallowed rites
Oft let me pay, and of my royal spouse
Now absent, both by fortune blest as now,
And let our foes, as now, in ruin lie—"

Thee and Orestes naming. But my lord
Far other vows addressed, but gave his words
No utterance, to regain his father's house.
Ægisthus then the sacrificing sword
Took from the basket, from the bullock's front
To cut the hair, which on the hallowed fire
With his right hand he threw, and, as his slaves
The victim held, beneath its shoulder plunged
The blade ; then turning to thy brother spoke :
" Amongst her noble arts Thessalia boasts
To rein the fiery courser, and with skill
The victim's limbs to sever. Stranger, take
The sharp-edged steel, and show that fame reports
Of the Thessalians truth." The Doric blade
Of tempered metal in his hand he grasped,
And from his shoulders threw his graceful robe ;
Then, to assist him in the toilsome task,
Chose Pylades, and bade the slaves retire.
The victim's foot he held, and its white flesh,
His hand extending, bared, and stript the hide
Ere round the course the chariot twice could roll,
And laid the entrails open. In his hands
The fate-presaging parts Ægisthus took
Inspecting : in the entrails was no lobe ;
The valves and cells the gall containing show
Dreadful events to him that viewed them near ;
Gloomy his visage darkened. But my lord
Asked whence his saddened aspect. He replied,
" Stranger, some treachery from abroad I fear ;
Of mortal men Orestes most I hate,
The son of Agamemnon. To my house
He is a foe." " Wilt thou," replied my lord,
" King of this state, an exile's treachery dread ?
But that, these omens leaving, we may feast,
Give me a Phthian for this Doric blade,
The breast asunder I will cleave." He took
The steel, and cut. Ægisthus, yet intent,
Parted the entrails ; and as low he bowed
His head, thy brother, rising to the stroke,

Drove through his back the pond'rous axe, and rived
 The spinal joints. His heaving body writhed
 And quivered struggling in the pangs of death.
 The slaves beheld, and instant snatched their spears,
 Many 'gainst two contesting ; but my lord
 And Pylades with dauntless courage stood
 Opposed, and shook their spears. Orestes then
 Thus spoke: " I come not to this state a foe,
 Nor to my servants ; but my father's death
 I on his murd'rer have avenged. You see
 Th' unfortunate Orestes ; kill me not,
 My father's old attendants." At those words
 They all restrained their spears ; and he was known
 By one grown hoary in the royal house.
 Crowns on thy brother's head they instant placed,
 With shouts of joy. He comes, and with him brings
 Proof of his daring, not a Gorgon's head,
 But, whom thou hatest, Ægisthus ; blood for blood,
 Bitter requital, on the dead is fall'n.

CHOR. Now for the dance, my friend, thy foot prepare,
 Now with joy-enraptured tread,
 Light as the hind that seems to bound in air,
 The sprightly measures lead.
 Thy brother comes, and on his brows
 A crown hath conquest placed :
 A wreath so glorious ne'er the victor graced
 Where famed Alpheüs flows.
 Come then, and with my choral train
 To Conquest raise the joyful strain.

ELEC. O light, and thou resplendent orb of day,
 O earth, and night which I beheld before,
 Now I view freely, freely now I breathe,
 Now that Ægisthus, by whose murd'ring hand
 My father fell, is dead. Whate'er my house
 To grace the head contains, I will bring forth,
 My friends, and crown my brother's conqu'ring brows.

CHOR. Whate'er of ornament thy house contains
 Bring, to grace thy brother's head.
 My choir the dance, accorded to sweet strains

Dear to the Muse, shall lead.
 For now our kings, whose honoured hand
 The sceptre justly swayed,
 Low in the dust th' oppressive tyrant laid,
 Again shall rule the land.
 Rise then, my voice, with cheerful cries,
 Attended to thy triumph rise.

ELECTRA, ORESTES, PYLADES, CHORUS.

ELEC. O glorious victor, from a father sprung
 Victorious in th' embattled fields of Troy,
 Orestes, for thy brows receive this crown.
 From the vain contest of the length'ned course
 Thou comest not, but victorious o'er thy foe,
 Ægisthus slain, by whom thy father bled,
 And I have been undone. Thou too, brave youth,
 Trained by a man most pious, in his toils
 Faithful associate, Pylades, receive
 From me this wreath ; for thine an equal share
 Of danger. Ever let me hold you blessed.

ORES. First, of this glorious fortune deem the gods,
 Electra, sov'reign rulers ; then to me,
 The minister of fortune and the gods,
 Give the due praise. I come not to relate
 That I have slain Ægisthus : deeds shall speak
 For me ; a proof to all, his lifeless corse
 I bring thee : treat it as thy soul inclines :
 Cast it by rav'nous beasts to be devoured,
 Or to the birds, the children of the air,
 Fix it, impaled, a prey : the tyrant now,
 Ægisthus, is thy slave, once called thy lord.

ELEC. Shame checks my tongue : yet something would I
 speak.

ORES. What wouldst thou ? Speak : thy fears are vanished
 now.

ELEC. I fear t' insult the dead, lest censures rise.

ORES. Not one of all mankind would censure thee.

ELEC. Hard to be pleased our city, prompt to blame.

ORES. Speak what thou wouldst, my sister ; for to him
Inexpiable enmity we bear.

ELEC. Let me then speak : but where shall I begin
Thy insults to recount ? With what conclude ?
Or how pursue the train of my discourse ?
I never with the opening morn forbore
To breathe my silent plaints, which to thy face
I wished to utter, from my former fears
If e'er I should be free : I now am free.
Now, to thee living what I wished to speak,
I will recount. Thou hast destroyed my hopes,
Made me an orphan, him and me bereft
Of a dear father, by no wrongs enforced.
My mother basely wedding, thou hast slain
The glorious leader of the Grecian arms,
Yet never didst thou tread the fields of Troy.
Nay, such thy folly, thou couldst hope to find
My mother, shouldst thou wed her, nought of ill
To thee intending : hence my father's bed
By thee was foully wronged. But let him know
Who with forbidden love another's wife
Corrupts, then by necessity constrained
Receives her as his own, should he expect
To find that chastity preserved to him,
Which to her former bed was not preserved,
He must be wretched from his frustrate hope.
And what a life of misery didst thou lead,
Though not by thee deemed ill ? Thy conscious mind
Of thy unholy nuptials felt the guilt :
My mother knew that she an impious man
In thee had wedded ; and, polluted both,
Thou hadst her fortune, she thy wickedness.
'Mongst all the Argives this had fame divulged,
The man obeys the wife, and not the wife
Her husband : shameful this, when in the house
The woman sovereign rules, and not the man.
And when of children speaks the public voice
As from the mother, not the father sprung,
To me it is displeasing. He who weds

A wife of higher rank and nobler blood,
 Sinks into nothing, in her splendour lost.
 This truth unknown, thy pride was most deceived,
 Thyself as great thou vauntedst, in the power
 Of riches vainly elevate ; but these
 Are nothing, their enjoyment frail and brief ;
 Nature is firm, not riches ; she remains
 For ever, and triumphant lifts her head.

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CATALOGUE DEPARTMENT
 FOR RECLASSIFICATION

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Nature is firm, not riches ; she remains
For ever, and triumphant lifts her head.
But unjust wealth, which sojourns with the base,
Glitters for some short space, then flies away.
To women thy demeanour I shall pass
Unmentioned, for to speak it ill beseems
A virgin's tongue ; yet I shall make it known
By indistinct suggestion. Arrogance
Swelled thy vain mind, for that the royal house
Was thine, and beauty graced thy perfect form.
But be not mine a husband whose fair face
In softness with a virgin's vies, but one
Of manly manners ; for the sons of such
By martial toils are trained to glorious deeds :
The beauteous only to the dance give grace.
Perish, thou wretch, to nothing noble formed ;
Such wast thou found, and vengeance on thy head
At length hath burst ; so perish all, that dare
Atrocious deeds ! Nor deem, though fair his course
At first, that he hath vanquished Justice ere
He shall have reached the goal, the end of life.

CHOR. His deeds were dreadful ; dreadful hath he felt
Your vengeance. With great power is Justice armed.

ORES. So let it be. But bear this body hence,
My slaves ; to darkness let it be consigned ;
That when my mother comes, before she feels
The deadly stroke, she may not see the corse.

ELEC. Forbear ; to other subjects turn we now.

ORES. What, from Mycenæ see I aid advance ?

ELEC. This is no friendly aid ; my mother comes.

ORES. As we could wish, amidst the toils she runs.

ELEC. High on her car in splendid state she comes.

ORES. What shall we do ? Our mother shall we kill ?

ELEC. On seeing her hath pity seized thy heart ?
 ORES. She bore me, bred me ; her how shall I slay ?
 ELEC. As she thy noble father slew and mine.
 ORES. O Phœbus, wild and rash the charge thou gavst.
 ELEC. Who then are sage, if Phœbus be unwise ?
 ORES. The charge to kill my mother : impious deed !
 ELEC. What guilt were thine t' avenge thy father's death ?
 ORES. Now pure, my mother's murderer I should fly.
 ELEC. Will vengeance for thy father be a crime ?
 ORES. But I shall suffer for my mother's blood.
 ELEC. To whom thy father's vengeance then assign ?
 ORES. Like to the gods perchance some demon spoke.
 ELEC. What, from the sacred tripod ! Vain surmise.
 ORES. Ne'er can my reason deem this answer just.
 ELEC. Sink not, unmanned, to weak and timorous thoughts.
 ORES. For her then shall I spread the fatal net ?
 ELEC. In which her husband caught by thee was slain.
 ORES. The house I enter. Dreadful the intent :
 Dreadful shall be my deeds. If such your will,
 Ye heavenly powers, so let it be ; to me
 A bitter, yet a pleasing task assigned.

CLYTEMNESTRA, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

CHOR. Imperial mistress of the Argive realms,
 Drawing from Tyndarus thy noble birth,
 And sister to th' illustrious sons of Jove,
 Who 'midst the flaming ether dwell in stars,
 By mortals lab'ring in the ocean waves
 In honour as their great preservers held,
 Hail ! Equal with the gods I thee revere,
 Thy riches such, and such thy happy state ;
 Thy fortune, queen, our veneration claims.

CLYT. First from the car, ye 'Trojan dames, alight ;
 Then take my hand, that I too may descend.
 The temples of the gods with Phrygian spoils
 Are richly graced : these, from the land of Troy
 Selected, for the daughter which I lost,
 A small, but honourable prize, are mine.

ELEC. And may not I, for from my father's house
I am an outcast slave, this wretched hut
My mean abode, thy blest hand, mother, hold ?

CLYT. My slaves are here : labour not thou for me.

ELEC. Why hast thou driven me from the house a slave ?
For when the house was taken, I was seized,
As these, an orphan of my father left.

CLYT. Such were the measures which thy father planned,
Where it beseemed him least, against his friends.
For I will speak (though when a woman forms
An ill opinion, from her tongue will flow
Much bitterness) my wrongs from him received :
These known, if for thy hatred thou hast cause,
'Tis just that thou abhor me ; but if not,
Why this abhorrence ? Me did Tyndarus
Give to thy father, not that I should die,
Nor my poor children : yet he led away,
Her nuptials with Achilles the pretence,
To Aulis led my daughter, in whose bay
His fleet was stationed ; on the altar there
My Iphigenia, like a blooming flower,
Did he mow down. Averting hostile arms
That threatened desolation to the state,
Or for the welfare of his house, to save
His other children, if for many one
A victim he had slain, the deed had found
Forgiveness : but for Helena, because
She was a wanton, and his faithless wife
Her husband could not punish, for this cause
My daughter he destroyed : yet for these wrongs,
Great as they were, I had not been enraged,
Nor had I slain my husband ; but he came,
And with him brought the raving prophetess
Admitted to his bed, and thus one house
Contained two wives. Women indeed are frail,
Nor other shall I speak ; but, this inferred,
Whene'er the husband from his honour swerves,
From his connubial bed estranged, the wife
Will imitate his manners, and obtain

Some other friend ; yet slander 'gainst our sex
 Raises her voice aloud ; while those who cause
 These trespasses, the men, no blame shall reach.
 Had Menelaus in secret from his house
 Been borne, ought I Orestes to have slain,
 To save my sister's husband ? His son's death
 How had thy father brooked ? And should not he,
 Who slew my daughter, die ? Was I to bear
 Patient his wrongs ? I slew him ; to that path,
 Which only I could tread, I turned my foot,
 Uniting with his foes ; for of his friends
 Against him who with me would lift the sword ?
 If, that thy father not with justice died,
 Aught thou wouldst urge against me, freely speak.

ELEC. What thou hast said is just ; yet shame attends
 That justice ; for the wife, if aught she knows
 Of sober sense, should to her husband yield
 In all things unreluctant. If thy mind
 Dissents, nor to the measure of my speech
 Accedes, yet let my mother her last words
 Call to her memory ; let me freely speak.

CLYT. I now repeat them, nor retract, my child.

ELEC. But, hearing, wilt thou not inflict some ill ?

CLYT. I will not ; but with kindness will requite.

ELEC. Then I will speak, and preface thus my speech.

I wish, my mother, that a better mind
 Were thine ; for excellence of form hath brought
 To thee and Helena deserved praise.
 Nature hath formed you sisters, light and vain,
 Of Castor much unworthy. She was borne
 Away, and by her own consent undone ;
 Thou hast destroyed the noblest man of Greece :
 Thy daughter's death thy pretext, thou hast slain
 Thy husband ; but so well as I none knows,
 Before it was decreed that she should die,
 Whilst from Mycenæ his departure yet
 Was recent, at the mirror didst thou form
 The graceful ringlets of thy golden hair.
 The wife, that in her husband's absence seeks

With curious care to set her beauty forth,
Mark as a wanton : she with nicest skill
Would not adorn her person to appear
Abroad, but that she is inclined to ill.
Of all the Grecian dames didst thou alone,
I know, rejoice, when prosperous were the arms
Of Troy ; but when defeated, on thine eyes
A cloud hung dark ; for never didst thou wish
That Agamemnon should from Troy return.
Yet glorious was th' occasion offered thee
The strength of female virtue to display :
Thou hadst a husband in no excellence
Inferior to Ægisthus : and so vile
Thy sister's conduct, thou hadst power from thence
The highest honour to thyself to draw ;
For in the foulness of th' example vice
Instructive holds a mirror to the good.
But if my father, as thou urgest, killed
Thy daughter, how have I to thee done wrong ?
My brother how ? Or why, when thou hadst slain
Thy husband, didst thou not to us consign
Our father's house, but make it the lewd scene
Of other nuptials purchased by that prize ?
Nor is thy husband exiled for thy son ;
Nor hath he died for me, though, far beyond
My sister's death, me living hath he slain.
If blood, in righteous retribution, calls
For blood, by me behoves it thou shouldst bleed,
And by thy son Orestes, to avenge
My father : there if this was just, alike
Is it just here. Unwise is he, who weds,
Allured by riches or nobility,
A vicious woman : all that greatness brings
Must yield to that endeared domestic bliss,
Which on the chaste though humble bed attends.

CHOR. Respecting women fortune ever rules
In nuptials : some a source of joy I see
To mortals ; some nor joy nor honour know.

CLYT. Always, my daughter, was thy nature formed

Fond of thy father : not unusual this :
 Some love the men, and on their mothers some
 With greater warmth their sweet affections place.
 I will forgive thee : nor indeed, my child,
 In deeds done by me do I so rejoice.
 But do I see thee, fresh from childbirth, thus
 Unbathed, and in these wretched vestments clad ?
 Ah, my unhappy counsels, that I urged
 My husband 'gainst thee to a rage too harsh !

ELEC. Too late to breathe the sigh, when thou canst
 give

No healing medicine. My father dead,
 Why not recall thy outcast wand'ring son ?

CLYT. I fear : my welfare I regard, not his,
 Said to breathe vengeance for his father's death.

ELEC. Against us why thy husband so enrage ?

CLYT. Such is his nature : and impetuous thine.

ELEC. My grief is great : but I will check my rage.

CLYT. And he no longer will be harsh to thee.

ELEC. High his aspiring ; in my house he dwells.

CLYT. Seest thou what contests thou wouldst raise anew ?

ELEC. I say no more : I fear him, as I fear——

CLYT. Cease this discourse. My presence why required ?

ELEC. That I am late a mother thou, I ween,
 Hast heard : make thou the sacrifice for me,
 I have no skill, on the tenth rising morn
 What for my son the rites require ; for me,
 This my first child, experience hath not taught.

CLYT. This is her task, who aided at the birth.

ELEC. Unaided and alone I bore the child.

CLYT. So neighbourless, so friendless stands thy house

ELEC. None with the poor a friendship wish to form.

CLYT. Then I will go, and offer to the gods,
 The days accomplished, for thy son. This grace
 For thee performed, I hasten to the fields,
 Where to the nymphs my husband now presents
 The hallowed victim. My attendants, drive
 These chariots hence, and lead the steeds to stalls ;
 When you imagine to the gods these rites

I shall have paid, again be present here :
My husband too behoves it me to grace.

ELEC. Let my poor house receive thee ; but take heed
Lest thy rich vests the black'ning smoke defiles,
There shalt thou sacrifice, as to the gods,
Behoves thee sacrifice : the basket there
Is for the rites prepared, and the keen blade
Which struck the bull : beside him shalt thou fall
By a like blow : in Pluto's courts his bride
He shall receive, with whom in heaven's fair light
Thy couch was shared : to thee this grace I give ;
Thou vengeance for my father shalt give me.

CHORUS.

Strophe.

Refluent the waves of mischief swell,
The forceful whirlwind veers around
Then in the bath my monarch fell :
The roofs, the battlements resound ;
The polished stones, that form the walls,
His voice re-echo, as the hero falls,
“ Why, barb'rous woman, by thy hand,
After ten years of war on Phrygia's plain
Returned victorious to my native land,
Why, barb'rous woman, am I slain ?”

Antistrophe.

Now Justice, for the injured bed
Which light Love gloried to betray,
Turns back with vengeance on her head,
Who dared her lord to slay.
Long absent in the fields of fame
Scarce to the high Cyclopean towers he came,
Eager to shed his blood she strove ;
With her own hand the keen-edged axe she swayed,
With her own hand the murd'rous weapon drove,
And low her hapless husband laid.

Epode.

Hapless to such a pest allied,
 She, like a lioness, in savage pride
 Midst shaggy forests wild that feeds,
 Dared such atrocious deeds.

CLYT. O, by the gods, my children, do not kill [*Within.*
 Your mother !

CHOR. Heard you in the house her cry ?

CLYT. Ah me, ah me !

CHOR. I too lament thy fate,
 Fall'n by thy children's hands. Th' avenging god
 Dispenses justice when occasion calls.
 Dreadful thy punishment ; but dreadful deeds,
 Unhappy, 'gainst thy husband didst thou dare.
 Stained with their mother's recent-streaming blood,
 See, from the house they come, terrible proof
 Of ruthless slaughter. Ah ! there is no house,
 Nor hath been, with calamities oppressed,
 More than the wretched race of Tantalus.

ORESTES, PYLADES, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

ORES. O Earth, and thou all-seeing Jove, behold
 These bloody, these detested deeds ! In death
 Stretched on the ground beneath my hand they lie,
 Both lie, a sad atonement for my wrongs.

ELEC. Much to be mourned, my brother, to be mourned
 With tears, and I the cause. Unchecked, unawed
 I to my mother came, I boldly came
 To her that gave me birth. Alas thy fate,
 Thy fate, my mother ! Thou hast suffered ills,
 And from thy children, whose remembrance time
 Can ne'er efface, deeds ruthless, and far worse
 Than ruthless : yet with justice hast thou paid
 This debt to vengeance for my father's blood.

ORES. O Phœbus, vengeance from thy hallowed shrine

Didst thou command, unutterable deeds,
 But not obscure, through thee are done, from Greece
 The bloody bed removed. But to what state
 Shall I now go, what hospitable house?

Who will receive me? Who, that fears the gods,
 Will look on me, stained with my mother's blood?

ELEC. And whither, to what country shall I fly,
 Wretch that I am? What nuptials shall be mine?
 What husband lead me to the bridal bed?

ORES. Again, again thy sober sense returns,
 Changed with the gale: thy thoughts are holy now,
 Then ruled by frenzy. To what dreadful deeds,
 O thou most dear, hast thou thy brother urged
 Reluctant? Didst thou see her, when she drew
 Her vests aside, and bared her breasts, and bowed
 To earth her body, whence I drew my birth,
 Whilst in her locks my furious hand I wreathed?

ELEC. With anguished mind, I know, thou didst proceed,
 When heard thy wailing mother's piteous cries.

ORES. These words, whilst with her hand she stroked my
 cheeks,

Burst forth, "Thy pity I implore, my son:"
 Soothing she spoke, as on my cheeks she hung,
 That bloodless from my hand the sword might fall.

CHOR. Wretched Electra, how couldst thou sustain
 A sight like this? How bear thy mother's death,
 Seeing her thus before thine eyes expire?

ORES. Holding my robe before mine eyes I raised
 The sword, and plunged it in my mother's breast.

ELEC. I urged thee to it: I too touched the sword.

CHOR. Of deeds most dreadful this which thou hast done.
 Cover thy mother's body; in her robes
 Decent compose her wounded limbs.—Thou gavst
 Being to those who were to murder thee.

ELEC. Behold my friends, and not my friends, we wrap
 Her robes around her, to our house the end
 Of mighty ills.

CHOR. But see, above the house
 What radiant forms appear? or are they gods

Celestial ? Mortals through th' ethereal way
Walk not : but why to human sight disclosed ?

CASTOR *and* POLLUX.

Hear, son of Agamemnon : for to thee
Thy mother's brothers, twin-born sons of Jove,
Castor, and this my brother Pollux, speak.
Late having calmed the ocean waves, that swelled
The lab'ring vessel menacing, we came
To Argos, where our sister we beheld,
Thy mother, slain. With justice vengeance falls
On her : in thee unholy is the deed.
Yet Phœbus, Phœbus—— But, my king is he,
I will be silent : yet, though wise, he gave
To thee response not wise : but I must praise
Perforce these things. Thou now must do what Fate
And Jove decree. To Pylades affy
Electra ; let him lead her to his house
His bride : but leave thou Argos ; for its gates,
Thy mother slain, to thee is not allowed
To enter ; for the Furies, hounds of hell,
Will chase thee, wand'ring, and to madness whirled.
Go then to Athens, seat of Pallas, clasp
Her hallowed image : that they touch thee not
She o'er thy head her Gorgon shield will hold.
They from her dreadful dragons will start back
Appalled. The mount of Mars is there, where first
On blood the gods sate judges, when enraged
That by unhallowed nuptials wrong had stained
His daughter, Mars, to ruthless vengeance fired,
Slew Halirrhothius, of ocean's lord
The son. Most righteous from that time is held
The judgment there, and by the gods confirmed :
There thou must make appeal, this bloody deed
Be there decided : from the doom of blood
Absolved the equal numbers of the shells
Shall save thee that thou die not ; for the blame
Apollo on himself will charge, whose voice
Ordained thy mother's death : in future times

This law for ever shall be ratified,
 The votes in equal number shall absolve.
 At this the dreadful goddesses with grief
 Deep-wounded through the yawning earth shall sink
 E'en at the mount ; thence an oracular gulf
 Hallowed, revered by mortals. On the banks
 Of Alpheus, the Lycæan temple near,
 Thou must inhabit an Arcadian state.
 And from thy name the city shall be called.
 This I have said to thee ; but in the earth
 The citizens of Athens shall entomb
 The body of Ægisthus : the last rites
 Due to thy mother Menelaus shall pay,
 At Nauplia late from vanquished Troy arrived,
 And Helena. From Egypt, from the house
 Of Proteus, she returns : to Ilion's towers
 She went not ; but, that strife and bloody war
 'Mongst mortal men might rise, an imaged form
 Resembling Helena Jove sent to Troy.
 This virgin now let Pylades receive
 His bride, and home to the Achaian land
 Conduct her. Him, to thee in words allied,
 To Phocis let him lead, and give him there,
 Just to his modest virtue, ample wealth.
 Thou to the narrow Isthmus bend thy steps,
 Thence speed thee to the blest Cecropian state.
 The fated doom, assigned for blood, fulfilled,
 Thou shalt be happy, from thy toils released.

CHOR. O sons of Jove, may we presume t' approach,
 And converse with you be allowed to hold ?

CAST. You may ; no curse this blood derives on you.

ORES. May I address you, sons of Tyndarus ?

CAST. Thou mayst : to Phœbus this dire deed I charge.

CHOR. Gods as you are, and brothers to the slain,
 Why from the house did not your power avert
 This deadly ill ?

CAST. The dire necessity
 Of fate impelled it, and the voice unwise
 Of Phœbus from his shrine,

ELEC. But me what voice
Of Phœbus urged, what oracle, that I
The murderer of my mother should become ?

CAST. Common the actions, common too the fates.
One demon, hostile to your parents, rent
The hearts of both.

ORES. For such a length of time
Not seen, loved sister, am I torn so soon
From thy dear converse, leaving thee so soon,
And left ?

CAST. She hath a husband, and a house,
Nor suffers aught severe, save that she leaves
The Argive state.

ORES. And what severer woe
Can rend the anguished heart, than to be driv'n
An outcast from our country ? I must leave
My father's house, and for my mother's blood
The sentence passed by foreign laws abide.

CAST. Resume thy courage : to the sacred seat
Of Pallas shalt thou come ; be firm, endure.

ELEC. O my loved brother, clasp, O clasp my breast
Close to thy breast. For from our father's house
A mother's curse hath torn us, dreadful curse !

ORES. Thus let me clasp thee : o'er me, as now dead,
As o'er my tomb thy lamentations pour.

CAST. Ah ; thou hast uttered sorrows e'en to gods
Mournful to hear. In me, in heaven's high powers
Is pity for the woes of mortal men.

ORES. I shall no more behold thee.

ELEC. And no more
Shall I come near thy sight.

ORES. No more with thee
Shall I hold converse : this my last address.

ELEC. Farewell, Mycenæ ! And you, virgins, born
In the same state with me, farewell, farewell !

ORES. O thou most faithful, dost thou go e'en now ?

ELEC. I go ; but dew my softened eyes with tears.

ORES. Go, Pylades, go thou with joy, and wed
Electra.

CAST. Them the nuptial rites await.
Haste thou to Athens, fly these hounds of hell ;
For 'gainst thee they their hideous steps advance,
Gloomy and dark, their hands with serpents armed,
Rejoicing in the dreadful pains they give.
To the Sicilian sea with speed we go,
To save the vessels lab'ring in the waves.
But to the impious through th' ethereal tract
We no assistance bring. But, those to whom
Justice and sanctity of life is dear,
We from their dang'rous toils relieve, and save.
Let no one then unjustly will to act,
Nor in one vessel with the perjured sail ;
A god to mortals this monition gives.

CHOR. Oh, be you blest ! And those, to whom is giv'n
Calmly the course of mortal life to pass
By no affliction sunk, pronounce we blest.

ORESTES.

TO the *Choephoræ* of *Æschylus* we owe the "*Electra*" and "*Orestes*" of *Euripides*, and particularly that wonderful scene in which the madness of *Orestes* is represented. This was touched with a masterly hand by the great father of tragedy; but *Euripides*, as hath been observed before, had the skill to give this sketch its finishing, and to heighten it with the warmest glow of colouring. Our poet is here, as *Longinus* describes him, like a lion that at first disregards his assailants, but, as soon as he feels the spear, lashes himself up to rage, and rushes on with impetuous ardour. If his genius did not of itself carry him to the sublime, he has here forced his nature to the true tragic elevation. Here, as the critic finely observes, the poet himself saw the *Furies*; and what his imagination so finely conceived, he forced his audience almost to see. *Euripides*, indeed, particularly studied to enrich his tragedies with these two passions, Love and Madness; and he succeeded very happily in them. *Shakespeare* knew well how to paint the horrors of an imagination disturbed with the consciousness of guilt, and all that perilous stuff which weighs upon the heart, when *Macbeth* felt

His secret murders sticking on his hands :

but the frenzy of *Orestes* receives a peculiar heightening from the tenderness with which the scene opens and concludes; we have here all the sublime conception and noble daring of *Æschylus* united with that sympathetic softness which characterizes *Euripides*.

As we form our first acquaintance with these Grecian princes

from Homer, and imbibe an early veneration for their noble qualities embellished by the graces of his poetry, we are hurt at finding the gallant Menelaus, the intrepid hero, the affectionate brother, represented as an ungrateful, unfeeling, timid, designing poltroon. Aristotle (*Poet.* c. 15) is generally understood as censuring the poet for this unnecessary depravation of the hero's manners; but the words of the critic are so concise, and derive so little light from the connection, that they may be considered as a mysterious oracular sentence which wants an expounder; perhaps it excuses the poet upon the necessity, and indeed it is not easy to conceive how the drama, had it given to Menelaus other manners, could have been worked up to this terrible height of tragic distress.

But a stronger and more important censure must ever fall on the sanguinary spirit of revenge which breathes through this drama. Even Tyndarus, who professes the highest reverence for the laws, and declares his resolution to support them, urges the death of Orestes and Electra, though he acknowledges that the wisdom of their ancestors allowed the offenders to atone their guilt by banishment: thus his argument confutes itself, and he is a fine image of a person who deceives even himself with the pretext of justice, by viewing things through the false medium of passion. The cool and dispassionate Pylades proposes to kill Helena, because her death would afflict the heart of Menelaus with grief: Orestes readily engages in the horrid design: the Chorus, the faithful guardian of virtue, approves it: and Electra, far from expressing any abhorrence of this cruel murder, advises her brother to seize Hermione, and, should Menelaus refuse to save their lives, to plunge the sword into her breast. We may be assured that these sentiments were received with approbation, because the tender Virgil, whose heart was alive to all the feelings of humanity, hath adopted them, and given them to his pious Æneas:

Extinxisse tamen nefas, et sumpsisse merentis
Laudabor poenas; animumque explesse juvalit
Ultricis flammæ, et cineres satiasse meorum.

Æneid, ii. 585.

But it should be remembered that this savage and sanguinary spirit does not characterize Orestes or Æneas; it was general

in those ages, when not to revenge an injury was considered as a mark of a base and servile mind : their morality allowed, and their religion sanctified, such revenge. If our minds are more enlightened, and our manners more humanized, we know from whence we derive the advantage.

The scene is in the royal palace at Argos.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

ELECTRA.
HELENA.
ORESTES.
MENELAUS.
TYNDARUS.

PYLADES.
MESSENGER.
PHRYGIAN SLAVE.
CHORUS OF ARGIVE VIRGINS.

ELECTRA.

THERE is not in the stores of angry heaven
Aught terrible, affliction or distress,
But miserable man bears its full weight.
E'en Tantalus, the son of Jove, the blest
(Not to malign his fate), hangs in the air,
And trembles at the rock, which o'er his head
Projects its threat'ning mass ; a punishment
They say, for that to heaven's high feast admitted,
A mortal equal with th' immortals graced,
He curbed not the intemperance of his tongue ;
The sire of Pelops he, of Atreus this,
For whom the Fates weaving a diadem
Wove discord with the thread, to kindle war
Betwixt the brothers, Atreus and Thyestes.
But why recite things horrible to tell ?
Him Atreus feasted, having slain his sons.
From Atreus (may oblivion hide the rest)
Th' illustrious Agamemnon, if illustrious,

And Menelaus had birth, Acrop-
Of Crete their mother. Menelaus espoused
The fatal Helen, by the gods abhorred.
Th' imperial Agamemnon wooed the bed
Of Clytemnestra, memorable to Greece ;
From her three daughters sprung, Chrysothemis
And Iphigenia, and myself Electra,
One son, Orestes, from this wicked mother.
Who in th' inextricable robe entangled
Her husband murdered, for a cause which ill
Becomes a virgin's modest lips t' unfold.
Th' injustice of Apollo must I blame ?
Orestes he commands to slay his mother,
Nor bears to all the glory of the deed.
Not disobedient to the god he slew her.
I had my share, such as a woman might,
And Pylades assisted in the act.
Since then the poor Orestes pines away
Impaired with cruel sickness ; on his bed
He lies ; his mother's blood to frenzy whirls
His tortured sense : th' avenging powers, that haunt
His soul with terrors thus, I dare not name.
The sixth day this, since on the hallowed pile
My slaughtered mother purged her stains away.
No food hath passed his lips, no bath refreshed
His limbs ; but in his garments covered close,
When his severe disease abates a little,
He melts in tears ; and sometimes from his couch
Starts furious, like a colt burst from his yoke.
Meantime the state of Argos hath decreed
That shelt'ring roof, and fire, and conference
Be interdicted to us matricides.
And this decisive day the states pronounce
Our doom, to die crushed with o'erwhelming stones,
Or by th' avenging sword plunged in our breasts.
Yet have we one small ray of bright'ning hope,
Hope that we die not ; for from Troy returned
After long wand'rings Menelaus arrives,
His vessels in the Nauplian harbour moored,

And to this strand impels his eager oar ;
 But the woe-working Helen in the shades
 Of shelt'ring night, lest some, whose sons were slain
 Beneath the walls of Troy, seeing her walk
 In day's fair light, with vengeful rage might rise,
 And crush the shining mischief, first he lands,
 And sends her to our house : there now she is,
 Weeping her sister's fate and our afflictions.
 Yet 'midst her grief this comfort she enjoys,
 Hermione, her virgin daughter, whom
 At Sparta, when she sailed for Troy, she left,
 The father to my mother's care consigned ;
 In her delighted she forgets her woes.
 But my quick eye glances to each access,
 If Menelaus advancing I might see.
 Weak help from others, if not saved by him :
 The house of the unhappy hath no friend.

ELECTRA, HELENA.

HEL. Daughter of Clytemnestra and the chief
 That drew from Atreus his illustrious birth,
 Virgin of ripest years, how is it, say,
 With thee, unhappy, and the wretch Orestes,
 Who in his mother's blood imbrued his hands ?
 With thee conversing I am not polluted,
 Charging the crime on Phœbus. Yet I mourn
 My sister's fate ; for since I sailed to 'Troy,
 Urged to that madness by th' offended gods,
 These eyes have not beheld her ; yet, her loss
 Deploring, at her fortunes drop the tear.

ELEC. Why should I tell thee what thine eyes behold,
 The race of Agamemnon in distress ?
 Myself attendant on th' unhappy dead,
 But that he breathes a little he is dead.
 Sit sleepless : yet reproach I not his ills.
 But thou art happy, happy is thy husband ;
 To us in our calamities ye come.

HEL. How long on this sick-bed hath he been laid ?

ELEC. E'er since he shed her blood who gave him breath.

HEL. Ah, wretch ! Ah, wretched mother thus to perish !

ELEC. Such our lost state I sink beneath our ills.

HEL. Do me one grace I beg thee by the gods.

ELEC. As watching at my brother's couch I may.

HEL. Wilt thou go for me to my sister's tomb ?

ELEC. My mother's dost thou mean ? And wherefore go ?

HEL. These locks and my libations to present.

ELEC. What hinders but thou visit thy friend's tomb ?

HEL. And show me to the Grecians ? Shame forbids.

ELEC. Too late discreet ; when shameless from thy house——

HEL. Just is thy censure, but not friendly to me.

ELEC. And at Mycenæ dost thou feel this shame ?

HEL. I dread the fathers, whose sons died at Troy.

ELEC. Against thee loud the voice of Argos cries.

HEL. Oblige me then, and free me from this fear.

ELEC. I could not look upon my mother's tomb.

HEL. To send these offerings by a slave were shame.

ELEC. Hermione, thy daughter, why not send ?

HEL. A virgin 'midst the crowd ! Indecent this.

ELEC. The favours of the dead, who trained her youth
With fond affection, thus she might repay.

HEL. 'Tis justly urged : I will obey thee, virgin,
And send my daughter ; for thy words are wise.

Hermione, come hither : to the tomb

Of Clytemnestra these libations bear,

And these my locks ; there pour this honied bowl

Foaming with milk and wine ; on the high mound,

Addressing thus the dead, " These hallowed gifts

Helen, thy sister, offers, who through fear

Approaches not thy tomb, dreading the crowd

Of Argos." Bid her be propitious to us,

To me, to thee, my husband, and these two,

These wretched two, whom Phœbus hath undone.

Then promise all that to a sister's shade

A sister should bestow : go, my child, haste,

Present these gifts ; then speed thy quick return.

ELEC. O nature, in the bad how great an ill !

[*Alone.*]

But in the virtuous strong thy power to save.
 See, she hath shorn th' extremity of her locks,
 Anxious of beauty, the same woman still !
 May the gods hate thee, as thou hast ruined me,
 And him, and universal Greece !—Ah me,
 My loved companions come, whose friendly grief
 Attunes their sad notes to my mournful strains.
 He sleeps now ; they will wake him, and my eyes
 Will melt in tears, when I behold him rave.

ELECTRA, CHORUS.

ELEC. Dearest of women, softly set your feet,
 Not to be heard ; gently advance ; no noise.
 Kind is your friendship : but t' awake him now
 From this sweet rest would be a grief to me.

CHOR. Silence, silence ! Softly tread :
 Nor foot be heard, nor sound, nor noise.

ELEC. This way far, far from the bed.

CHOR. I obey.

ELEC. Hush, let thy voice

Steal on my ear

Soft as the whispers of the breathing reed.

CHOR. Soft as the whispers of the breathing reed

My voice shall steal upon thy ear.

ELEC. Ay, thus, low, low ; softly come near ;

Come softly, friends, and tell me why

This visit. A long sleep hath closed his eye.

CHOR. Doth hope then brighten on his ill ?

ELEC. Alas, what hope ? Behold him lie ;

He breathes, a little breathes, and still

Heaves at short intervals a sigh.

CHOR. Unhappy state !

ELEC. Death were it, should you, as thus loud you weep,

Fright from his eyelids the sweet joys of sleep.

CHOR. Yet wail I his unhappy state,

Abhorred deeds of deadly hate,

Rage of vindictive, tort'ring woes,

Which the relentless powers of heaven impose.

ELEC. Unjust, unjust the stern command,
The stern command Apollo gave
From Themis' seat, his ruthless hand
In blood, in mother's blood to lave.

CHOR. Ah, turn thine eye.

He stirs, he moves, rolled in the cov'ring vest.

ELEC. Wretch, thy rude clamours have disturbed his rest.

CHOR. And yet I think sleep locks his eye.

ELEC. Wilt thou be gone? hence wilt thou fly,
That quiet here again may dwell?

CHOR. Again composed he sleeps again.

ELEC. 'Tis well.

CHOR. Awful queen, whose gentle power
Brings sweet oblivion of our woes,
And in the calm and silent hour
Distils the blessings of repose,
Come awful Night,
Come from the gloom of Erebus profound,
And spread thy sable-tinctured wings around;
Speed to this royal house thy flight;
For pale-eyed Grief, and wild Affright,
And all the horrors of Despair,
Here pour their rage, and threaten ruin here.

ELEC. Softly let your warblings flow;
Further, a further distance keep;
The far-off cadence sweet and low
Charms his repose, and aids his sleep.

CHOR. Tell us, what end
Awaits his mis'ries?

ELEC. Death: that end I fear.
He tastes no food.

CHOR. Death then indeed, and near.

ELEC. When Phœbus gave the dire command
To bathe in mother's blood his hand,
By whom the father sunk in dust,
He doomed us victims.

CHOR. Dire these deeds, but just.

ELEC. She slew, she died.—Thy hand abhorred
In dust my bleeding father laid:

And for thy blood, in vengeance poured,
 We perish, perish as the dead.
 The shadowy train
 Thou joinest : but my life shall waste away
 In tears the night, in sighs and groans the day.
 But, ah ! to whom shall I complain !
 Nor child nor husband soothes my pain :
 For ever drag I my distress,
 Sigh, mourn, and weep in lonely wretchedness.

CHOR. Go nearer, royal virgin ; nearer view him,
 That under this soft sleep the sleep of death
 Deceive thee not : I like not this still rest.

ORESTES, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

ORES. O gentle Sleep, whose lenient power thus soothes
 Disease and pain, how sweet thy visit to me,
 Who wanted thy soft aid ! Blessing divine,
 That to the wretched givest wished repose,
 Steeping their senses in forgetfulness !—
 Where have I been ! Where am I ? How brought hither ?
 My late distraction blots remembrance out.

ELEC. My most dear brother, oh, what heart-felt joy
 To see thee lie composed in gentle sleep !
 Wilt thou I touch thee ? Shall I raise thee up ?

ORES. Assist me then, assist me ; from my mouth
 Wipe off this clotted foam ; wipe my moist eyes.

ELEC. Delightful office, for a sister's hand
 To minister relief to a sick brother.

ORES. Lie by my side, and from my face remove
 These squalid locks ; they blind my darkened eyes.

ELEC. How tangled are the ringlets of thy hair,
 Wild and disordered through this long neglect :

ORES. Pray lay me down again : when this ill frenzy
 Leaves me, I am very feeble, very faint.

ELEC. There, there : the bed is grateful to the sick,
 A mournful, but a necessary tenure.

ORES. Raise me again ; more upright ; bend me forward.

CHOR. The sick are wayward through their restlessness.

ELEC. Or wilt thou try with slow steps on the ground
To fix thy feet? Variety is sweet.

ORES. Most willingly: it hath the show of health;
The seeming hath some good, though void of truth.

ELEC. Now, my loved brother, hear me, whilst the Furies
Permit thy sense thus clear and undisturbed.

ORES. Has thou aught new? If good, I thank thee
for it;

If ill, I have enough of ill already.

ELEC. Thy father's brother, Menelaus, arrives;
His fleet rides anchored in the Nauplian bay.

ORES. Comes he then? Light on our afflictions dawns:
Much to my father's kindness doth he owe.

ELEC. He comes; and, to confirm what now I say,
Brings Helena from Ilium's ruined walls.

ORES. More to be envied, were he saved alone;
Bringing his wife, he brings a mighty ill.

ELEC. The female line of Tyndarus was born
To deep disgrace, and infamous through Greece.

ORES. Be thou unlike them then; 'tis in thy power;
And further than in words thy virtue prove.

ELEC. Alas, my brother, wildly rolls thine eye;
So quickly changed! the frenetic fit returns.

ORES. Ah, mother! Do not set thy Furies on me.
See, how their fiery eyeballs glare in blood,
And wreathing snakes hiss in their horrid hair!
There, there they stand, ready to leap upon me.

ELEC. Rest thee, poor brother, rest thee on thy bed;
Thou seest them not; 'tis fancy's coinage all.

ORES. O Phœbus, they will kill me, these dire forms,
These Gorgon-visaged ministers of hell!

ELEC. Thus will I hold thee, round thee throw mine arms,
And check th' unhappy force of thy wild starts.

ORES. Off, let me go! I know thee, who thou art,
One of the Furies; and thou grapplest with me,
To whirl me into Tartarus. Avaunt!

ELEC. What shall I do? Ah me, where shall I seek
Assistance, since th' unfriendly god frowns on us!

ORES. Bring me the bow of horn which Phœbus gave me,

And with it bade me drive these fiends away,
Should they affright me with their madd'ning terrors.

ELEC. Shall any god by mortal hands be wounded?

ORES. Should she not instant vanish from my sight.

Heard you the clang? Saw you the wingéd shaft
Bound from the distant-wounding bow? Ha, ha!
Here yet! On swift wings mount th' ethereal air,
And there impeach the oracle of Phœbus.—

Whence this disquiet? Why thus pants my breath?

Ah, whither am I wandered from my bed?

For from the storm the high-swoln waves subside.

Why dost thou weep, my sister? Why decline

Thy drooping head, and hide it in thy vest?

I blush to give thee part in my disease,

And wound with grief thy virgin tenderness.

Let not my ills be thus infectious to thee;

Thou barely didst assent; I did the deed,

I shed her blood. But Phœbus I must blame,

Who urged me to this most unholy act;

Then, save with soothing words, assist me not.

Had these eyes seen my father, had I asked him

In duty if I ought to slay my mother,

I think he would have prayed me not to plunge

My murdering sword in her that gave me birth;

Since he could not revisit heaven's sweet light,

And I must suffer all these miseries.

But now unveil thy face and dry thy tears,

My sister, though afflictions press us sore:

And when thou seest me in these fitful moods,

Soothe my disordered sense, and let thy voice

Speak peace to my distraction; when the sigh

Swells in thy bosom, 'tis a brother's part

With tender sympathy to calm thy griefs;

These are the pleasing offices of friends.

But to thy chamber go, afflicted maid,

There seek repose, close thy long-sleepless eyes,

With food refresh thee, and th' enlivening bath.

Shouldst thou forsake me, or with too close tendance

Impair thy delicate and tender health,

Then were I lost indeed ; for thou alone,
Abandoned as I am, art all my comfort.

ELEC. Should I forsake thee ! No ; my choice is fixed ;
And I will die with thee, or with thee live,
Indifferent for myself ; for shouldst thou die,
What refuge shall a lonely virgin find,
Her brother lost, her father lost, her friends
All melted from her ?—Yet, if such thy wish,
I ought t' obey : recline thee on thy couch,
Nor let these visionary terrors fright thee ;
There rest ; though all be fancy's coinage wild,
Yet Nature sinks beneath the violent toil.

CHORUS.

Strophe.

Awful powers, whose rapid flight
Bears you from the realms of night
To hearts that groan, and eyes that weep,
Where you joyless orgies keep,
Ye gloomy powers, that shake the affrighted air,
And armed with your tremendous rod,
Dealing terror, woe, despair,
Punish murder, punish blood,
For Agamemnon's race this strain,
This supplicating strain, I pour ;
No more afflict his soul with pain,
Nor torture him with madness more :
Breathe oblivion o'er his woes,
Leave him, leave him to repose.
Unhappy youth, what toils are thine,
Since Phœbus from his central shrine
Bade thee unsheath th' avenging sword,
And Fate confirmed th' irrevocable word !

Antistrophe.

Hear us, king of gods, O hear,
 Where is soft-eyed Pity, where?
 Whence, to plunge thee thus in woes,
 Discord stained with gore arose?
 What vengeful Demon thus with footstep dread,
 Trampling the blood-polluted ground,
 Sternly cruel joys to spread
 Horror, rage, and madness round?
 Woe, woe is me! In man's frail state
 Nor height nor greatness firm abides:
 On the calm sea secure of fate,
 Her sails all spread, the vessel rides:
 Now th' impetuous whirlwinds sweep,
 Roars the storm, and swells the deep,
 Till with the furious tempest tost
 She sinks in surging billows lost.
 Yet firm their fate will I embrace,
 And still revere this heaven-descended race.

CHOR. But see, the royal Menelaus advances:
 That awe-commanding and majestic port
 Denotes him of the race of Tantalus.—
 Illustrious leader of a thousand ships,
 That bore to Asia's strand thy martial host,
 All hail! Good fortune guides thee, and the gods,
 Fav'ring thy vows, have blessed thy conq'ring arms.

MENELAUS, ORESTES, CHORUS.

MEN. From Troy returned, with pleasure I behold
 This royal house, with pleasure mixed with grief:
 For never saw I house encompassed round
 With such afflictions. Agamemnon's fate,
 How by his wife he perished, I long since
 At Malea learned, when rising from the waves
 Confessed to open view the sailors' prophet,

Unerring Glaucus, the dire bath disclosed,
The wife, and each sad circumstance of blood ;
A tale, that harrowed up my soul with grief,
And wrung the tear from the stern veteran's eye.
But to the Nauplian coast arrived, my wife
First landed, when I hoped with joy to fold
Orestes and his mother in my arms,
As happy now, a wave-washed fisherman
Told me that Clytemnestra is no more.
Slain by th' unholy sword. But, virgins, say
Where is Orestes, who these horrid ills
Hath dared ? For when the war called me to Troy,
An infant in his mother's arms I left him,
That now, if seen, his form would be unknown.

ORES. He whom thou seekst am I : I am Orestes.
To thee, O king, will I unfold my woes,
And willingly : but first I grasp thy knees,
And pour my plain unornamented prayer :
Save me ; for thou 'midst my distress art come.

MEN. Ye powers of heaven, what do mine eyes behold ?
One from the regions of the dead returned !

ORES. Well hast thou said : I view the light indeed,
But do not live ; such are my miseries.

MEN. How wild, how horrid hangs thy matted hair !

ORES. The real, not th' apparent, racks my soul.

MEN. Thy shrunk and hollow eye glares dreadfully.

ORES. My whole frame wastes ; nought, save my name, is left.

MEN. Reason revolts at this thy squalid form.

ORES. Alas, I am the murderer of my mother.

MEN. I have heard it : spare mine ear the tale of woe.

ORES. I will : yet heaven is rich in woes to me.

MEN. What are thy sufferings ? What disease consumes thee ?

ORES. Conscience : the conscious guilt of horrid deeds.

MEN. How sayst thou ? Wisdom suffers when obscure.

ORES. A pining melancholy most consumes me.

MEN. Dreadful its power, but not immedicable.

ORES. And frenzy, fierce t' avenge my mother's blood.

MEN. When did its rage first seize thee ? What the day ?

ORES. The day I raised my hapless mother's tomb,

- MEN. What, in the house, or sitting at the pyre?
- ORES. By night, as from rude hands I guard her bones.
- MEN. Was any present, to support thy weakness?
- ORES. My Pylades, who aided in her death.
- MEN. What phantoms frighten thy disordered sense?
- ORES. Three virgin forms I see gloomy as night.
- MEN. Whom thy words mark I know, but will not name.
- ORES. Awful they are : forbear irreverent words.
- MEN. And do these haunt thee for thy mother's blood?
- ORES. Ah wretched me, how dreadful their pursuit !
- MEN. Thus dreadful sufferings dreadful deeds attend.
- ORES. Yet have we where to charge our miseries.
- MEN. Name not thy father's death ; that were unwise.
- ORES. Phœbus, by whose command I slew my mother.
- MEN. Of right and justice ignorant, I ween.
- ORES. We to the gods submit, whate'er they are.
- MEN. And doth not Phœbus in thine ills protect thee?
- ORES. Not yet : delays attend the powers divine.
- MEN. How long then since thy mother breathed her last?
- ORES. This the sixth day ; the funeral pile yet warm.
- MEN. How soon thy mother's blood these powers avenge?
- ORES. Unwisely said : though true, unkind to friends.
- MEN. What then avails to have avenged thy father?
- ORES. Nought yet. Delay is as a deed not done.
- MEN. In what light does the city view thy deeds?
- ORES. They hate us, so that none hold conference with us.
- MEN. Hast thou yet purified thy hands from blood?
- ORES. Where'er I go, each house is barred against me.
- MEN. What citizens thus drive thee from the land?
- ORES. Æax, through ranc'rous malice to my father.
- MEN. On the avenging Palamedes' death?
- ORES. I wrought it not. But three pursue my ruin.
- MEN. The others who? Some of Ægisthus' friends?
- ORES. They hurt me most, whose power now sways the state.
- MEN. Commit they not the sceptre to thy hands?
- ORES. They, who no longer suffer us to live !
- MEN. How acting? What thou art assured of speak.
- ORES. Sentence against us will this day be given.
- MEN. Of exile? or to die? or not to die?

ORES. To die, with stones crushed by our citizens.

MEN. Why fliest thou not far from this country's bounds?

ORES. On every side we are enclosed with arms.

MEN. By private foes, or by the Argive state?

ORES. By the whole state: in brief, that I may die.

MEN. Wretch, thou hast reached misfortune's dire extreme.

ORES. In thee is all my hope, in thee my refuge:

Happy to us afflicted art thou come;

Share with thy friends that happiness, alone

Enjoy not all the good thou hast received;

In our afflictions bear a friendly part.

Think how my father loved thee, and requite

That love to us: it will become thee well:

They have the name of friends, but not the worth,

Who are not friends in our calamities.

CHOR. But see, the Spartan Tyndarus this way

Directs his aged feet, in sable weeds,

His locks, in grief for his dead daughter, shorn.

ORES. Ah me! He comes indeed, whose presence most
Fills me with shame for what I have misdone.

I was his darling once; my infant age

With tenderness he nursed, caressed me, bore

The child of Agamemnon in his arms,

And loved me like the twin-born sons of Jove:

Nor Leda less. And is it thus, my soul,

Thus, O my bleeding heart, that I requite

Their ill-paid love! Ah, cover me, ye shades,

Ye clouds, with friendly darkness wrap me round,

And hide me from the terrors of his eye!

TYNDARUS, MENELAUS, ORESTES, CHORUS.

TYND. Where shall I see my daughter's husband, where
Find Menelaus? At Clytemnestra's tomb,

Libations as I poured, I heard that he,

With Helen, after all these tedious years,

Is safely in the Nauplian port arrived.

O lead me; for I long to grasp his hand,

To feast mine eyes after this length of years,

And welcome to our shores the man I love.

MEN. Hail, reverend sharer of the bed with Jove !

TYND. With joy thy greeting I return, my son.

Ah, not to know the future, what an ill !

Hateful to me this murd'rous dragon here

Glares pestilential lightnings from his eyes.

Wilt thou hold conference with th' unhallowed wretch ?

MEN. And wherefore not ? His father was my friend.

TYND. From such a father sprung a son so vile ?

MEN. He did ; to be respected, though unhappy.

TYND. Barb'rous thy manners, 'mongst barbarians learned.

MEN. Nay, Greece enjoins respect to kindred blood.

TYND. And not to wish to be above the laws.

MEN. Necessity is to the wise a law.

TYND. Enjoy it thou ; I will have none of it.

MEN. Wisdom approves not anger in thy years.

TYND. What ! Is the contest then of wisdom with him ?

If virtuous and dishonourable deeds

Are plain to all, who more unwise than he ?

Deaf to the call of justice he infringed

The firm authority of the public laws :

For when beneath my daughter's murd'ring axe

Th' imperial Agamemnon bowed his head,

A horrid deed, which never shall I praise,

He ought t' have called the laws, the righteous laws,

T' avenge the blood, and by appeal to them

Have driven his mother from this royal house :

Thus 'midst his ills calm reason had borne rule,

Justice had held its course, and he been righteous.

But the same Fury, which had seized his mother,

Had now seized him ; and with ungoverned rage,

Justly abhorrent of her impious deed,

He did a deed more impious, slew his mother.

For, let me ask thee, should the faithless wife

Bathe in the husband's blood her murd'rous hands,

And should th' avenging son the mother slay,

His son again retaliate blood for blood,

What bound shall the progressive mischief know ?

The wisdom of our ancestors ordained

That he, who had the guilt of blood upon him,

Be not allowed the sight, the walks of men,
 By banishment atoning, not by death :
 Else one must always be to death devote,
 Who hath the last pollution on his hands.
 But these vile women doth my soul abhor,
 And her, my daughter, first, who slew her lord :
 Thy Helen too I never will commend,
 Never hold converse with her ; no, nor thee
 Can I approve, who for a worthless woman
 In toilsome march hast trod the fields of Troy.
 Yet to my power will I support the laws,
 And check this savage, blood-polluted rage,
 Which spreads wild havoc o'er th' unpeopled land.
 Hadst thou the feelings of humanity,
 Wretch, when thy mother cried to thee for mercy,
 And bared her breast to thy relentless view ?
 I saw it not, that scene of misery,
 Yet the soft tear melts from my aged eye.
 One thing confirms my words : the gods abhor,
 With madness scourge thee, and with terrors haunt,
 Vindictive of thy guilt. What need I hear
 From other witness what mine eyes behold ?
 Now, Menelaus, I warn thee, mark me well :
 Do not, protecting him, oppose the gods,
 But leave him to the vengeance of the state,
 Or never set thy foot on Sparta's shore.
 My daughter by her death hath rightly paid
 The debt to justice : but from him that death
 Was most unjust. Oh, happy had I been,
 Had I no daughters : there I am a wretch !

CHOR. Happy his state, who, in his children blest,
 Hath not there felt affliction's deepest wound.

ORES. In reverence to thy age I dread to speak
 What I well know must pierce thy heart with grief.
 I am unholy in my mother's death,
 But holy, as my father I avenged.
 The veneration due to those grey hairs
 Strikes me with awe : else I could urge my plea
 Freely and boldly ; but thy years dismay me.

What could I do? Let fact be weighed with fact.
My father was the author of my being ;
Thy daughter brought me forth : he gave me life,
Which she but fostered : to the higher cause
A higher reverence then I deemed was due.
Thy daughter, for I dare not call her mother;
Forsook her royal bed for a rank sty
Of secret and adulterous lust : on me
The word reflects disgrace, yet I must speak it.
Ægisthus was this private paramour :
Him first I slew, then sacrificed my mother :
An impious deed ; but I avenged my father.
Thou threatenst the just vengeance of the state :
Hear me : deserve I not the thanks of Greece ?
Should wives with ruffian boldness kill their husbands,
Then fly for refuge to their sons, and think,
Baring their breast, to captivate their pity,
These deeds would pass for nothing, as the mood,
For something or for nothing, shall incline them.
This complot have I broke, by doing what
Thy pompous language styles atrocious deeds.
My soul abhorred my mother, and I slew her,
Who, when her lord was absent, and in arms
To glorious conquest led the sons of Greece,
Betrayed him, with pollution stained his bed ;
And, conscious of her guilt, sought not t' atone it,
But, to escape his righteous vengeance, poured
Destruction on his head, and killed my father.
Now by the gods, though in a charge of blood
Ill it becomes me to invoke the gods,
Had I in silence tamely borne her deeds,
Would not the murdered, justly hating me,
Have roused the Furies to torment my soul ?
Or hath she only her assisting fiends,
And he no fav'ring power t' avenge his wrongs ?
Thou, when to that bad daughter thou gavst birth,
Didst give me ruin ; for through her bold crime
I lost my father, and my mother slew.
Seest thou Ulysses' wife ? Telemachus

Shed not her blood ; for she, unstained with vice,
 Guards her chaste bed with spotless sanctity.
 Seest thou Apollo, who to mortal ears
 Sounds from his central cave the voice of truth ?
 Him we obey in all that he commands :
 Obeying his commands, I slew my mother ;
 Drag him then to your bar, put him to death ;
 The guilt is his, not mine. What should I do ?
 The guilt on him transferred, is not the god
 Sufficient to absolve me ? Where shall man
 Find refuge, if the god, at whose command
 I did it, will not now save me from death ?
 Then say not that these deeds were done not well,
 But to the doers most unhappily.
 If well accorded, the connubial state
 From all its strings speaks perfect harmony ;
 If ill, at home, abroad, the harsh notes jar,
 And with rude discord wound the ear of Peace.

CHOR. That Peace to wound always our sex was born,
 Augmenting by our ills the ills of men.

TYND. What, dost thou brave me, and in proud defiance
 So answer, as to pierce my heart with grief ?
 This pride will fire me more to urge thy death.
 One honest task I'll add to that which drew me
 Hither, to grace my murdered daughter's tomb :
 This instant to th' assembled Argives go,
 And rouse the willing state, an easy task,
 To crush thee, and thy sister : she deserves,
 E'en more than thou, to die, whose accursed tongue
 Added new fierceness to thy fierce intents,
 Thine ears assailing with some bitter speech,
 That Agamemnon's shade haunted her dreams,
 That the tremendous powers below abhorred
 Th' adulterous bed, foul e'en to man's gross sense,
 Till all this house blazed in the flames she kindled.
 I tell thee, Menelaus, and I will do it,
 If thou regard my hate, or my alliance,
 Protect him not, by the just gods I charge thee,
 But leave him to the rigour of the laws,

Or never dare to tread on Spartan ground.
Hear me, and mark me : league not with the vile,
Nor scorn thy friends, whose breasts with virtue glow.
Here, my attendants, lead me from this house.

ORESTES, MENELAUS, CHORUS.

ORES. Why get thee gone, that I may plead to him,
Uninterrupted by thy wayward age.—
Why dost thou bend that way, then backward turn,
Thoughtful thy step, absorbed in anxious care ?

MEN. Forbear, and leave me to my thoughts, perplexed
And unresolved which cause I should espouse.

ORES. Suspend awhile thy judgment ; hear me first,
First hear my plea ; weigh it, and then resolve.

MEN. Speak ; thou hast reason. Wisdom sometimes loves
To dwell with silence, sometimes woos the ear.

ORES. Then let me urge my plea ; and, oh ! forgive me
If I seem tedious : grief is fond of words.

Give me not aught of thine, only return
What from my father's grace thou hast received.

I ask not thy rich treasures, yet a treasure
Richer than all thy stores : I ask my life.

Is this unjust ? Let me from thee receive
Something unjust : such Agamemnon was,

Who led to Troy th' united arms of Greece :

Yet was the wrong not his ; but to avenge

Thy wife's incontinent and foul offence.

For all his dangers, all his toils in war,

Borne as becomes a friend, in a friend's cause,

Give me one day for his ten years in arms :

To vindicate thy honour, one short day

Stand firm, my friend, the guardian of my life.

For thee at Aulis my poor sister died ;

I am content, nor ask Hermione

A sacrifice for me. In my distress

Protect me, pity me ; I ask no more.

To my unhappy father grant my life,

And save my sister, save her virgin years.

The house of Agamemnon sinks with me.
Impossible thou'lt say : " When danger threatens,
The friend comes forth resolved, and shields his friend :
In fortune's golden smiles what need of friends ?
Her fav'ring power wants no auxiliary.
Greece sees thou lovst thy wife." I speak not this
In flattery, to wind into thy bosom ;
But I conjure thee by that love—Ah me !
How am I fall'n ! Not for myself alone
I pour my prayer, but for my father's house.
Now by the kindred blood, whose royal tide
Rolls in thy veins ; by each endearing tie
Of fond relation and fraternal love,
Think that my murdered father's injured shade
Burst from the realms of death, and hovers o'er thee ;
And think, oh, think the words I speak are his.
'Tis for my life I plead. life's dear to all,
With sighs, with groans, with tears : save me, oh, save me !

CHOR. Low at thy knees a woman joins her prayer ;
Oh, save them, save th' unhappy, for thou canst !

MEN. I hold thee dear, Orestes, and am willing
To give my friendly aid in thy distress ;
Th' affinity of blood calls loudly on us
To share its toils, if the gods grant the power,
Nor shrink appalled at danger or at death ;
And much I wish the gods would grant this power :
But with a thousand toils oppressed I come,
And lift a single spear, whose glitt'ring point
No squadrons follow wedged in firm array ;
Few my remaining friends, and small my force.
With Argos then should we engage in arms,
We could not conquer ; but with gentle words
Perchance we may : this way Hope smiles on us.
Who would with feeble forces aim at deeds
Of perilous proof ? 'Twere folly to attempt it.
When roused to rage the madd'ning populace storms,
Their fury, like a rolling flame, bursts forth
Unquenchable ; but give its violence way,
It spends itself, and as its force abates

Learns to obey, and yields it to your will :
 Their passions varying thus, now rough with rage,
 Now melting with soft pity, Wisdom marks
 The change, and turns it to a rich account.
 Thus Tyndarus I will move, and th' Argive state,
 To use their supreme power with gentleness.
 The gallant bark, that too much swells her sails,
 Oft is o'erset, but let her pride be lowered,
 She rides secure, and glories in the gale.
 Impetuous rage is hateful to the gods,
 Hateful to men : with cool unpassioned reason
 (Discretion guides my words) I must preserve thee,
 And not, as thou perchance mayst deem, by force ,
 Against the stronger what can force avail ?
 Its trophies can my single spear erect
 Victorious o'er the ills that now assault thee ?
 To be a suitor hath not been my use
 At Argos, but Necessity will teach us,
 If wise, submission to the power of Fortune.

ORESTES, CHORUS.

ORES. Thou doughty champion of thy wife, good else
 For nought, in thy friend's cause a coward base,
 Thus dost thou slight me, turn thee thus away ?
 Are Agamemnon's favours thus repaid ?
 Thou hadst no friend, my father, in thy ills.
 Ah me ! I am betrayed ; e'en Hope forsakes me,
 And leaves me unprotected to my fate,
 Who on his shelt'ring power alone relied.—
 But from his Phocians, see, with hasty step
 Here comes a friend indeed, my Pylades !
 A pleasing sight : for in distress a friend
 Comes like a calm to the tossed mariner.

PYLADES, ORESTES, CHORUS.

PYL. With swift pace speed I through the city, hearing
 Their counsels, and discerning their intents
 T' adjudge thee and thy sister to quick death.

But what ! How fares my friend ? What thy design ?
Thou partner of my soul, companion dear,
Friend, kinsman, brother : thou art all to me.

ORES. To speak my woes in brief then, we are lost.

PYL. Then in thy ruin is thy friend involved.

ORES. The Spartan views us with malignant eye.

PYL. A vile wife to a husband matched as vile.

ORES. To me no joy doth his arrival bring.

PYL. Is he indeed then at this land arrived ?

ORES. Late, but soon found unfaithful to his friends.

PYL. And brought he his disloyal wife with him ?

ORES. In truth he brought not her, but she brought him.

PYL. Where is this pest, that hath unpeopled Greece ?

ORES. Here in my house, if I may call it mine.

PYL. What to thy father's brother didst thou say ?

ORES. Not to see me and my poor sister slain.

PYL. Now, by the gods, what answer did he give ?

ORES. Timid and cautious, like a faithless friend.

PYL. With what excuses his denial clogged ?

ORES. The father of these female worthies came.

PYL. Incensed and chafing for his daughter's death ?

ORES. E'en so ; for him my father was disdained.

PYL. And wants he courage here t' assert thy cause ?

ORES. No warrior he, but among women brave.

PYL. Then have thy woes their full weight ; thou must die.

ORES. First the deciding vote must pass against us.

PYL. Deciding what ? I tremble as I ask.

ORES. Or life or death. Few words speak great events.

PYL. Fly then, and with thy sister leave this house.

ORES. Seest thou the guards that close their weapons round ?

PYL. Each street I saw, each pass secured with arms.

ORES. We are invested, like a sea-girt town.

PYL. Mine also is misfortune, ruin mine.

ORES. Ruin ! From whence ? Thy ills augment my woes.

PYL. My father in his rage hath banished me.

ORES. What, on some public, or a private charge ?

PYL. As impious, aiding in thy mother's death.

ORES. Unhappy, shalt thou suffer in my ills ?

PYL. I shall not, like the Spartan, shrink from them

ORES. Like mine, should Argos meditate thy death !

PYL. They have no right ; I am no subject here.

ORES. The many, when bad rulers prompt to ill,
Regard no rights.

PYL. But when good lead to good,
Their counsels well advised breathe temperate wisdom.

ORES. Well, be it so. But shall we now consult
Our common good ?

PYL. Propose th' important theme.

ORES. To urge my plea before them.

PYL. Vindicate
Thy deed as righteous ?

ORES. Righteous, as avenging
My father's blood.

PYL. Harshly, I fear, their brows
Will frown upon thee.

ORES. Should fear hold me mute,
And yield me tame to death ?

PYL. Unmanly that.

ORES. What should I do ?

PYL. Hast thou, remaining here,
Prospect of safety ?

ORES. Safety dwells not here.

PYL. In going hast thou hope ?

ORES. Should it take well,
It might succeed.

PYL. Attempt it boldly then ;
Go : if to die, 'tis nobler to die there.

ORES. My cause is just.

PYL. Would heaven they so may think !

ORES. Thus I avoid the charge of guilty fear.
Some one, indignant at my father's death,
Perchance may pity me.

PYL. I see it all,
And the bright lustre thy high birth throws round thee.

ORES. I will not stay, and like a coward slave
Die tamely here.

PYL. I praise thy noble spirit.

ORES. But to my sister shall we make this known ?

PYL. No, I conjure thee.

ORES. She would be all tears.

PYL. Avoid the omen then ; in silence go ;
Nor let her grief unseasonably detain thee.

ORES. Yet one distress afflicts me : should the Furies
Rouse all their terrors, and affright my soul.

PYL. My care shall watch around thee.

ORES. To attend
A man disordered thus, to guard, to hold him,
Is an unpleasing office.

PYL. But for thee
Delightful to my love.

ORES. Yet have a care
Lest my contagious frenzy seize on thee.

PYL. No more of frenzy.

ORES. Wilt thou not be shocked
At this hard task ?

PYL. No office shocks a friend.

ORES. Be thou my pilot then.

PYL. A welcome charge.

ORES. And guide my footsteps to my father's tomb,
That I may pour my supplications there,
And move his shade to aid me.

PYL. Pious this,
And just.

ORES. But from my mother's lead me far :
Let me not see it.

PYL. All is hostile there.
But haste thee, ere the fatal vote be passed.
Lean on me, let me throw my arm around thee,
Thus hold thee, thus support thy feeble limbs,
And bear thee through the crowd of gazing eyes
Regardless. Where shall friendship show its faith,
If now in thy afflictions I forsake thee ?

ORES. This is to have a friend : compared to this
What are the ties of blood ? The man who melts
With social sympathy, though not allied,
Is than a thousand kinsmen of more worth.

CHORUS.

Strophe.

Th' exalted state, th' imperial power,
Which spread o'er Greece its ample sway,
And, girt with war, on the barbaric shore
Taught the proud streams of Simois to obey,
Withdraw their glories. Discord (as of old
Fierce 'midst the sons of Tantalus she rose,
And for the rich ram fleeced with gold
Prepared the feast of horrid woes,
Whence Vengeance bared the flaming sword,
And blood for blood remorseless poured)
Now through the house of Atreus lords it wide,
And filled with carnage swells her sanguine pride.

Antistrophe.

Honour is honour now no more,
Since with fierce rage he dared invade
His parent's breast, and, his hand stained with gore,
Waved to the golden sun his crimson blade.
Ill actions are displeasing to the skies,
And moon-eyed Folly marks them for her own.
Heardst thou not Clytemnestra's cries,
Her thrilling shrieks, her dying moan?
"The mother by the son to bleed!
Ah, dare not: 'tis an impious deed;
Nor, in wild rev'rence to thy father's name,
Blot with eternal infamy thy fame!"

Epode.

Is there in all heaven's angry store
Misfortune, sorrow, sickness, pain,
Is there an ill that racks, that tortures more
Than by th' un pitying son the parent slain?

Ah spare, unhappy youth, thy mother spare!—
 'Tis done : like vultures see the Furies rise,
 And rend his soul with wild despair :
 See how he rolls his haggard eyes !
 When from her gold-embroidered vest
 Suppliant she bared her heaving breast,
 Ah, couldst thou strike ?—He struck.—O deed abhorred !
 And ruthless in her bosom plunged the sword.

ELECTRA, CHORUS.

ELEC. Ye virgins, hath the poor Orestes, struck
 With madness from the gods, rushed from the house ?

CHOR. Not so ; but to th' assembled state of Argos
 He goes, resolved to strive in this hard contest,
 Where life to him and thee, or death's the prize.

ELEC. Ah me, what hath he done ? Who counselled this ?

CHOR. Pylades. But this messenger will tell thee
 All that hath passed touching thy brother there.

MESSENGER, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

MESS. Unhappy daughter of that mighty chief,
 Who led the powers of Greece, revered Electra,
 How shall my tongue disclose this tale of woe ?

ELEC. Ah me ! We are no more. Thy falt'ring voice
 In broken accents speaks the tragic tale.

MESS. E'en so : the fatal sentence is pronounced.
 This day thy brother and thyself must die.

ELEC. Long have my fears, presaging this event,
 With mournful expectation sunk my heart.
 But was there no debate ? Whose ruling voice
 Procured this sentence ? Tell me, good old man,
 Arm they their hands with stones ? Or by the sword
 Together sink we in one common death ?

MESS. I left my rural cottage, and the gates
 Of Argos entered, with fond wish to learn
 To thee and to Orestes what had chanced,
 Prompted by that high reverence which I bore

Thy father ; for his house supported me,
 Though poor, yet not unfaithful. Soon I saw
 The thronging people hurry to that height
 Where, as they say, Ægyptus gave them seats
 When Danaus was adjudged to punishment.
 Astonished at the sight, I asked if war
 New threat'ning roused the city thus : an Argive
 Gave answer, " Seest thou not Orestes there ?
 He goes to plead his cause ; and life or death
 Hangs on his voice." I looked, and near me saw—
 O piteous spectacle !—what least I hoped
 To see, thy brother : as he walked, his eyes
 Fixed on the ground, his fever-weakened limbs,
 Supported by his friend, whose faithful care,
 Touched with like grief, guided his feeble steps.
 Soon as th' assembly sate, the herald's voice
 Proclaimed free speech to all who willed to speak,
 Whether Orestes for his mother slain
 Should die, or not. Talthybius first arose,
 Who with thy father stormed the towers of Troy ;
 Double and dark his speech, as one who lives
 The slave of greatness : to thy father high
 Respect he paid, but to thy brother's praise
 Silent, in honourable terms involved
 His ill intent, as that he modelled laws
 'Gainst parents not beseeming : but his eye
 Always glanced cheerful on Ægisthus' friends :
 For such their nature ; the warm shine of fortune
 Allures them, vassals to the rich and great.
 Next rose the royal Diomede : his voice
 Allowed not death, but exile. to atone
 The deed. Discordant clamours echoed round,
 As approbation prompted or dislike.
 An Argive, not an Argive, next arose,
 His birth barbaric, of licentious tongue,
 Presumptuous, turbulent, and prompt to lead
 With empty noise the populace to ill :
 For the smooth tongue, that charms to mischief, bears
 A pestilent power ; whilst Wisdom, aiming still

At virtue, brings its honourable thought,
Though late, to glorious issue. Her grave voice
Authority, that owes its best grace to it,
Should countenance, and check the factious tongue.
This wretch, suborned by Tyndarus, clamoured loud
For death, the harshest death, involving thee
In the same ruin. But another rose
Of different sentiment ; no slightly gaud,
But one in whose plain form the eye might note
A manly, free, direct integrity.
Tempered with prudence : one who rarely joined
The city circles, in his small domain,
Which his own culturing hand had taught to smile,
Passing in honest peace his blameless days.
His voice to Agamemnon's son decreed
A crown, his noble father who avenged
By slaying that abandoned impious woman,
Whose vile deeds checked the soldier's generous flame ;
For who in distant fields, at honour's call,
Would wield his martial arms, if in his absence
Pollution stain his wife, and his pure bed
Be made a foul sty of adulterous lust ?
The virtuous all approved. Orestes now,
Preventing further argument, advanced,
And thus addressed them : " Ye illustrious Argives,
Who from a line of ancient heroes draw
Your high-born race, to vindicate your honour,
Not less than to avenge my father's death,
I did this deed ! For should the husband's blood
Leave on the wife's hand no foul stain, full soon
The purple tide would flow, or you must sink—
O shame to manhood !—vile slaves to your wives.
Now she, that to my father's bed was false,
Hath died for it. If you require my life,
The law hath lost its force ; and who shall say
His own life is secure, as these bold deeds
From frequency draw force and mock at justice ? "
These truths were lost in air ; and that vile talker,
Whose malice called for death to both, prevailed.

Harsh was the sentence, and th' unhappy youth
 Scarce gained this sad indulgence, leave to die
 By his own hand this day. Thou too must die.
 Him from th' assembly Pylades with tears
 Leads this way, by a few, a faithful few,
 Accompanied, whose eyes, melting with pity,
 Rain bitter dew. He comes, a dismal sight,
 To pierce thy soul with grief. But haste, prepare
 The sword: thou too must die: thy high-born race
 Avails not, nor the Oracle of Phœbus,
 Whose fatal answer brings destruction on you.

CHOR. Why, miserable virgin, dost thou bend
 Thy clouded eye to th' earth? Why silent thus?
 Give thy griefs voice, and let thy sorrows flow.

ELECTRA.

Strophe.

Yes, I will let my sorrows flow,
 And give to grief the melancholy strain,
 And, as the mournful notes complain
 With all the heart-felt agony of woe,
 These hands my bleeding cheeks shall tear,
 And beat this head in wild despair,
 Devoted to the queen, that rules beneath
 The realms of darkness and of death.
 Daughters of Argos, with loud shrieks deplore
 The house of Atreus, now no more.
 Fall'n, by too severe a fate,
 From the proud glories of its splendent state.

Antistrophe.

Low, low they lie, th' imperial line,
 Th' imperial race of Pelops vanished, gone;
 No trace remains, no name, no son;
 Their vaunted honours in the dust decline.

From envious gods these ruins come,
 And the harsh city's bloody doom.
 Short is the day of life, each little hour
 With toils, with mis'ries clouded o'er ;
 Should bright'ning hope, to cheer the troubled day,
 Pour through the gloom a transient ray,
 Fate comes, and o'er the darkened scene
 Spreads the deep horrors of its dreary reign.

Epode.

Oh for an eagle's wing, whose rapid flight
 Might bear me to th' ethereal height,
 Where to Olympus fixed the golden chain
 Suspends the pond'rous, trembling mass :
 There should my woe-wild notes complain
 To the hoar author of my race.
 From Tantalus our lineage springs,
 A mighty race of sceptred kings :
 Great as they are, around them wait
 The vengeful ministers of fate ;
 Since Pelops, with impetuous force,
 Lashed his proud steeds, and urged their fiery course ;
 And as the bounding wheels they bore
 Along Geræstus' rock-rough shore,
 Saw Myrtilus extended there,
 Hurled headlong from the rapid car ;
 With gloomy joy he smiled, and gave
 The mangled limbs to stain the foaming wave.
 To Atreus thence pernicious came
 From Maia's son the fatal Ram,
 Who gave his golden fleece to shine
 Destructive, a destructive sign.
 Hence, Discord, hence thy horrid deeds
 Startled the sun's indignant steeds ;
 Back to the East they wing their way,
 And meet the Morn's affrighted ray ;
 The Pleiads, hast'ning to advance,
 Start back, and change their sevenfold dance.

Hence false Aërope in honeyed smiles
Concealed her wanton, ruinous wiles ;
Hence to Thyestes' horrid feast
Came slaughter, a tremendous guest ;
And, her hand reeking with my father's blood,
Draws from my heart the purple flood.

CHOR. But see thy brother, by the Argive state
Condemned to bleed, advances slow ; and with him
The faithful Pylades, with a brother's love,
Shares in his griefs, and guides his feeble steps.

ELECTRA, ORESTES, PYLADES, CHORUS.

ELEC. Ah me, my brother ! Whilst I yet behold thee
Let me indulge my grief, ere yet the tomb,
Yet ere the solemn pyre in its black shade
Wraps our dead limbs, let me indulge my grief,
My frenetic grief ; fix my fond eyes upon thee,
That never, never must behold thee more.

ORES. Wilt thou not cease these womanish wailings, meet
This harsh decree with silence, and abide,
Firmly abide the rigour of our fate ?

ELEC. Can I be silent, when our eyes no more
Shall see yon golden sun's irradiate light ?

ORES. Kill me not thou ; forbear ! Enough of death
Have I already from the hands of Argos.

ELEC. Thy youth I mourn, and thy untimely death ;
Life was thy due, when, ah ! thou art no more.

ORES. Now by the gods, throw not this softness round me,
Nor make th' unmanly tear drop at our woes.

ELEC. We die ; and shall the tear not flow ? That dew
Pity will shed o'er the lost joys of life.

ORES. This day must we needs die ; prepare we then
The sword, or other instrument of death.

ELEC. My brother, do thou kill me ; let no Argive
Touch with his rude hand Agamemnon's daughter.

ORES. No : in thy mother's blood I have enough ;
I shed not thine ; but by thy own hand die.

ELEC. I will ; and not desert thy honest sword.
But let me throw my fond arms round thy neck.

ORES. Vain is the joy, if yet it be a joy,
In death to soothe thee with a last embrace.

ELEC. My brother ! O that dearest, best-loved name,
Dear to thy sister, partner of my soul !

ORES. Why wilt thou melt me thus ? And yet I wish,
Returning thy embrace, to fold thee close,
Close in my arms ; nor modesty forbids ;
It is my sister. Let me clasp thee then,
And press thee to my bosom, fondly press thee.
This sweet exchange of love is all our woes
Allow us for the names of wedded joys.

ELEC. Oh, may the same sword end us, the same tomb
Close in its cedar hearsement our cold limbs !

ORES. That would be joy ; but destitute of friends
Who shall inurn us in one common tomb ?

ELEC. Did Menelaus my father then betray ?
Did not the wretch plead earnest for thy life ?

ORES. He durst not show his false eye ; but, his hopes
Fixed on the sceptre, feared to save his friends.
But let us in our death give shining proof
Of our illustrious birth ; my hand shall show
My high nobility, and plunge the sword
Intrepid through my breast : dare thou the like.
Thou, Pylades, be umpire of our death ;
With decent care compose our breathless limbs,
And lay them in my father's sepulchre.
Farewell ! I go to execute the deed.

PYL. Yet stay ; one charge against thee must I bring,
Shouldst thou but hope I would survive thy death.

ORES. And what avails it that thou die with me ?

PYL. Without thy converse what can life avail ?

ORES. Thou hast not slain thy mother : I slew mine.

PYL. I shared the deed : the suffering I should share.

ORES. Oh, save thee for thy father ; die not with me :
Thou hast a country ; that name's lost to me :
Thou hast a father's house, hast greatness, wealth.
If this ill-fated maid, whom to thy arms,

The sanction of our friendship, I betrothed—
If she be lost, some other nuptial bed
Awaits to bless thee with a father's joys.
Our dear relation is no more: my friend,
Thou, whose sweet converse was my soul's delight,
Farewell! For thee the joys of life remain;
To us they wither in the shade of death.

PYL. Wide from my honest purpose dost thou stray.
May not the fertile earth, nor the bright air
Receive my blood, if ever I forsake thee,
To spare myself if ever I forsake thee.
Together I designed, together wrought
Thy mother's death, which draws this fate on thee:
Together will I die with thee, and her:
Dear to my soul, affianced to my bed,
I deem her as my wife. Should I return
To Delphi, the high citadel of Phocis,
Dare I name honour, if united thus
Whilst fortune favoured your high state, but now
The false friend shrink from your adversity?
Not so: these things demand my deep regard.
Yet, ere we die, some measures let us form
T' afflict with grief the heart of Menelaus.

ORES. Let me see that, my friend, then let me die!

PYL. Be then advised, and let the keen sword wait.

ORES. Shall then my just revenge burst on his head?

PYL. No more: these women; I distrust their faith.

ORES. They are all truth, all friendship; fear them not.

PYL. Let us slay Helen: that would grieve his soul.

ORES. How? I approve it, be it nobly done.

PYL. Let the sword end her: in thy house she lurks.

ORES. She doth, and seals its treasures for her own.

PYL. Espoused to Pluto she will seal no more.

ORES. But how, around her that barbaric train?

PYL. What are they? For the Phrygians nought I dread.

ORES. Marshals of mirrors and cosmetic washes.

PYL. Brings she these Trojan gewgaws back to Greece?

ORES. Greece! 'Tis a paltry spot; she breathes not in it.

PYL. Well may the free disdain a host of slaves.

ORES. T' achieve this deed, twice would I die with joy.

PYL. Twice would I die, might I thy vengeance aid.

ORES. Disclose thy purpose, and accomplish it.

PYL. We enter, as in readiness to die.

ORES. Thus far I comprehend thee, but no more.

PYL. To her with loud laments bewail our fate.

ORES. T' extort the tear, though her heart bounds with joy.

PYL. This be her hour: the next may we enjoy.

ORES. How then to execute the destined deed?

PYL. Bear we our swords concealed beneath our vests.

ORES. But can destruction reach her 'midst her train?

PYL. Confined apart nought shall that crew avail.

ORES. And if one dares to clamour, let him die.

PYL. In that th' immediate exigence will guide us.

ORES. The death of Helen then, that is the word.

PYL. Agreed. That honour dictates this, now hear.

To draw the sword against a virtuous woman

Would blot our names with infamy. Her blood

All Greece demands, for sons, for fathers slain

In her cursed cause, for the deep sigh that rends

The widowed matron's desolated heart.

Shouts of applause would rend the air, thick fires

Blaze to the gods, and many a fervent prayer

Draw blessings on our heads. No longer called

The murderer of thy mother, thou shalt hear

Th' applauding voice of Greece with triumph hail thee

Revenger of the mischief-working Helen.

What, shall the treacherous Menelaus then smile,

Proud of his high success; and, whilst thy father,

Thyself, thy sister fall, thy mother too,

(But I forbear; for honour at her name

Dims its pale fires,) seize thy rich-treasured house

As his inheritance, and in amorous folds

Clasp his fair wife, by Agamemnon's spear

Recovered to his arms? Let me not live,

If I not draw the gloomy sword against her.

Failing in this, we'll set the house on flames,

And nobly in the blazing ruins die.

One must succeed : the glory shall be ours
To die with honour, or with honour live.

CHOR. This guilty fair, a scandal to her sex,
Merits th' abhorrence of each virtuous dame.

ORES. Life hath no blessing like a prudent friend,
Than treasured wealth more precious, than the power
Of monarchs, and the people's loud applause.
Thou on Ægisthus guidedst my just rage,
Nor in my dangers wast thou absent : now
Thou givst me vengeance on mine enemies,
Nor shrinks thy firm foot back. But I forbear,
Nor with intemperate praise thine ear offend.
I will not tamely die, but in my fall
Pull ruin on my foes : they too shall weep,
The traitors ; they shall have their share of woe.
Th' illustrious Agamemnon was my sire,
Imperial chief of Greece ; no tyrant he,
But clothed with th' awful power of the just gods.
I will not blot his splendours, like a slave
Crouching to death ; but with a liberal pride
Throw life away, first glorying in revenge.
Whiche'er succeeds, we triumph : yet if thence
Despair force safety, if the sword should glance
From us and wound their breasts, I have my wish.
Transport is in the thought, and the light words,
Charged with no costly pleasure, soothe my soul.

ELEC. And this suggests a thought which lifts my mind
To hope success and safety to us all.

ORES. The prescience of a god inspires thy voice.
But how ? • Oh say, for wisdom too is thine.

ELEC. Then hear ; and thou, my brother, mark my words.

ORES. Speak : there is pleasure in the hope of good.

ELEC. The daughter of this Helen dost thou know ?

ORES. The fair Hermione, our mother's charge ?

ELEC. She now is gone to Clytemnestra's tomb.

ORES. With what intent ? Thy words awaken hope.

ELEC. To pour libations for her mother there.

ORES. As means of safety dost thou tell me this ?

ELEC. Her, when she enters, as an hostage seize.

Thy son, Orestes, calls thee ! At my prayers
 Assistant come : for thee these sufferings fall
 Unjustly on my head, for my just deeds.
 Betrayed by thy base brother, 'gainst his wife
 My stern intents are bent : aid our revenge.

ELEC. Father, if in the realms beneath thou hear
 Thy children call, oh come ! For thee we die.

PYL. Spirit of Agamemnon, kindred shade,
 Hear me too, hear thy suppliant : save thy children !

ORES. I slew my mother.

PYL. My hand touched the sword.

ELEC. And my bold counsels prompted to the deed.

ORES. T' avenge thee, father.

ELEC. Nor did I betray thee.

PYL. Hear this, indignant shade, and save thy children !

ORES. Accept th' oblation of these tears.

ELEC. Accept

These groans.

PYL. Now cease ; and haste we to the deed.

If to the realms beneath prayers wing their way,

He hears. Thou Jove, our great progenitor,

Awfully just, to him, to me, to her

Extend thy guardian power ; this trinal band

One cause, one safety, or one ruin joins :

We live together or together die.

ELECTRA, CHORUS.

ELEC. Virgins of high Pelasgian race,

Achaia's pride, Mycenæ's grace !

CHOR. Why, royal maid, these plaintive strains ?

That name, that title yet remains.

ELEC. Divide, divide ! With careful view

Watch you the street, the entrance you.

CHOR. And why to us this task assigned ?

Unfold, sweet friend, unfold thy mind.

ELEC. Lest any, standing near the gate,

Find in this scene of blood her fate.

1st SEMICHOR. Haste, to your stations quickly run :

My watch be towards the rising sun.

2nd SEMICHOR. Be mine with cautious care address
To where he sinks him in the west.

ELEC. Now here, now there, now far, now nigh,
Quick glancing dart th' observant eye.

1st SEMICHOR. With fond affection we obey,
Our eyes quick glancing ev'ry way.

ELEC. Glance through that length of hair, which flows
Light waving o'er your shaded brows.

1st SEMICHOR. This way a man comes hast'ning down ;
His garb bespeaks some simple clown.

ELEC. Undone, undone, should he disclose
These couched, armed lions to their foes.

1st SEMICHOR. He passes on, suppress thy fear,
And all this way again is clear.

ELECTRA, to 2nd SEMICHORUS.

And that way doth no footstep rude
Disturb the wished-for solitude ?

2nd SEMICHOR. This way no rude step beats the ground,
But all is still, all safe around.

ELEC. Patience exhausted bears no more :
Near will I listen at the door.

Favoured with silence, why so slow

To let the purple torrent flow ?

Blinded by beauty's dazzling ray

Do your charmed swords refuse t' obey ?

They hear not. Roused at these alarms

Some Argive soon will rush in arms ;

And in her aid vindictive spread

Horror and ruin on our head.

Watch, virgins, watch with strictest care,

Repose hath nothing to do here.

CHOR. With transverse watch our heedful eye
Each various way——

HEL. Io, Pelasgian Argos, I am slain !

[*Within.*

ELEC. Hark! Their bold hands are in the bloody act.

It was the cry of Helena, I deem.

CHOR. O Jove, eternal power, hear us, and ever
Protect our friends !

HEL. My dearest Menelaus,
I die ! Where art thou ? Fly, oh fly to save me !

ELEC. Kill, slay, strike, wound, dispatch, destroy :
With iron smiles of gloomy joy
Plunge deep the huge tempestuous blade,
For blood, for death, for carnage made,
Deep in her breast. She basely fled
Her father's house, her husband's bed :
Hence many a Greek in battle slain
Lies mould'ring on the Phrygian plain :
Hence, to call forth the bursting tear,
The arrowy shower, the hurtling spear,
And hence Scamander's silver flood
Whirls his swoln eddies stained with blood.

CHOR. Hark ! hark ! I hear the sound of feet :
The marble pavement now they beat.

ELEC. Whilst slaughter is at work, my virgin friends,
Hermione comes : cease we the measure then :
She walks into our toils, a goodly prize.
Silent resume your stations ; fixed your eye,
Let not your countenance betray the deed.
My eye shall take again its mournful cast,
As unacquainted with this havoc here.

HERMIONE, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

ELEC. From Clytemnestra's tomb comest thou, virgin
Thy hallowed offerings and libations paid ?

HERM. I have appeased her shade. But from this house
The voice of loud lament ere my approach
Struck my astonished ear : it makes me tremble.

ELEC. Well it beseems us : we have cause for cries.

HERM. Be thy voice tuned to good. Is there aught new ?

ELEC. Orestes and myself are doomed to die.

HERM. Be it not so, by blood to me allied !

ELEC. Necessity lays its iron yoke on us.

HERM. For this did these laments sound from the house ?

ELEC. Suppliant at Helen's feet he raised the cry.

HERM. Who ? For my knowledge on thy words depends.

ELEC. The poor Orestes, for his life and mine.

HERM. Just cause for lamentation hath this house.

ELEC. Can nature know a stronger? But come thou,
Join in the supplication of thy friends,
Fall at thy mother's knees—how blest her state!—
That Menelaus allow not that we die.

O thou, who from my mother's hand receiv'dst
Thy infant nurture, look with pity on us,
Our woes alleviate, to the trial go:
My foot shall lead, sweet prop of all our hopes!

HERM. And willingly I follow: if my voice,
My prayers, my power avail, ye shall not die.

ELEC. You there within the house, ye arm'd friends,
Will you not seize your prey?

HERM. Ah, who are these
Terrible to mine eye!

ORES. No noise, no cry! [*Advancing*
To us, not to thyself, thou bringest safety.

ELEC. Here, seize her, seize her! To her trembling breast
Point your keen swords, and awe her into silence.
Let Menelaus perceive he hath found men,
Not Phrygian slaves: men, whose bold spirits dare
Retort his foul wrongs on his own base head. [*They lead her off.*
Now, my loved virgins, raise your voices high;
Before the house ring out the notes of woe,
That this bold deed spread no alarm, nor call
Th' astonished Argives to these royal gates,
Till I see Helen rolling in her blood,
Or from the slaves attending learn her fate.

CHOR. Justice unsheathed her awful sword,
And Vengeance snatched it from her hand:
From heaven her rapid flight she poured,
And plunged in Helen's breast the glitt'ring brand.
For this accursed, this fatal fair
Filled Greece with many a mournful tear,
Since the pernicious Phrygian boy
Enamoured bore her wanton charms to Troy.
Hush, hush! the palace door resounds; break off.
A Phrygian slave comes forth: learn we from him
What fate hath wrought within.

PHRYGIAN, CHORUS.

PHRY. The Grecian sword from death I fled,
 In these barbaric sandals was my flight,
 Climbing the pillar's sculptured head,
 And o'er the cedar rafter's height :
 For th' unkind earth refused to save
 A flying, a barbaric slave.
 Whither, ah, whither shall I fly ?
 Oh say, ye virgin strangers, say,
 Mount the grey regions of the sky,
 Or through the foaming billows dash my way,
 Where, the firm globe encircling wide,
 Vexed Ocean rolls his roaring tide ?

CHOR. Servant of Helen, Phrygian, whence these cries ?

PHRY. O Ilium, Ilium ! Woe, woe, woe !
 Ye towers, the fertile Phrygia's stately boast !
 O sacred Ida's pine-crowned brow !
 I mourn, I mourn your glories lost :
 For you these doleful notes complain,
 A mournful, a barbaric strain.
 From Leda's egg, the Swan her sire,
 The beauteous, baleful Helen rose :
 Whose eye on heaven-built Troy glares fire,
 And the rich seat of Ganymede o'erthrows :
 Hence flows, for chiefs, for heroes slain,
 The mournful, the barbaric strain.

CHOR. No longer hold us in suspense ; relate
 Each circumstance : conjecture errs from truth.

PHRY. It is the song of death ; your pardon then
 That I indulged the melancholy strain.
 In Asia with barbaric voice we raise
 These notes of woe, when by the ruthless sword
 The blood of kings is shed upon the earth.
 But to my tale. Of lion port came in
 Two of your Grecians : father to the one
 Th' illustrious leader of your troops : and one
 The son of Strophius, of deep reserve,

And dang'rous, dark design ; such was the chief
Of Ithaca, but faithful to his friends,
In battle bold, and in the works of war
Of sage experience ; as a dragon fierce.
Perdition on his silence, which concealed
Designs of death. Together they advanced
To the bright queen whom Paris called his wife,
Their eyes suffused with tears, humble their mien,
And at her knees, on each side one, they fell
Besieging her. Back start the slaves, back starts
Each Phrygian minister, some fearing fraud,
More unsuspicious some, whilst others thought
This dragon, crimson with his mother's blood,
The beauteous Spartan in his toils enclosed.

CHOR. Where then wast thou ? Hadst thou first fled through
fear ?

PHRY. I then was standing, in our Phrygian mode
Was standing near, and with the feathered fan
Raised the soft gales to breathe upon her cheeks,
In our barbaric mode, to bid their breath
Sport in the ringlets of her waving hair.
Her curious fingers guide the thread, the spoils
Of Phrygia, whose rich texture formed the woof
T' adorn the purple pall, a mournful present
To Clytemnestra. With mild voice Orestes
Entreats her to arise, and go with him
To an age-honoured altar, in old times
The seat of Pelops, his great ancestor,
That she might hear his words. He led her, ah !
He led her ! Unprophetic of her fate
She followed. The vile Phocian, his compeer,
Seized the occasion, and with stern command
Bade us be gone ; then, dragged to separate cells,
Confined us from our royal mistress far.

CHOR. What terrible event ensued ? Oh, say !

PHRY. Goddess of Ida, potent, potent queen !
What scenes of blood, what impious deeds these eyes,
These eyes amidst the royal rooms beheld !
Each in his fierce hand grasped the sword concealed

Beneath their purple vests, his fiery glance,
 Heedful of interruption, darting round ;
 Then, like two mountain boars, before the queen
 They stood, and thundered, "Thou shalt die, shalt die ;
 Thy coward husband kills thee, who in Argos
 Betrays his brother's family to death."
 She shrieked aloud, and raising her white arm
 In miserable manner beat her head ;
 Then bent her golden-sandalled feet to flight.
 But, rushing fierce, Orestes in her hair
 Locked his rude hand, and bending to the left
 Her head, prepared to plunge th' impetuous sword
 Deep in her throat.

CHOR. Where were her Phrygians then ?
 They ran, belike, on all sides to her aid.

PHRY. Roused by her cries we burst the bars, and each
 From forth his separate cell rushed to her aid :
 Some in their hasty hands snatched stones, some seized
 The beamy spear, th' unwieldy falchion some :
 'Gainst us in dreadless rage the Phocian came,
 Fierce as the Trojan Hector, fierce as Ajax,
 Whose triple-crested helm I saw, I saw
 Dreadfully waving in the gates of Priam.
 Clashing our swords met his ; but then, oh then
 Was seen how weak, how spiritless our arms
 Opposed in fight against the force of Greece ;
 One hasty running, dying one, one gashed
 With wounds, wild with affright another bends
 Imploring mercy ; sheltering in the dark
 We fly, and all was terror, blood, and death.
 Just as th' uplifted sword threatened to shed
 Her mother's blood on th' earth, Hermione came ;
 Swift with unhallowed rage they dart on her,
 And seize their trembling prey ; then turn again
 To execute the work of death on Helen.
 Meanwhile, O heaven ! O earth ! O day ! O night !
 Forth from the chamber through the vestibule,
 Whether by some enchantment, by the power
 Of magic, or the stealth of fav'ring gods,

She vanished. What hath happened since I know not,
 Intent on hasty flight to save myself,
 For all his toils, all his distressful toils,
 Barren return hath Menelaus received,
 And led his beauteous wife from Troy in vain.

CHOR. Terror succeeds to terror ; for mine eyes
 Behold Orestes there before the house
 Walk with disordered pace, and grasp his sword.

ORESTES, PHRYGIAN, CHORUS.

ORES. Where is the slave, who this way fled my sword ?

PHRY. Low at thy feet, such our barbaric use,
 Thus prostrate I implore thy mercy, king.

ORES. This is not Ilium, but the land of Greece.

PHRY. In any land life to the wise is sweet.

ORES. Hast thou raised cries to call the Spartan's aid ?

PHRY. Thee rather would I aid : more worthy thou.

ORES. This Helen then, with justice did she die ?

PHRY. Most justly : had she three lives, she should lose them.

ORES. Thy servile fear smooths thy dissembling tongue.

PHRY. No. Should she live who wasted Greece and Troy ?

ORES. Swear, I will kill thee else, thou flatterest not.

PHRY. Now by my life I swear, sincerely swear.

ORES. Was the steel dreadful thus to all at Troy ?

PHRY. Keep thy sword off : near, it glares terror to me.

ORES. Freeze not to stone, as seen the Gorgon's head.

PHRY. Let me not die ; no Gorgon's head I know.

ORES. Fears a slave death, the end of all his ills ?

PHRY. To slave or free sweet is the light of heaven.

ORES. Well urged : thy wisdom saves thee : go thou in.

PHRY. Thou wilt not kill me then ?

ORES. In safety go.

PHRY. Thy words breathe music.

ORES. But I may retract
 This lenity.

PHRY. No music breathes in that.

ORES. Fool, if thou thinkst thy blood shall stain my sword,
 Nor woman thou, nor in the scale of men.

To stop thy clamours came I : Argos soon
Is roused at every noise. For Menelaus
We fear him not : our swords shall welcome him ;
Let him then come, proud of his golden locks
That wanton o'er his shoulders. Should he raise
The men of Argos, and for Helen's death
Lead them against this house, and menace me,
My sister, and my friend, he shall behold
His daughter, with his wife, weltring in blood.

CHORUS.

1st SEMICHOR. Other horrors, other woes
Rise this royal house t' enclose.
2nd SEMICHOR. Haste we then to spread th' alarm
Or keep silence, shunning harm ?
1st SEMICHOR. See the sudden smoke arise,
Waving tidings to the skies !
2nd SEMICHOR. From the torch that dusky wreath
Threatens ruin, flames, and death.
CHOR. What event the gods assign,
Mortal, to submit is thine.
Here some stern relentless power
Bade the horrid ruin roar,
When the blood-stained car beneath
Myrtilus lay rolled in death.

But see, with hasty step the Spartan comes,
Informed, belike, of these rough deeds of death.
Quick, quick, ye royal youths—make fast these gates,
Prevent the foe ; for to th' unfortunate,
Like thee, Orestes, dreadful are the wrongs
Of insolent and rude prosperity.

MENELAUS *below*, ORESTES, PYLADES, ELECTRA,
HERMIONE *above*, CHORUS.

MEN. I heard the horrid and atrocious deeds
Of these two lions, men I call them not ;
My wife not dead, I hear, but disappeared.
This idle rumour I received from one,

Bewildered with his fears ; the bitter scoff,
The artifice of him that slew his mother.
Open the gates here : slaves, I speak to you,
Unbar the gates, that I at least may save
My daughter from their bloody hands, and bear
My poor lost wife away, whose murderers
This vengeful hand should recompense with death.

ORES. Stand off ! forbear ! Spartan, I speak to thee
Fow'ring in pride ! Dare but to touch the gate,
I will rend down this ancient pinnacle
That crowns the battlements, and crush thy head.
The gates are shut, and barricadoed strong,
To guard me from thy efforts and thy friends'.

MEN. Ha ! what is this ? What mean these blazing
torches ?

Why on the battlements this station fixed ?

Why at my daughter's bosom points that sword ?

ORES. Is it thy will to question, or to hear me ?

MEN. Neither ; but by compulsion I must hear thee.

ORES. Be thou assured, thy daughter I will kill.

MEN. Thou hast killed Helen : wilt thou shed more blood ?

ORES. Would I had killed her, nor the gods beguiled me !

MEN. Her murder dost thou tauntingly deny ?

ORES. With sorrow I deny it : 'twas my wish.

MEN. What to have done ? Thy words excite my fear.

ORES. To sacrifice this baleful pest of Greece.

MEN. Give me the body, that I may entomb it.

ORES. Ask of the gods : but I will kill thy daughter.

MEN. The mother slain, wilt thou add blood to blood ?

ORES. T' avenge my father ; yet betrayed by thee.

MEN. Art thou not sated with thy mother's blood ?

ORES. Never, with punishing such impious women.

MEN. And art thou, Pylades, accomplice with him ?

ORES. His silence speaks : sufficient my reply.

MEN. But short thy joy, unless thou fly on wings.

ORES. We will not fly : but we will fire the house.

MEN. Thy father's royal seat in ruins sink !

ORES. That it may ne'er be thine : and at the flames

Her will I sacrifice.

- MEN. Ay, kill her, do ;
I will have vengeance, ample vengeance on thee.
ORES. Thus then.
MEN. Ah, stay thee ! do not, do not kill her !
ORES. Be silent now, and with composure bear
Th' afflictions, which with justice light on thee.
MEN. What, is it justice then that thou shouldst live ?
ORES. Live ! Ay, and reign.
MEN. Where wouldst thou reign ?
ORES. In Argos,
Pelasgian Argos.
MEN. At the sacred rites
Well would those hands the cleansing lavers touch.
ORES. And wherefore not ?
MEN. And, ere the spear is raised,
Offer the hallowed victim !
ORES. Dost not thou ?
MEN. And well : my hands are pure.
ORES. But not thy heart.
MEN. Who will hold converse with thee ?
ORES. He that loves
His father.
MEN. He too, who reveres his mother ?
ORES. Happy his state.
MEN. Unhappy then is thine.
ORES. Because such impious women I abhor.
MEN. Take, from my daughter's bosom take thy sword.
ORES. False are thy words.
MEN. My daughter wilt thou kill ?
ORES. Now thou speakst truth.
MEN. Ah me, what shall I do ?
ORES. Go to the Argives, and persuade them——
MEN. What
Shall I persuade them ?
ORES. Ask the state to spare
Our lives.
MEN. Or you will kill my daughter ?
ORES. Ay.
MEN. Unhappy Helen !

- ORES. Am not I unhappy ?
 MEN. From Troy I brought thee to be butchered here.
 ORES. Would it were so !
 MEN. After a thousands toils—
 ORES. But not for me.
 MEN. These dreadful ills fall on me.
 ORES. Thou hadst no will to serve me.
 MEN. Thou hast caught me.
 ORES. No : by thy baseness thou hast caught thyself.
 But go, Electra, fire the house below :
 And thou, my Pylades, my faithful friend,
 Set from these battlements the roof on fire.
 MEN. Arm, arm, ye sons of Greece ! ye warlike Argives,
 Fly to my aid. Despair of life, and guilt
 Stained with his mother's blood, prompt his bold hand
 In one wide ruin to involve the city.

APOLLO.

Cease, Menelaus, forbear this fiery rage :
 Apollo speaks : revere the present god.
 And thou, Orestes, whose uplifted sword
 Threatens that virgin's life, forbear, and hear.
 Her whom thy rage, to work him woe, assailed,
 This radiant form in tissued clouds enshrined,
 Snatched from thy sword I saved ; such the command
 Of heaven's high king : his beauteous progeny
 Soars above mortal fate, and orb'd in heaven
 Immortal 'midst her kindred stars she shines,
 Beaming kind influence on the mariners.
 Lead to thy royal house another wife ;
 Since by her beauty the just gods awoke
 'Twixt Greece and Troy the rage of war, to free
 The groaning earth from impious multitudes.
 Such is the fate of Helen. Thou, Orestes,
 Quitting this country, in Parrhasia's plains
 For one revolving year thy dwelling fix,
 And give the place thy name ; that honour share
 With Azan and with Arcas. Pass from thence

To Athens ; there against the Furies urge
 Thy plea, acquit thee of thy mother's blood :
 There in that awful court the gods shall sit
 Thy judges ; and thy just cause shall prevail.
 Her, at whose throat thy angry sword was pointed,
 The gods decree thy wife ; though Pyrrhus dreams
 Of nuptial joys, the Delphic sword awaits him ;
 My vengeance on Achilles this demands.
 To Pylades thy sister is betrothed ;
 Give him his bride : and happiness attends
 To pour her blessings on their future years.
 Thou, Menelaus, yield that Orestes reign
 At Argos : haste to Sparta, reign thou there,
 And wear that crown, the dowry of thy wife,
 The well-earned meed of all the toils she caused thee.
 It shall be mine t' appease the state to him,
 Compelled by my command to slay his mother.

ORES. Thou god of oracles, prophet of good,
 True are thy words, and faithful. Yet my soul
 Was struck with horror, lest some vengeful power
 Spoke this, which I misdeemed thy voice divine.
 But all is well. Obedient to thy word
 I drop the sword : and, if her father gives her,
 Wish to receive Hermione my bride.

MEN. Daughter of Jove, bright Helen, hail ! Thy state
 'Midst the blest mansions of th' immortal gods
 I reverence. Now, Orestes, give I thee
 My daughter, at the bidding of the god.
 Illustrious in thy race thou takest a wife
 Not less illustrious : blessings on thy hand
 That takes her, and on mine that gives her to thee.

APOL. Each now depart, as I commanded : cease
 Your strife.

MEN. T' obey is ours.

ORES. Such are my thoughts.
 Now, Menelaus, to all these evils past
 My soul speaks peace ; and to thy oracles.

APOL. Go then your ways, now go, and reverence Peace,
 Most beauteous of the gods. I will conduct

Th' immortal Helen to the house of Jove
O'er yon star-spangled sky, to the bright seats
Where, with majestic Juno, and the bloom
Of Hebe ever young, Alcides' joy,
A goddess she shall hear the vows of mortals ;
And honoured with the twin-born sons of Jove
Guide the tost mariners, and rule the sea.

CHOR. O victory, I revere thy sober triumphs :
Thus ever guard, thus ever crown my life !

IPHIGENIA IN AULIS.

THE translator thought it not improper to arrange the tragedies of Euripides, as he had before arranged those of Æschylus, according to the historical series of their subjects. [Some variation has been made in this edition to secure equal interest for each of the volumes, but the relation of plays to each other has been kept in view.] The following tragedies have relation to the Trojan war and the events which arose from it: these are great and important, have a close connection, and reflect light on each other by being thus placed in regular succession. [The other plays of Euripides relating to the Trojan war will be included in the next of the three volumes which, in course of time, will secure a complete translation of that poet in the "Universal Library."]

The combined fleet of Greece was assembled at Aulis, and had been long detained there by contrary winds: the Oracle declared that they would not be permitted to sail, unless Iphigenia were sacrificed to Diana; but that, if the goddess were thus propitiated, they should reach the Phrygian shore, and lay the towers of Troy level with the ground. Upon this Agamemnon had been prevailed upon to send for his daughter under pretence of giving her in marriage to Achilles: the arguments of Ulysses, his affection for his brother, his desire of glory, his love of his country, and his reverence for the gods, had impelled him to this measure: but he had consented with reluctance, and felt all the fondness of a father. This conflict of his mind is finely described throughout the drama. -CIS. length paternal tenderness prevails over all other consideratio.

he secretly forms measures to prevent her coming, is detected, and disappointed. Iphigenia arrives attended by her mother ; but instead of her nuptials with the most accomplished of all the Grecian princes, she soon learns that she is destined to bleed as a victim on the altar of Diana. Never did Euripides succeed better in painting scenes of distress ; never was he more powerful in exciting the softest emotions of pity. The characters of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra are admirably sustained ; Aristotle seems to have formed a different judgment concerning that of Iphigenia (Poetic, c. xv.). For the reader's satisfaction, the objection made by that critic and the defence of the poet are here subjoined. " Aristotle's words are : ' Iphigenia is an instance of the inconsistent character ; for there is no probable conformity between her fears and supplications at first, and her firmness and resolution afterwards.' But how doth this appear, independently of the name of the great critic ? Iphigenia is drawn indeed, at first, fearful and suppliant ; and surely with the greatest observance of nature. The account of her destination to the altar was sudden, and without the least preparation ; and, as Lucretius well observes, *Nubendi tempore in ipso* ; when her thoughts were employed, and, according to the simplicity of those times, confessed to be so, on her promised nuptials. The cause of such destination too, as appeared at first, was the private family interest of Menelaus. All this justifies, or rather demands, the strongest expression of female fear and weakness. ' But she afterwards recants, and voluntarily devotes herself to the altar.' And this with the same strict attention to probability. She had now informed herself of the importance of the case. Her devotement was the demand of Apollo, and the joint petition of all Greece. The glory of her country, the dignity and interest of her family, the life of the generous Achilles, and her own future fame, were all nearly concerned in it. All this considered, together with the high, heroic sentiments of those times, and the superior merit, as was believed, of voluntary devotement, Iphigenia's character must have been very unfit for the distress of a whole tragedy to turn upon, if she had not, in the end, discovered the readiest submission to her appointment. But, to show with at wonderful propriety the poet knew to sustain his characters,

we find her, after all, and notwithstanding the heroism of the change, in a strong and passionate apostrophe to her native Mycenæ, confessing some involuntary apprehensions and regrets, the remains of that instinctive abhorrence of death, which had before strongly possessed her.

'Once the bright star of Greece——
But I submit to die.'

This I take to be not only a full vindication of the consistency of Iphigenia's character, but as delicate a stroke of nature, as is, perhaps, to be found in any writer."—*Comment. on the Epistle to the Pisos.*

Happy Euripides in such an advocate! P. Brumoy has the same sentiments concerning the character of Iphigenia. The reasons he employs are nearly the same. "Only," to continue the words of the same critic, "he confirms them all by showing that the Iphigenia of Racine, which is modelled, not according to the practice of Euripides, but the comment of Aristotle, is, in all respects, so much the worse for it." The same must be said concerning the character of Achilles, as it is drawn by Racine: P. Brumoy, in the comparison, has well defended the Achilles of Euripides "on the sure principles of nature and common sense." Yet, with him, we ought to allow much to the different manners of different ages and different nations: and, in justice to the merit of the excellent Racine, we should reflect that he wrote for the French nation, Euripides for the Athenians. It is difficult to forbear pointing out the singular beauties of this fine drama; but "I have too much respect for the understanding of my readers to take that liberty."

The scene is at Aulis, before the house of Agamemnon.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

AGAMEMNON.
MENELAUS.
ACHILLES.
CLYTEMNESTRA.

IPHIGENIA.
ATTENDANT
MESSENGER.
CHORUS, FEMALES OF CHALCIS.

AGAMEMNON, ATTENDANT.

AGAM. Thou old and faithful servant, from the house
Come forth.

ATT. I come. What recent care disturbs
The royal Agamemnon ?

AGAM. Thou shalt know.

ATT. I haste : for not to sleep inclines my age,
Nor in these eyes is dull.

AGAM. What star is that
There sailing ?

ATT. Sirius, in his middle height
Near the seven Pleiads riding.

AGAM. Not the sound
Of birds is heard, nor of the sea ; the winds
Are hushed in silence on the Euripus.

ATT. Why doth the royal Agamemnon then
Rush from his tent ? Through Aulis quiet reigns,
And motionless the watch their station hold.
Let us go in.

AGAM. I envy thee, old man ;
I envy all, who pass their lives secure
From danger, to the world, to fame unknown :
But those to greatness raised I envy not.

ATT. The dignity of life in greatness lies.

AGAM. Yet is that dignity unsafe : the chase
Of glory is delightful, but when won
It brings disquiet. One while from the gods,
Their worship ill directed, ruin comes ;
One while the various and discordant views
Of men distract the mind, and wound its peace.

ATT. This I approve not in a potent chief.
Not to all good, without a taste of ill,
Did Atreus give thee birth : it must be thine
To joy, it likewise must be thine to grieve,
For thou art mortal born ; and though perchance
To thee not pleasing, thus the gods decree.
The blazing lamp didst thou display, and write

That letter, which thou holdest in thy hand
E'en now ; the writing didst thou blot ; then seal,
And open it again ; then on the floor
Cast it in grief, the warm tear from thine eye
Fast flowing, in thy thoughts distracted near,
As it should seem, to madness. What new care,
My royal lord, say what new care disturbs thee ?
Tell me, impart it to me : to a man
Honest and faithful wilt thou speak, a man
By Tyndarus of old sent to thy wife,
A nuptial present, to attend the bride,
One of tried faith, and to his office just.

AGAM. To Leda were three beauteous daughters born,
Phœbe, and Clytemnestra now my wife,
And Helena : to her the youths of Greece,
Those of the noblest rank, as wooers came.
Each menaced high, on deeds of blood resolved,
Should he not win the virgin ; this was cause
To Tyndarus her father of much doubt,
To give, or not to give her, and how best
To make good fortune his ; at length this thought
Occurred, that each to each the wooers give
Their oath, and plight their hands, and on the flames
Pour the libations, and with solemn vows
Bind their firm faith that him who should obtain
The virgin for his bride they all would aid ;
If any dared to seize and bear her off,
And drive by force her husband from her bed,
All would unite in arms, and lay his town,
Greek or Barbaric, level with the ground.
Their faith thus pledged, the aged Tyndarus
Beneath them well with cautious prudence wrought ;
He gave his daughter of her wooers one
To choose, tow'ards whom the gentle gales of love
Should waft her : and she chose (O had he ne'er
Obtained that envied favour !) Meneïaus.
To Lacedemon now the Phrygian came,
The judge between the beauties of the sky,
So fame reports him : gorgeous was his dress,

Glitt'ring with gold and vermeil-tinctured dies,
Barbaric elegance He loved, was loved,
And bore the beauteous Helena away
To Ida's pastoral groves ; for Menelaus
Was absent then. Deserted thus through Greece
He raved, the oaths attesting giv'n of old
To Tyndarus, conjuring all t' avenge
His wrongs. On this the Grecians rush to war,
And taking arms come hither to the straits
Of Aulis, furnished well with ships, with spears,
And num'rous chariots : me they chose their chief,
Doing a grace to Menelaus, for that
I am his brother. O that this high honour
Some other had received, not I ! The troops
Collected and embodied, here we sit
Unactive, and from Aulis wish to sail
In vain. The prophet Calchas, 'midst the gloom
That darkened on our minds, at length pronounced
That Iphigenia, my virgin daughter,
I to Diana, goddess of this land,
Must sacrifice : this victim giv'n, the winds
Shall swell our sails, and Troy beneath our arms
Be humbled in the dust ; but if denied,
These things are not to be. This when I heard,
I said that by the herald's voice the troops
Should be discharged, for never would I bear
To slay my daughter ; till my brother came,
And, urging many a plea, persuaded me
To bear these dreadful things. I wrote, I sealed
A letter to my wife, that she should send
Her daughter to Achilles as a bride
Affianced : of his worth I spoke in terms
Of amplest honour ; said he would not sail
With Greece, unless from us his nuptial bed
Was decked in Phthia : with my wife this found
Easy belief, the false tale that announced
Her daughter's destined marriage. Of the Greeks
None but Ulysses, Calchas, and my brother
To this are conscious. What I then resolved

Imprudently, I prudently retract,
 Committed to this letter, which thou sawst me
 This night, old man, unfold and fold again
 Take then this letter, haste, to Argos go.
 That there is written, in its secret fold's
 Enclosed. I will explain to thee; for thou
 Art faithful to my wife and to my house.

ATT. Read it, explain its purport, that my words
 May aptly with thy writing correspond.

AGAM. "Whate'er my former letter gave in charge, [*Reeas.*
 Daughter of Leda, this I write to thee,
 That to Eubœa's winding way thou send not
 Thy daughter, nor to Aulis rising high
 Above the waves; for to some other time
 The nuptials of the virgin we defer."

ATT. Will not Achilles, frustrate of his bride,
 Be fired with rage 'gainst thee, and 'gainst thy wife?
 This might be dang'rous: is not such thy thought?

AGAM. His name indeed we used, but nothing more:
 Achilles knows not of the nuptials, knows
 Of our transactions nought, nor that I named
 My daughter his, as to his bed betrothed.

ATT. This, royal Agamemnon, is a deed
 Of perilous daring. So thy daughter, named
 A bride to him who from a goddess draws
 His birth, thou ledd'st a victim for the Grecians.

AGAM. Distraction's in the thought: unhappy me,
 My misery sinks me! But away! To age
 Remitting nothing, use thy utmost speed.

ATT. I hasten, king.

AGAM. Now sit not on the bank
 Of shaded fountain, nor indulge to sleep.

ATT. Think better of me.

AGAM. Take good heed, where'er
 The ways divide, observing that the car,
 Whose wheels swift-rolling bear my daughter hither
 Where rides the fleet of Greece, escape thee not.

ATT. I shall observe.

AGAM. Now haste thee from the tent

Antistrophe 1.

Diana's hallowed grove I seek,
 Where to the goddess frequent victims bleed,
 And through it pass with speed,
 The warm blush kindling on my youthful cheek,
 Ardent my wish to view the guard of shields,
 The armed tents of Greece extended wide,
 Their horse in warlike muster o'er the fields,
 And all the glorious scene of martial pride.

There either Ajax struck my sight,
 One from Oïleus draws his birth, and one
 From greater Telamon,
 Salamis glories in her hero's might.
 These sitting with Protesilaus I saw
 Delighted with the various-figured die.
 But Palamedes, proud his birth to draw
 From Neptune, with Tydides whirled on high
 The massy discus : Merion there
 Rejoiced the manly sport to share,
 Wondrous the hero's form and martial grace ;
 Ulysses there, whose island's craggy brow
 Frowns o'er the darkened waves below ;
 And Nireus, fairest of the Grecian race.

Epode 1.

Swift as the wingéd wing
 Achilles, whom the goddess Thetis bore,
 And gave to Chiron in his rigid lore
 To train his infant mind,
 I saw : in all his arms arrayed,
 The cumbrous equipage of war,
 His speed he o'er the strand displayed,
 Contending with the harnessed car :
 High o'er the beam I saw Eumelus rise,
 I heard his animating cries,
 And marked each courser beauteous to behold,
 Their glitt'ring bits embossed with gold :
 Those in the midst, the yoke that bear.
 Dappled with silvery marks their hair ;

And each on either side
 That wind, obedient to the guiding rein,
 With equal swiftness o'er the plain,
 Bright as the flaming gold, with pride
 On snow-white fetlocks bound :
 With rival speed I saw Pelides fly,
 In arms, the whirling chariot nigh,
 Light o'er the pebbled ground.

Strophe 2.

Hence to the numerous fleet I fly,
 A vast and glorious sight,
 To gratify my curious eye,
 A woman's dear delight.
 On the right wing from Phthia's strand
 The Myrmidons, a valiant band,
 In fifty gallant vessels ride;
 And by the Nereids we behold,
 Bright on the prows in sculptured gold,
 Achilles' arms are signified.

Antistrophe 2.

The Argive ships of equal oars
 Next these their station hold ;
 The son of Talaus leads their powers,
 And Sthenelus the bold.
 In order next th' Athenian train
 In sixty vessels plough the main,
 Their host the son of Theseus leads :
 Adorning the Munychian prows
 In arms a sculptured Pallas glows,
 Inspiring high heroic deeds.

[*The second Epode is lost.*]

Strophe 3.

Bœotia's host I there surveyed,
 In fifty ships the warriors came :
 An imaged form each ship displayed,
 Proud argument of Theban fame ;

High on each sculptured prow their Cadmus stands,
 A golden dragon holding in his hands ;
 And Leïtus, who boasts his birth
 From those that sprung embattled from the earth,
 Commands their naval war.
 Those, who their race from Phocis draw,
 Ranged on the foaming flood I saw.
 Oïlean Ajax there,
 Equal his numbers, leads the Locrian train,
 Leaving illustrious Thronion's plain.

Antistrophe 3.

From high Mycenæ's rampired towers,
 Towers by the lab'ring Cyclops wrought,
 The son of Atreus leads his powers ;
 A hundred ships the monarch brought ;
 And faithful at his side, as friend with friend,
 These eyes beheld the injured chief attend ;
 That for the fair, her house who fled,
 Lightly preferring a barbaric bed,
 Greece with a gen'rous rage
 Might rise and vindicate his cause.
 His troops from Pylos Nestor draws,
 Reverend the warrior's age ;
 On his tall vessels sculptured Alpheus stands,
 A bull, and seems to spurn the sands.

Epode 3.

From Ænia's stormy coast
 By Geneus led twelve vessels plough the tide ;
 The chiefs of Elis anchor by their side ;
 These through th' extended host
 Are called the brave Epëan train,
 And Eurytus their force commands.
 Dashed by their oars the foaming main
 Whitens beneath the Taphian bands ;
 Meges their leader, from that dangerous shore,
 Where rough Echinæ's vext rocks roar.

The Salaminian Ajax to the right
 Stretches, the left wing to unite ;
 The last in station, o'er the deep
 His fleetest vessels circling sweep.
 In all their gallant pride
 I heard, I saw them stretch : to meet their war
 Should the barbaric slight barks dare,
 Shattered and sunk beneath the tide,
 They will return no more.
 I heard, I saw ; and all the warlike train
 Faithful my memory shall retain,
 When reached my native shore.

ATTENDANT, MENELAUS, CHORUS.

ATT. This, Menelaus, is wrong ; thou shouldst not do it.

MEN. Go to : thou wouldst be faithful to thy lords !

ATT. That is an honour to me, no reproach.

MEN. Wouldst thou do what thou shouldst not, thou shalt
 rue it.

ATT. Thou shouldst not ope the letter which I bear.

MEN. Thou shouldst not bear what to all Greece is hurtful.

ATT. With others dispute that ; leave this to me.

MEN. I will not let it go.

ATT. Nor will I yield it.

MEN. Soon shall thy head this sceptre stain with blood.

ATT. Nay, it were glorious for my lords to die.

MEN. Let go : a slave presuming to dispute !

ATT. My royal master, we are wronged : by force
 Thy letter hath he wrested from my hands,
 To what behoves him paying no regard.

AGAMEMNON, MENELAUS, ATTENDANT, CHORUS.

AGAM. Why this indecent tumult at my doors ?

ATT. My words have greater right than his t' inform thee.

AGAM. Why, Menelaus, this strife with him, this force ?

MEN. Look, if thou darst, at me ; then will I speak.

AGAM. Fear I, from Atreus born, to raise mine eye ?

MEN. Dost thou see this, with basest orders charged ?

AGAM. I see it : from thy hand first give it back.

MEN. Not till I've shown all Greece what's written here.

AGAM. Knowst thou, this opened, what thou shouldst not know?

MEN. To wring thy heart, opening thy secret baseness.

AGAM. Where didst thou take it? Gods, hast thou no shame?

MEN. Watching from Argos if thy daughter comes.

AGAM. On my affairs a spy ! How shameless this !

MEN. Urged by my will : for I am not thy slave.

AGAM. Have I not leave in mine own house to rule ?

MEN. How wayward is thy mind, thy present thoughts
At variance with the past, and soon to change !

AGAM. Finely thy words are tuned : but know thou this,
The wily tongue is a detested ill.

MEN. The wav'ring mind is a base property,
And darkens to our friends : I will convince thee :
But if through pride thou turn thee from the truth,
Small share of praise shalt thou receive from me.
Thou knowest, when thy aim was to command
The troops of Greece at Troy, thy semblance formed
As if affecting nothing, but thy wish
Most ardent ; what humility was thine :
Pressing the hand of each, thy door to all
Was open, to the meanest, and thy speech
To all addressed in order, e'en to those
Who willed no converse with thee, seeking thus
By courteous manners thy ambitious wish
To purchase. The supreme command obtained,
Soon were thy manners changed, and to thy friends
Not friendly as before ; nor was access
Easy, oft too denied. Ill it becomes
An honest man, when raised to power, to change
His manners, but then most to be approved
Firm to his friends, when through his advanced state
He most can serve them : this I urge against thee
As my first charge, where first I found thee base.
But when thou camst to Aulis, with the troops
Of Greece in arms, to nothing didst thou sink,
Astonished at thy fortune, by the gods
Denied a gale to swell thy sails. The Greeks

Required thee to dismiss the ships, nor toil
 In vain at Aulis : how dejected then
 Thy visage, thy confusion then how great
 Not to command the thousand ships, and fill
 The fields of Priam with embattled hosts ?
 Me then didst thou address, "What shall I do,
 Or what expedient find, of this command,
 Of this high honour not to be deprived ?"
 When Calchas at the hallowed rites declared
 That to Diana thou must sacrifice
 Thy daughter, and the Grecians then should sail,
 With joy thy thoughts were heightened ; willingly
 The virgin as a victim didst thou promise
 And freely, not by force (urge not that plea),
 Dost thou despatch a message to thy wife
 To send thy daughter hither, the pretence
 Her nuptials with Achilles. But thy mind
 Was soon averse, and secretly devised
 Letters of diff'rent import ; now in sooth
 Thou wilt not be the murd'rer of thy daughter.
 This air is witness, which hath heard these things
 Of thee. To thousands this hath chanced in tasks
 Of arduous nature ; freely they engage,
 Then from the high attempt retreat with shame,
 Th' ill judgment of their countrymen in part,
 Justice in part the cause, for in the proof
 They feel their want of power to guard the state.
 But most I mourn th' unhappy fate of Greece,
 Who, prompt her noble vengeance to inflict
 On the barbarians, worthless as they are,
 Shall let them now go scoffing off, through thee,
 And through thy daughter. Never for his wealth
 Would I appoint a ruler o'er the state,
 Or chief in arms : wisdom should mark the man
 Who in his country bears the sov'reign sway :
 Every man sage in counsel is a leader.

CHOR. How dreadful, when 'twixt brothers words arise,
 And fierce disputings kindle into strife !

AGAM. For this I will rebuke thee ; but in brief,

Not raising high the eye of insolence,
 But with more temperance, because thou art
 My brother ; for a good man loves to act
 With modesty. But tell me, why with rage
 Dost thou thus swell ? why rolls thy blood-streaked eye ?
 Who injures thee ? of what art thou in want ?
 A rich connubial bed, is that thy wish ?
 This to procure thee is not in my power.
 Thou didst possess one, but ill governed it.
 Shall I, who with no fault have e'er been charged,
 Suffer for thy ill conduct ? Is thy heart
 Racked at my honours ? But a beauteous wife
 In thy fond arms it is thy wish to hold,
 Transgressing decency and reason : base
 Of a bad man the pleasures. But if I,
 Before ill-judging, have with sober thought
 My purpose changed, must I be therefore deemed
 Reft of my sense ? Thou rather, who hast lost
 A wife that brings thee shame, yet dost with warmth
 Wish to regain her, would the fav'ring god
 Grant thee that fortune. Of the nuptials eager
 The suitors pledged to Tyndarus their oath,
 Unwise : the hope, I ween, of the fair bride
 Effected this, more than thy grace or power :
 Take these, and march to war ; soon wilt thou find
 What oaths avail ill plighted, with slight thought,
 And by compulsion. But I will not slay
 My children : and thy wishes o'erleap justice,
 The punishment of thy flagitious wife.
 My nights, my days would pass away in tears,
 Should I with outrage and injustice wrong
 Those who from me derived their birth. These things
 Have I replied to thee in brief, with ease
 And plainness : but if thou wilt not be wise,
 What concerns me I rightly will appoint.

CHOR. These words are different from his former speech,
 And well the father's melting pity show.

MEN. Ah me unhappy ! I have then no friends.

AGAM. Yes, if thou wish not to destroy thy friends.

MEN. How wilt thou show one father gave us birth?

AGAM. I would be wise, but not be mad with thee.

MEN. Friends with their friends in common ought to grieve.

AGAM. Be thy deeds friendly then, not painful to me.

MEN. And with all Greece shouldst thou not bear this pain?

AGAM. All Greece, and thee, hath heaven-sent frenzy seized.

MEN. Thou gloriest in thy sceptre, and betray'st
Thy brother. But to other means I turn,
And other friends.

AGAMEMNON, MENELAUS, MESSENGER, CHORUS.

MESS. I come, imperial lord
Of Greece, thy daughter leading, in thine house
Named Iphigenia by thee; and thy wife
Attends her, Clytemnestra, with thy son
Orestes, sight delightful to thine eyes
After this tedious absence from thy home.
But wearied with this length of way, beside
A beauteous-flowing fountain they repose,
Themselves refreshing, and their steeds, unyoked
To taste the fresh grass of the verdant mead.
I run to bring thee notice, that prepared
Thou mayst receive them: this the troops have heard
For through the camp swift the report was spread
That Iphigenia is arrived, and all
Haste to the sight desirous to behold
Thy daughter; for to every eye the great
Appear illustrious, with high splendour graced.
Is this her bridal day, some ask, or what
Intended? Or through fond desire to see
His daughter did th' imperial Agamemnon
Send for the virgin? Others mightst thou hear,
The princess to Diana, queen of Aulis,
Will they present? Who shall receive her hand?
But haste, begin the rites, and crown thy head.
And thou too, royal Menelaus, prepare
The hymeneals; let the joyful house
Re-echo to the pipe and festive dance:
For happy to the virgin comes this day.

AGAM. 'Tis well: thou hast my thanks. But go thou in ;
All things, if fortune favours, shall be well.—
Ah me, unhappy me ! What shall I say,
And whence begin ? In what a chain of fate
Am I enfolded ? Fortune, wiser far
Than all my vain designs, hath closely wrought
Beneath me. What advantages attend
Ignoble birth ? They are allowed to weep
And utter sad complaints ; but to the noble
This is denied. Led by the pride of rank,
Which rules us, to the people we are slaves.
I am indeed ashamed to drop the tear,
And not to drop the tear I am ashamed,
Fall'n as I am on these great miseries.
Well, let it be. But how shall I address
My wife, or how receive her ? with what eye
Look on her ? For to all my former ills
Coming unbidden, she hath added weight
Of new distress : yet decency required
Her presence with her daughter, to attend
Her nuptials, and present the dearest gifts :
There will she find me false. But thee, O thee,
Unhappy bride (bride call I thee ! how soon
To Pluto to be wedded !), how I pity !
Methinks I hear her suppliant voice thus speak,
“ My father, wilt thou kill me ? Mayst thou make
Thyself such nuptials, and whoe'er to thee
Is dear.” Orestes, standing near, shall cry
In accents inarticulate, his speech,
As yet unformed, articulate to me.
Unhappy me ! what ruin hath the son
Of Priam brought on me ! This Paris caused
When he espoused the faithless Helena.

CHOR. I, as a woman and a stranger ought,
Am moved with pity at a monarch's woes.

MEN. Give me thy hand, my brother, let me clasp it.

AGAM. I give it : thou art conqueror, I a wretch.

MEN. By Pelops, called the father of thy father
And mine : by Atreus, whence we draw our birth,

I swear, that what I now shall say to thee
Comes from my heart, nought feigned, but what I think.
When from thine eye I saw thee drop the tear,
I pitied thee, and sympathizing dropped
Myself a tear : its former reas'nings now
My soul foregoes, no more unkind to thee,
But, as thou feelest, feels : nay, I exhort thee
Neither to slay thy daughter, nor to rank
What concerns me most high : it is not just
That grief should rend thy heart, whilst my affairs
Go pleasantly ; that any of thy house
Should die, whilst mine behold the light. For what
Can be my purpose ? Might I not contract
Other illustrious nuptials, if my wish
Were other nuptials ? But at such a price,
My brother's ruin, which behoves me least,
Should I recover Helena, an ill
Dear with a blessing purchased ? Folly ruled
Before, and youth : but on a nearer view
I see what 'tis to yield a child to death.
Besides th' unhappy virgin, near allied
By ties of consanguinity, excites
My pity, destined for a nuptial bed
To fall a victim : what hath she to do,
The virgin daughter, with my Helena ?
Discharged from Aulis let the troops depart.
And thou, my brother, cease to dew thine eyes
With tears, which cause the drops to start in mine.
Touching thy daughter hast thou oracles
Which respect me ; no more be that respect ;
My part I cede to thee. My thoughts are changed
From cruel, and I feel what I should feel :
Nature returns, and all a brother's love
Warm in my heart revives : of no bad man
The manners these, to follow still the best.

CHOR. Generous thy words, and worthy Tantalus
The son of Jove : thou dost not shame thy birth.

AGAM. Now I applaud thee ; for beyond my thought
Rightly thy words conclude, and worthy thee.

MEN. For love and for ambition variance oft
Rises 'twixt brothers : but my soul abhors
This mutual harshness of unnatural strife.

AGAM. But dire necessity compels me now
My daughter's bloody slaughter to complete.

MEN. Who shall compel thee to destroy thy child ?

AGAM. The whole assembled host of Greece in arms.

MEN. Not if to Argos her thou send again.

AGAM. That might be secret : this must be revealed.

MEN. What ? Of the people have not too great dread.

AGAM. The oracle will Calchas sound to all.

MEN. Not if ere that he die : an easy thing.

AGAM. Vainglorious is the whole prophetic breed.

MEN. And of no use when present, of no good.

AGAM. But seest thou not what enters now my thought ?

MEN. Can I conjecture what thou dost not speak ?

AGAM. He of the race of Sisyphus knows all.

MEN. Nor thee, nor me, will e'er Ulysses harm.

AGAM. Artful, the people as he wills he leads.

MEN. With vanity, a mighty ill, possessed.

AGAM. Think then thou seest him stand amidst the troops,
Declaring to them all the oracle
Announced by Calchas : how this sacrifice
I promised to Diana, then refused.
Soon will he lead the Grecians, and excite them,
Me in their fury having slain, and thee,
To sacrifice the virgin. Should I fly
To Argos, marching thither they will raze
Her rampires by the Cyclops raised, and spread
Destruction o'er the land. Unhappy me !
Such ills are mine, to this severe distress
Brought by the gods ! Yet one thing make thy care :
Take heed, as through the host thy steps return,
These tidings reach not Clytemnestra's ear,
Till I the virgin to th' infernal king
Shall have presented, that I may abide
With as few tears as may be my hard fate.
Silence, ye female strangers, be your part,

CHORUS.

Strophe.

How blest their golden days, who prove
 The gentle joys of temp'rate love,
 When modest Venus on the couch attends,
 Pleased with tranquillity to dwell !
 But high the madd'ning passions swell,
 When both his bows the bright-haired tyrant bends ;
 One, by the Graces strung, imparts
 Pure joys that brighten in our hearts ;
 And one, life's wild tumultuous war.
 Far, beauteous Queen, from us may this be far ;
 Mine be Love's pure and temp'rate grace,
 The holy flame of chaste desire,
 Mild Venus, in my breast inspire ;
 There never have ungoverned passion place !

Antistrophe.

Nature in man we diff'ring find,
 And diff'rent manners mark his mind :
 When good, they give each excellence to spring,
 And education's sage control
 To every virtue forms the soul :
 Meek modesty then Wisdom loves to bring,
 She loves to bring each various grace,
 Which shows where Duty hath its place,
 Whence Glory beams divinely bright,
 And pours on life unfailing streams of light.
 Virtues in woman fairest shine
 That silent guard Love's holy flame ;
 Man's various worth ascends to fame
 Most, when t' exalt the state his great design.

Epode.

Thence, Paris, didst thou come,
 Where, on Ida's pastured brow
 Trained the snowy herds among,
 Thine was the barbaric song,
 Thine to bid the sweet notes flow,

Whilst thy Phrygian pipe breathes measures,
Caught from those harmonious treasures
Which Olympus taught his reed.

Unmilked herds around thee feed,

Whilst the contending beauties of the skies

From thee expect the prize.

Hence camest thou to the Grecian shore,

The ivory-cinctured house before :

Thy eyes the flames of love inspire,

And Helen, as she gazed, received the fire :

Her charms too rushed upon thy soul,

And madness reigned without control.

Hence discord, discord calls to war :

With many a ship, with many a spear

Greece rushes on, impetuous to destroy

The rampired walls of Troy.

How splendid are the fortunes of the great !

See, Iphigenia, daughter of the king,

And Clytemnestra, sprung from Tyndarus,

My queen ! From noble ancestors they draw

Their birth, and are to fortune's highest state

Exalted : to th' inferior ranks of life

The powerful and the wealthy are as gods.

Daughters of Chalcis, near them let us stand,

And courteous in our hands receive the queen,

As from her car she to the ground descends,

With duteous zeal, that she may tread secure ;

And that th' illustrious daughter of the king

On her arrival nothing may disturb :

For, strangers as we are, let us not cause

These Argive strangers trouble or affright.

CLYTEMNESTRA, IPHIGENIA, ATTENDANTS, CHORUS.

CLYT. This as a prosperous omen I accept,

Thy courtesy and gentleness of speech :

And hence conceive I hope that I am come

To happy nuptials leading her a bride.

But from the chariot take the dow'ral gifts

Brought with me for the virgin ; to the house

Bear them with faithful care. My daughter, quit
 The harnessed chariot, and thy delicate foot
 Place on the ground. Ye females, in your arms
 Receive her; she is weak; and from the car
 Conduct her down: stretch one of you your hand,
 Supporting me, that may I leave this seat
 In seemly manner. Some before the yoke
 Stand nigh the horses, for their eye is quick,
 Soon startled, and unruly: now receive
 This child, Orestes, Agamemnon's son,
 For he is yet an infant. Dost thou sleep,
 My son? The rolling chariot hath subdued thee:
 Wake to thy sister's marriage happily;
 Th' alliance of a noble youth, thyself
 Noble, shalt thou receive, the godlike son
 Of Thetis. Come, my daughter, near me stand,
 Stand near thy mother, Iphigenia, show
 These strangers how supremely I am blest
 In thee; and here address thee to thy father.

IPH. Would it offend my mother, should I run
 And throw myself into my father's arms?

AGAMEMNON, CLYTEMNESTRA, IPHIGENIA, CHORUS.

CLYT. Imperial chief of Greece, my honoured lord,
 To thy commands obedient we are come.

IPH. My father, to thy arms I wish to run,
 Clusped to thy bosom; dear to me thy sight
 After such absence: be not angry with me.

AGAM. Enjoy thy wish: of all my children thou
 Hast of thy father always been most fond.

IPH. Absent so long, with joy I look on thee.

AGAM. And I on thee: so this is mutual joy.

IPH. Well hast thou done to bring me to thy presence.

AGAM. If well, or not well done, I cannot say.

IPH. A gloom hangs on thee 'midst thy joy to see me.

AGAM. A king and chief hath many anxious cares.

IPH. But let me have thee now: think not of cares.

AGAM. Thou hast me all: each thought is bent on thee.

IPH. Smooth then thy brow, and look with fondness on me.

AGAM. To see thee gives me joy, such joy as mine.

IPH. Yet from thy melting eye thou pourst the tear.

AGAM. Long, very long the absence to ensue.

IPH. I know not, dearest father, what this means.

AGAM. Thy prudent speech makes me more pity thee.

IPH. Might it divert thee, idly will I talk.

AGAM. Can I be silent? O, thou hast my thanks.

IPH. At home, my father, with thy children stay.

AGAM. I wish it: but, that wish denied, I grieve.

IPH. A mischief on the war, and Sparta's wrongs!

AGAM. Others will feel the mischief: I have felt it.

IPH. How long thy absence in the bay of Aulis!

AGAM. Something detains me yet, detains the host.

IPH. Where, father, do they say the Phrygians dwell?

AGAM. Where O that Priam's Paris ne'er had lived!

IPH. And when thou leavst me is the voyage long?

AGAM. To the same place thou with thy father goest.

IPH. O that with honour I might sail with thee!

AGAM. Thou shalt, where thou thy father shalt remember.

IPH. Go I alone, or sails my mother with me?

AGAM. Alone: nor father there, nor mother goes.

IPH. Dost thou then place me in some other house?

AGAM. Ask not: for virgins should not know these things.

IPH. Haste to me then from Troy, victorious there.

AGAM. Here first I must present a sacrifice.

IPH. Those rites thou with the priests must well prepare.

AGAM. Thou shalt be witness, nigh the lavers placed.

IPH. Shall we then round the altar raise the song?

AGAM. Thee happier than myself in this I deem,

That thou art ignorant. But go thou in,

Present thee to the virgins. O, that kiss,

That dear embrace, how painful from a child,

Who from a father must so long be absent!

Ah me, that breast, those cheeks, those golden tresses!

What piercing sorrows hath the Phrygian state

And Helen caused us! But I check my words;

For when I touch thee, in my melting eyes

The sudden moisture rises. Go thou in.—

Daughter of Leda, if with pity touched

I feel my grief too strong, for that I soon
 Shall to Achilles my dear child consign,
 Forgive me : happy is it so to place
 A daughter, yet it pains a father's heart
 When he delivers to another house
 A child, the object of his tender care.

CLYT. Nor is my heart insensible. I feel,
 Be thou assured, an equal grief, nor want
 From thee monitions, when I lead the virgin
 With hymeneal rites ; but custom, joined
 With time, will check it. Well : his name I know
 To whom thou hast betrothed thy daughter ; more
 I wish to know, his lineage whence he draws.

AGAM. Ægina was the daughter of Asopus.

CLYT. With her what mortal wedded, or what god ?

AGAM. Jove, sire of Æacus, CEnone's chief.

CLYT. What son of Æacus possessed his house ?

AGAM. Peleus ; the daughter he of Nereus weds.

CLYT. By force, or by the god's consent obtained ?

AGAM. Her father gave her, first by Jove betrothed.

CLYT. Where did he wed her ? In the ocean waves ?

AGAM. Where Chiron dwells, on Pelion's awful heights.

CLYT. The Centaur race, they say, inhabit there.

AGAM. The gods there present graced his nuptial feast.

CLYT. Achilles did the sire or Thetis train ?

AGAM. Chiron, that from bad men he might not learn.

CLYT. Wise he who took, wise they who gave the charge.

AGAM. Such is the man who shall thy daughter wed.

CLYT. Not disapproved ; but where in Greece his seat ?

AGAM. Where flows Apidanus through Phthia's bounds.

CLYT. Thine and my daughter thither will he lead ?

AGAM. When he obtains her, this will be his care.

CLYT. Blest may they be ! But when the bridal day ?

AGAM. Soon as the moon's propitious circle fills.

CLYT. Is for the bride the previous victim slain ?

AGAM. Soon shall it : this employs my present thought.

CLYT. And wilt thou next the nuptial feast prepare ?

AGAM. When I have offered what the gods require.

CLYT. Where for the females shall we deck the feast ?

AGAM. Here, where the gallant fleet at anchor rides.

CLYT. Amply supply then what th' occasion claims.

AGAM. Knowst thou what now I wish thee do? Obey me.

CLYT. In what? Thou long hast trained me to obey.

AGAM. We in the place where now the bridegroom is——

CLYT. Without the mother! What to me belongs——

AGAM. Will give thy daughter 'midst th' assembled Greeks.

CLYT. And where, whilst this is doing, shall I be?

AGAM. To Argos go, thy charge the virgins there.

CLYT. And leave my daughter? Who shall raise the torch?

AGAM. The light, to deck the nuptials, I will hold.

CLYT. Custom forbids: nor wouldst thou deem it seemly.

AGAM. Nor decent that thou mix with martial troops.

CLYT. But decent that the mother give the daughter.

AGAM. Nor leave the younger in the house alone.

CLYT. In close apartments they are guarded well.

AGAM. Let me persuade thee.

CLYT. By the potent queen,

Goddess of Argos, no. Of things abroad

Take thou the charge: within the house my care

Shall deck the virgin's nuptials as is meet.

[*She goes in.*]

AGAM. Unhappy me! In vain I came, my hopes

Are vanished; out of sight it was my wish

To send my wife: thus I devise, thus form

My wily purpose, studious to beguile

Those dearest to my soul, in all my aims

Confounded. Hence to Calchas will I go

The Seer, inquiring what the goddess wills,

To me unfortunate, a grief to Greece.

A wise man in his house should find a wife

Gentle and courteous, or no wife at all.

CHORUS.

Strophe.

To Simois, and his silver tide

In eddies whirling through the plain,

The fleet of Greece in gallant pride

Vengeful shall bear this martial train;

To Ilion's rampired towers shall bear,
 And Troy, by Phœbus loved, the war.
 Cassandra there, when on her soul
 The gods prophetic transports roll,
 Her brows with verdant laurel loves to bind,
 Her yellow tresses streaming to the wind.

Antistrophe.

The Trojans high on Ilium's towers,
 And round the walls of Troy shall stand ;
 When Mars to Simois leads his powers,
 And furious ploughs the hostile strand ;
 From Priam's ruined house to bear
 Again to Greece the fatal fair,
 Whose brothers, sons of Jove, on high
 Twin stars adorn the spangled sky,
 Rushing to war his brazen shield he rears,
 And glitt'ring round him blaze the Grecian spears.

Epode.

Phrygian Pergamus around,
 Walls of rock with turrets crowned,
 Mars the furious war shall lead :
 Blood his flaming sword shall stain,
 As from the trunk he hews the warrior's head,
 And to the dust shakes Troy's proud walls again.
 Virgins with their woes opprest,
 And Priam's queen their fall lament ;
 Jove-born Helen beats her breast,
 In anguish, from her lover rent.
 From me, from mine be far the fate
 Which Lydia's gorgeous dames with sighs,
 Whilst Troy's sad matrons wipe their dewy eyes,
 In mutual converse o'er the web relate,
 " Who will not rend her crisped hair,
 Who will not pour the gushing tear,
 Low sunk in dust our ruined walls ?
 Bright daughter of the bird, whose neck
 Arched in proud state the white plumes deck,
 For thee in dust our country falls :

If true the fame that mighty Jove
 Changed to a swan sought Leda's love :
 Or fabling poets from Pieria's spring
 Their wanton and indecent legends bring."

ACHILLES, CHORUS.

ACH. Where is the leader of the Grecian host ?
 Who of th' attendants tells him that Achilles,
 The son of Peleus, seeks him at the gate ?—
 Different our state, who nigh the Euripus
 Wait here : unwedded some, their houses left
 In solitude, here sit upon the shore ;
 And childless others leave their nuptial beds ;
 Such ardour, not without the gods, through Greece
 Flames for this war. What touches me to speak
 Is mine : let others what their need requires
 Themselves explain. Thessalia's pleasant fields
 And Peleus leaving, at the narrow surge
 Of Euripus I wait, the Myrmidons
 Restraining : with impatient instance oft
 They urge me, " Why, Achilles, stay we here ?
 What tedious length of time is yet to pass
 To Ilium ere we sail ? Wouldst thou do aught ?
 Do it, or lead us home ; nor here await
 The sons of Atreus, and their cold delays."

CLYTEMNESTRA, ACHILLES, CHORUS.

CLYT. Son of the goddess Thetis, in the house
 Hearing thy words I come without the gates.

ACH. O revered Modesty, whom do mine eyes
 Behold ? Her form bears dignity and grace.

CLYT. Not strange thou knowst us not, before not seen ;
 But thy regard to Modesty I praise.

ACH. Who art thou ? To the Grecian camp why come,
 A woman 'midst a host of men in arms ?

CLYT. Daughter of Leda, Clytemnestra named,
 Am I, the royal Agamemnon's wife.

ACH. Well hast thou answered, and in brief : but shame
 Were mine with wedded dames to hold discourse.

CLYT. Stay : wherefore dost thou fly me ? With my hand
Join thy right hand, pledge of thy happy nuptials.

ACH. My hand with thine ! To Agamemnon this
Were wrong, if, what I have no right, I touch.

CLYT. Son of the sea-born Nereid, thou hast right,
Much right, since thou my daughter soon wilt wed.

ACH. Wed, dost thou say ? Amazement chains my tongue :
What secret purpose hath thy strange discourse ?

CLYT. 'Tis ever thus : the modest, 'midst new friends,
At mention of their nuptials are ashamed.

ACH. Ne'er did I woo thy daughter ; ne'er did word
Of nuptials from th' Atridæ reach my ear.

CLYT. What may this mean ? Thou wonderst at my words,
And equal wonder thine excite in me.

ACH. All is conjecture, common to us both,
Both haply are by words alike deceived.

CLYT. I am abused, according nuptials here
Never designed, it seems ; I blush at this.

ACH. Some one perchance 'gainst thee and me hath framed
This mock. Regard it not ; light let it pass.

CLYT. Farewell ! I cannot look upon thy face,
Basely abused, and made a liar thus.

ACH. Thee too I bid farewell : within the house
Inquiries from thy husband will I make.

ATTENDANT, CLYTEMNESTRA, ACHILLES, CHORUS.

ATT. Stay, stranger of the race of Æacus,
Stay, goddess-born : daughter of Leda, stay.

ACH. Who from the gates calls with his earnest voice ?

ATT. A slave : in that I boast not : no proud vaunt
My fortune will admit.

ACH. Whose slave ? Not mine :
For I with Agamemnon have no share.

ATT. Hers, who stands here before the house, the gif
Of Tyndarus her father.

ACH. Well, we stay ;
What wouldst thou ? why hast thou detained me ? Speak.

ATT. Are you alone before this royal house ?

ACH. Speak as to us alone : come from the gates.

ATT. O fortune, and my provident caution, save
Those whom I wish to save!

ACH. Thy words portend
Something not brief, and seem of import high.

CLYT. Delay not for my hand : speak what thou wouldst.

ATT. Dost thou then know me, who I am, to thee
And to thy children how benevolent?

CLYT. I know thee, an old servant of my house.

ATT. And to the royal Agamemnon given
Part of thy dowry.

CLYT. With us didst thou come
To Argos, and hast there been always mine.

ATT. So is it : hence to thee I bear goodwill,
But to thy husband less.

CLYT. Well then, to me,
Whate'er thy wish to speak, at length disclose.

ATT. Thy daughter will her father slay, her father
With his own hand.

CLYT. How ! I abhor thy words,
Old man : thou art not in thy perfect sense.

ATT. Striking her white neck with the ruthless sword.

CLYT. Unhappy me ! Hath madness seized his mind?

ATT. No : save to thee and to thy daughter, sound
His sense : in this he errs from reason wide.

CLYT. What cause ? What Fury fires him to the deed?

ATT. The Oracles, and Calchas, that the troops
May sail.

CLYT. Sail whither ? Wretched me ! She too
How wretched, whom her father will destroy !

ATT. To the proud seats of Troy, thence to bring back
Helen, the Spartan's wife.

CLYT. Of her return
Is Iphigenia doomed the fatal price?

ATT. E'en so : thy daughter will her father slay
A victim to Diana.

CLYT. From my home
To win me were these nuptials then devised

ATT. Thy daughter that with pleasure thou mightst lead
To wed Achilles.

CLYT. To perdition then
Thou comst, my daughter, and thy mother with thee.

ATT. Piteous of both the suff'rings, and th' attempt
Of Agamemnon dreadful.

CLYT. With my woes
I sink, mine eye no longer holds the tear.

ATT. Painful the tear that falls for children lost.

CLYT. But whence, old man, knowst thou, or heardst thou
this?

ATT. I took my way, charged with a letter to thee,
Since that which had been sent.

CLYT. Its purport what?
Forbidding, or exhorting me to bring
My daughter to her death?

ATT. This not to bring her
Gave charge: for wise were then thy husband's thoughts.

CLYT. Charged with this letter to me, why to me
Didst thou not give it?

ATT. Menelaus by force
Took it away, the author of these ills.

CLYT. Son of the sea-born Nereid, son of Peleus,
Dost thou hear this?

ACH. What makes thee wretched, lady,
I hear: and ill what touches me I brook.

CLYT. My daughter they will slay, the false pretence
Thy nuptials.

ACH. On thy husband I too charge
Much blame, nor light doth my resentment rise.

CLYT. Low at thy knees I will not blush to fall,
Of mortal birth to one of heavenly race.

Why should I now be proud? Or what demands,
More than a daughter's life, my anxious care?

Protect, O goddess-born, a wretched mother;
Protect a virgin called thy bride: her head
With garlands—ah, in vain!—yet did I crown,
And led her as by thee to be espoused;

Now to be slain I bring her: but on thee,
If thou protect her not, reproach will fall;

For, though not joined in marriage, thou wast called

The husband of the virgin. By this cheek,
By this right hand, by her that gave thee birth
(For me thy name hath ruined, and from thee
I therefore claim protection), I have now
No altar, but thy knee, to which to fly,
I have no friend but thee: the fell designs
Of Agamemnon's ruthless heart thou hearst;
And I, a woman, as thou seest, am come
To this unruly camp, in mischiefs bold,
Of use but when they list. If thou shalt dare
Stretch forth thine hand to aid me, I shall find
Safety: if not, then am I lost indeed.

CHOR. To be a mother is the amplest source
Of nature's dear affections: this to all
Is common, for their children anxious thought.

ACH. To noblest thoughts my tow'ring soul is raised,
Which at the woes of others knows to melt,
And bear with moderation fortune's smiles.

CHOR. These are the men, who, trained in reason's lore,
As wisdom guides them, form their life aright.

ACH. There is a time, when not to build too much
On our own wisdom is agreeable:

But then there is a time, when to exert
Our judgment is of use. By Chiron trained,
Of mortals the most righteous, I have learned
Simplicity of manners. To the sons
Of Atreus, when their high commands are stamped
With honour, my obedience shall be paid:
Where honour bids not, I shall not obey:
But my free nature here, and when at Troy,
Preserved, my spear shall to my utmost power
Add glory to the war. But thee, oppressed
With miseries, and by those most dear to thee,
Far as a young man may, so strong I feel
The touch of pity, thee will I protect;
And never shall thy daughter, who was called
Mine, by her father's hand be slain; to weave
His wily trains thy husband ne'er shall make
Me his pretext; for so my name would slay

Thy daughter, though it lifted not the sword.
The cause indeed thy husband ; yet not pure
My person, if through me, and through my nuptials,
The virgin perish, suffering dreadful things
And wrongs, at which astonished nature starts.
I were the basest of the Greeks, a thing
Nought worth (and Menelaus might well be ranked
'Mongst men), no more the son of Peleus deemed,
But of some cruel demon, should my name,
Pleaded to screen thy husband's purpose, kill her.
By Nereus, who beneath the wat'ry waves
Was trained, the sire of Thetis, whence my birth,
The royal Agememnon shall not touch
Thy daughter, with his finger shall not touch her,
Nor e'en her robes : else Sipylus, a mean
Barbaric town, from whence our chiefs derive
Their race, shall be illustrious, and my realm,
Phthia, be slighted as unknown to fame.
His lustral lavers and his salted cakes
With sorrow shall the prophet Calchas bear
Away. The prophet ! What is he ? A man
Who speaks 'mongst many falsehoods but few truths,
Whene'er chance leads him to speak true ; when false,
The prophet is no more. With nuptial rites
Why should I say how many virgins sue
To be united to me ? But of that
No more. The royal Agamemnon wrongs me,
Greatly he wrongs me : ought he not from me,
Would he betroth his daughter, ask my name ?
Th' assent of Clytemnestra then with ease
Had I obtained to give her daughter to me.
I to the Greeks had given her, if to Troy
For this their course were checked ; the public good
Of those with whom I join my arms t' exalt
I should not have refused : but with the chiefs
I now am nothing, held of no esteem
To act, or not to act, in glory's cause.
But soon this sword shall know whom, ere to Troy
I come, with drops of blood I shall distain,

Whoe'er he be that shall attempt to take
Thy daughter from me. Rest thou then in peace ;
I, as a guardian god, am come to thee :
Great is the contest, yet it shall be proved.

CHOR. Worthy, O son of Peleus, of thyself,
Worthy the sea-born goddess, are thy words.

CLYT. How shall I praise thee, that due bounds my words
Exceed not, nor beneath thy merit sink,
Thy grace impairing : for the good, when praised,
Feel something of disgust, if to excess
Commended. But I blush at words that raise
Pity at private woes, whilst of my ills
No share is thine : yet lovely is the sight,
When, stranger though he be, to the distressed
A good man gives assistance. Pity me ;
My sufferings call for pity : when I thought
To have thee for a son, I fondly fed
A false and flatt'ring hope. To thee perchance,
And to thy future nuptials, this might be
An omen, should my daughter die ; 'gainst this
Behoves thee guard. Well did thy words begin,
And well they ended : be it then thy will
My daughter shall be saved. Wilt thou she fall
A suppliant at thy knees ? This ill becomes
A virgin ; yet, if such thy will, with all
Her blushes shall she come, and in her eye
Ingenuous modesty : or the same grace
Shall I, if absent she, obtain from thee ?

ACH. Let her remain within : for Modesty
With her own modest dignity is pleased.

CLYT. Yet must we sue to thee with earnest prayer.

ACH. Nor bring thy daughter, lady, to our sight,
Nor ours be rude reproach. Th' assembled host,
At leisure from their own domestic cares,
Loves the malignant jest and sland'rous tale.
Suppliant or not, alike shall you obtain
From me this grace : the contest shall be mine,
Great as it is, to free you from your ills.
Of one thing be assured, ne'er shall my tongue

Utter a falsehood : if I speak untruth,
And mock thee with vain promise, let me die :
But as I save thy daughter may I live.

CLYT. O be thou blest, thus aiding the unhappy !

ACH. Now hear me, how success may best be ours.

CLYT. What wouldst thou ? My attention thou mayst claim.

ACH. The father's purpose let persuasion change.

CLYT. He, void of spirit, too much fears the host.

ACH. Yet reason o'er the spiritless prevails.

CLYT. Small are my hopes : yet, say, what must I do ?

ACH. First, be a suppliant to him not to slay
His children : if rejected, come to me.

If thy entreaties win him, of my aid

There is no need : thy daughter's life is saved,

I with my friend shall be on better terms,

And nought of blame the army to my charge

Can then impute, if I by reason wish

T' effect my purpose, not by violence.

Well to thy warmest wish may this succeed,

And to thy friends', accomplished without me.

CLYT. How wise thy words ! Whate'er to thee seems right
Shall be attempted. Should I not effect

The things I wish, where shall I see thee next,

Or whither bend my wretched steps to find

Thy hand, my firm protector 'gainst these ills ?

ACH. Far as occasion shall require, myself

Will be thy guard. But with disordered step

Let no one see thee hurrying through the throng

Of Grecians, nor disgrace thy father's house :

On Tyndarus unmerited would fall

Aught of ill fame, for he is great in Greece.

CLYT. It shall be so. Lead thou ; on thee to wait

Me it behoves. If there are gods, on thee,

Just as thou art, their blessings must attend :

If not, to what effect is all our toil ?

CHORUS.

Strophe.

What were the strains that Hymen gave to-swell,
The Lybian pipe its warbles sweet
Attemp'ring to the chorded shell,
That loves to guide the mazy-winding feet,
Whilst the whisp'ring reed around
Breathes a soft responsive sound,
When to the feast of gods on Pelion's brow
The golden-sandalled Muses took their way,
Loose to the gale their beauteous tresses flow,
Thee, Peleus, gracing, and thy bridal day,
As they pierce the tangled grove,
O'er the mountain as they rove
Where the Centaur race reside,
Peleus and his lovely bride
They hail, and those wild scenes among
Pour the mellifluous song.
The Phrygian Ganymede of form divine,
A royal youth of Dardan race,
Advanced the feast of Jove to grace,
Poured from the glowing bowls the sparkling wine.
Fifty nymphs the white sands o'er,
Daughters they of Nereus hoar,
To the nuptials light advance,
And weave the circling dance.

Antistrophe.

The Centaurs waving high their spears of pine,
Their heads with grassy garlands crowned,
Came to the bowls, the feast divine,
Their hoofs swift-bounding o'er the rattling ground.
There the nymphs of Thessaly
Raised their tuneful voices high ;
The prophet Phœbus joined the solemn strain,
And Chiron skilled to trace the Fates' decree.
"Daughter of Nereus," sung the raptured train,
"A son, bright beam of beauty, shall from thee

Draw his birth, who will advance,
 Dreadful with his flaming lance,
 With his Myrmidons that wield
 Fierce in fight the spear and shield,
 To th' illustrious realms of Troy,
 And her proud towers destroy :
 His manly limbs refulgent arms enfold ;
 Vulcan, at the mother's prayer,
 Shall the glorious gift prepare,
 And all the hero blaze in burnished gold."
 Thus when Peleus won his bride,
 Of the Nereid train the pride,
 Came the gods in bright array
 To grace their nuptial day.

Epode.

But thee, unhappy maid, thy head
 With flow'ry garlands Greece shall crown ;
 As from the mountain cave's cool shade
 Some beauteous heifer coming down,
 Her neck no rude yoke knows, decreed
 A victim at some shrine to bleed.
 But now a human neck must bow,
 And now the virgin's blood must flow,
 Not trained the sylvan wilds among
 To rustic pipe or pastoral song ;
 Her the fond mother decked with pride
 As to some Grecian chief a bride.
 The lovely form, the beauteous face,
 And modest virtue's blushing grace
 Avail no more : in evil hour
 Impiety hath seized the power ;
 A slighted outcast Virtue fails,
 Injustice o'er the laws prevails :
 The common danger none describes,
 Th' impending vengeance of the skies.

CLYTEMNESTRA, CHORUS.

CLYT. I am come forth, if haply I may see
My husband ; long his absence since he left
The house. In tears is my unhappy daughter,
And heaves the frequent sigh, since she hath heard
The death to which her father destines her.
I spoke of one that is approaching nigh,
This Agamemnon, who will soon be found
Daring against his children impious deeds.

AGAMEMNON, CLYTEMNESTRA, CHORUS.

AGAM. Daughter of Leda, to my wish I find thee
Before the house, that from my daughter's ear
Apart I may speak words, which ill beseems
A virgin, soon to be a bride, to hear.

CLYT. What is it ? Let not the occasion pass.

AGAM. Send now thy daughter to her father's charge
Committed ; for the lavers ready stand,
The salted cakes, which o'er the lustral fire
The hand must cast, the heifers too, whose blood
Must in black streams, before the nuptials, flow
To the chaste queen Diana, are prepared.

CLYT. Thy words indeed are gracious, but thy deeds
I know not, should I name them, how to praise.
Yet come thou forth, my daughter, for to thee
Are all thy father's purposes well known :
And bring thy brother, bring Orestes, wrapt
Close in thy vests, my child.—See, she is here
In prompt obedience to thee : what for her,
What for myself is meet, that shall I speak.

AGAMEMNON, CLYTEMNESTRA, IPHIGENIA, CHORUS.

AGAM. Why weeps my daughter ? cheerful now no more
Thy look, nor pleasant : wherefore is thine eye
Fixed on the ground, thy robe before it held ?

IPH. Ah me ! Whence first shall I begin to speak

My ills? For all in ills have found a first,
A last, a middle, and successive train.

AGAM. Why is it that you all are drawn together,
With terror and confusion in your looks?

CLYT. Answer to what I ask with honest truth.

AGAM. Speak freely : to be questioned is my wish.

CLYT. Thine and my daughter art thou bent to slay?

AGAM. Ah, what a question! What suspicion this!

CLYT. To this without evasion answer first.

AGAM. Ask what is meet, thou what is meet shalt hear.

CLYT. I ask this only ; to this only speak.

AGAM. O fate! O fortune! O my awful doom!

CLYT. And mine, and hers, one to us wretched three!

AGAM. In what have I done wrong?

CLYT. Canst thou ask this
Of me? Thy purpose is unwise and ill.

AGAM. I am undone : my secrets are betrayed.

CLYT. I have heard all, know all, which thou wouldst do
Against me : e'en thy silence and thy sighs
Confess it ; labour not to give it words.

AGAM. Lo, I am silent ; for to misery
I should add shamelessness by speaking false.

CLYT. Now hear me, for my thoughts will I unfold
In no obscure and coloured mode of speech.
First then, for first with this will I upbraid thee,
Me didst thou wed against my will, and seize
By force ; my former husband Tantalus
By thee was slain. By thee my infant son,
Torn from my breast by violence, was whirled
And dashed against the ground. The sons of Jove,
My brothers, glitt'ring on their steeds in arms
Advanced against thee ; but old Tyndarus,
My father, saved thee, at his knees become
A suppliant ; and hence didst thou obtain
My bed. To thee and to thy house my thoughts
Thus reconciled, thou shalt thyself attest
How irreproachable a wife I was,
How chaste, with what attention I increased
The splendour of thy house, that ent'ring there

Thou hadst delight, and going out, with thee
 Went happiness along. A wife like this
 Is a rare prize ; the worthless are not rare.
 Three daughters have I borne thee, and this son.
 Of one of these wilt thou—O piercing grief !—
 Deprive me. Should one ask thee, for what cause
 Thy daughter wilt thou kill, what wouldst thou say ?
 Speak ; or I must speak for thee ! E'en for this,
 That Menelaus may regain Helena.
 Well would it be, if, for his wanton wife
 Our children made the price, what most we hate
 With what is dearest to us we redeem.
 But if thou lead the forces, leaving me
 At Argos, should thy absence then be long,
 Think what my heart must feel, when in the house
 I see the seats all vacant of my child,
 And her apartment vacant : I shall sit
 Alone, in tears, thus ever wailing her :
 " Thy father, O my child, hath slain thee ; he
 That gave thee birth, hath killed thee, not another,
 Nor by another hand ; this is the prize
 He left his house." But do not, by the gods,
 Do not compel me to be aught but good
 To thee, nor be thou aught but good to me ;
 Since there will want a slight pretence alone
 For me, and for my daughters left at home,
 To welcome, as becomes us, thy return.
 Well, thou wilt sacrifice thy child : what vows
 Wilt thou then form ? what blessing wilt thou ask
 To wait thee, thou, who dost thy daughter slay—
 Thou, who with shame to this unlucky war
 Art marching ? Is it just that I should pray
 For aught of good to thee ? Should I not deem
 The gods unwise, if they their favours shower
 On those who stain their willing hands with blood ?
 Wilt thou, to Argos when returned, embrace
 Thy children ? But thou hast no right : thy face
 Which of thy children will behold, if one
 With cool deliberate purpose thou shalt kill ?

Now to this point I come : if thee alone
To bear the sceptre, thee to lead the troops
Th' occasion called, shouldst thou not thus have urged
Thy just appeal to Greece: "Is it your will,
Ye Grecians, to the Phrygian shores to sail?
Cast then the lot whose daughter must be slain."
This had at least been equal; nor hadst thou
Been singled out from all to give thy child
A victim for the Greeks. Or Menelaus,
Whose cause this is, should for the mother slay
Hermione : but I, who to thy bed
Am faithful, of my child shall be deprived,
And she, that hath misdones, at her return
To Sparta her young daughter shall bear back,
And thus be happy. Aught if I have said
Amiss, reply to that : but if my words
Speak nought but sober reason, do not slay
Thy child, and mine : and thus thou wilt be wise.

CHOR. Be thou persuaded : reason bids preserve
Our children: this no mortal can gainsay.

IPH. Had I, my father, the persuasive voice
Of Orpheus, and his skill to charm the rocks
To follow me, and soothe whome'er I please
With winning words, I would make trial of it ;
But I have nothing to present thee now
Save tears, my only eloquence ; and those
I can present thee. On thy knees I hang,
A suppliant wreath, this body, which she bore
To thee. Ah ! kill me not in youth's fresh prime.
Sweet is the light of heaven ; compel me not
What is beneath to view. I was the first
To call thee father, ne thou first didst call
Thy child ; I was the first that on thy knees
Fondly caressed thee, and from thee received
The fond caress ; this was thy speech to me :
" Shall I, my child, e'er see thee in some house
Of splendour, happy in thy husband, live,
And flourish, as becomes my dignity ? "
My speech to thee was, leaning 'gainst thy cheek,

Which with my hand I now caress : " And what
 Shall I then do for thee ? Shall I receive
 My father when grown old, and in my house
 Cheer him with each fond office, to repay
 The careful nurture which he gave my youth ? "
 These words are on my memory deep impressed ;
 Thou hast forgot them, and wilt kill thy child.
 By Pelops I entreat thee, by thy sire
 Atreus, by this my mother, who before
 Suffered for me the pangs of childbirth, now
 These pangs again to suffer, do not kill me.
 If Paris be enamoured of his bride,
 His Helen, what concerns it me ? and how
 Comes he to my destruction ? Look upon me,
 Give me a smile, give me a kiss, my father,
 That, if my words persuade thee not, in death
 I may have this memorial of thy love.
 My brother, small assistance canst thou give
 Thy friends, yet for thy sister with thy tears
 Implore thy father that she may not die :
 E'en infants have a sense of ills : and see,
 My father, silent though he be, he sues
 To thee : be gentle to me, on my life
 Have pity. Thy two children by this beard
 Entreat thee, thy dear children : one is yet
 An infant, one to riper years arrived.
 I will sum all in this, which shall contain
 More than long speech : To view the light of life
 To mortals is most sweet, but all beneath
 Is nothing : of his senses is he reft
 Who hath a wish to die ; for life, though ill,
 Excels whate'er there is of good in death.

CHOR. For thee, unhappy Helen, and thy love,
 A contest dreadful, and surcharged with woes,
 To the Atridæ and their children comes.

AGAM. What calls for pity, and what not, I know :
 I love my children, else I should be void
 Of reason : to dare this is dreadful to me,
 And not to dare is dreadful. I perforce

Must do it. What a naval camp is here
 You see, how many kings of Greece arrayed
 In glitt'ring arms : to Ilium's towers are these
 Denied t' advance, unless I offer thee
 A victim, thus the prophet Calchas speaks,
 Denied from her foundations to o'erturn
 Illustrious Troy ; and through the Grecian host
 Maddens the fierce desire to sail with speed
 'Gainst the Barbarians' land, and check their rage
 For Grecian dames. My daughters these will slay
 At Argos, you too will they slay, and me,
 Should I, the goddess not revering, make
 Of none effect her oracle. To this
 Not Menelaus, my child, hath wrought my soul,
 Nor to his will am I a slave ; but Greece,
 For which will I, or will I not, perforce
 Thee I must sacrifice : my weakness here
 I feel, and must submit. In thee, my child,
 What lies, and what in me, Greece should be free,
 Nor should her sons beneath Barbarians bend,
 Their nuptial beds to ruffian force a prey.

CLYTEMNESTRA, IPHIGENIA, CHORUS.

CLYT. Alas, my child ! O strangers ! Wretched me,
 How wretched in thy death ! Thy father flies thee ;
 He flies, but dooms thee to the realms beneath.

IPH. My mother, O my mother ! Wretched me !

For both our fortunes, full of woe,
 One strain, one mournful strain shall flow.
 No more the gladsome light of day,
 No more the bright sun's golden ray
 Shall shine, ah me ! to cheer my child.
 Ah me ! - Ye Phrygian forests wild,
 Ye snow-clad mountains, rude that rise,
 Mountains of Ida to the skies ;
 Where Priam once his son unblest,
 Far severed from his mother's breast,
 Exposed, this Paris to destroy ;
 Idæus thence they called the boy ;

The boy they called Idæus, known
 So named through all the Phrygian town.
 O that his son he ne'er had laid
 Where with their herds the herdsmen strayed,
 The fountains of the nymphs among,
 Where roll the lucid streams along,
 And the green mead profusely pours
 The blushing glow of roseate flowers,
 With hyacinths of dusky hue,
 For goddesses which lovely grew.
 Once Pallas came to those sweet glades,
 And Juno deigned to grace their shades,
 And Venus fraught with wanton wiles,
 Resistless with enchanting smiles,
 And Hermes, messenger of Jove.
 Venus in all the sweets of love
 Rejoicing, Pallas in her spear,
 And proud the bed of Jove to share,
 Juno's bright form, imperial dame,
 Once to the odious judgment came :
 For beauty and for beauty's prize
 This contest drew them from the skies,
 But death on me : yet Greece shall own
 My death assures her high renown.

CHOR. Diana hath accepted thee the first
 Of victims, that our arms may sail to Troy.

IPH. But he, to whom my birth I owe,
 Betrays and flies me 'midst my woe.
 My mother ! Ah my cruel fate !
 He flies, and leaves me desolate.
 Ill-omened Helena, thy love
 Fatal, will fatal to me prove :
 I die, I perish, I am slain,
 My blood th' unhallowed sword shall stain ;
 Unhallowed is my father's hand,
 That pours it on th' empurpled sand.
 O, had the ships ne'er ploughed their way
 To Aulis, to this winding bay !
 O, had Jove given the fleet to bear

To 'Troy's proud shores the wafted war ;
 Not adverse winds, that sullen sweep
 Across Eubœa's angry deep !
 To some he grants the fav'ring gales
 That wanton in their flying sails ;
 Necessity to some and pain ;
 To some to cut the azure main ;
 These quit the port with gallant pride,
 Reluctant those at anchor ride.
 To suff'rings born the human race,
 In suff'rings pass life's little space :
 Why since misfortunes 'round them wait,
 Should men invite their cruel fate ?

CHOR. Alas, what woes, what miseries hath thou brought,
 Daughter of Tyndarus, on Greece ! But thee,
 Unhappy virgin, by this flood of ills
 O'erwhelmed I wail. Ah, were this fate not thine !

IPH. My mother, what a crowd of men I see
 Advance !

CLYT. The son of Thetis with them comes,
 For whom, my child, I led thee to this strand.

IPH. Open the doors to me, ye female train,
 That I may hide myself.

CLYT. Whom dost thou fly ?

IPH. Achilles, whom I blush to see.

CLYT. And why ?

IPH. These ill-starred nuptials cover me with shame.

CLYT. Nothing of pleasure doth thy state present.
 Yet stay : this is no time for grave reserve.

'ACHILLES, CLYTEMNESTRA, IPHIGENIA, CHORUS.

ACH. Daughter of Leda, O unhappy queen !

CLYT. Thy voice speaks nothing false.

ACH. Among the Greeks
 Dreadful the clamour.

CLYT. What the clamour ? Say.

ACH. Touching thy daughter.

CLYT. Thou hast said what bears
 No happy omen.

- ACH. That she must be slain
A victim.
CLYT. And doth none against this speak?
ACH. I was with outrage threatened.
CLYT. Stranger, how?
ACH. To be o'erwhelmed with stones.
CLYT. Whilst thou wouldst save
My child?
ACH. E'en so.
CLYT. Who dared to touch thee?
ACH. All
The Grecians,
CLYT. Were thy troops of Myrmidons
Not present to thee?
ACH. They were first in rage.
CLYT. Then are we lost, my child.
ACH. They cried aloud
That I was vanquished by a woman.
CLYT. Aught
Didst thou reply?
ACH. That her, who was to be
My bride, they should not slay.
CLYT. With justice urged.
ACH. Named by her father mine.
CLYT. From Argos brought
By his command.
ACH. In vain : I was o'erpowered
By their rude cries.
CLYT. The many are indeed
A dreadful ill.
ACH. Yet I will give thee aid.
CLYT. Wilt thou alone fight with a host?
ACH. Thou seest
These bearing arms.
CLYT. May thy designs succeed!
ACH. They shall succeed.
CLYT. Shall not my child be slain?
ACH. Never by my permission.
CLYT. Will none come
To lay rude hands upon the virgin?

- ACH. Many :
Ulysses with them ; he will lead her.
- CLYT. What,
He of the race of Sisyphus ?
- ACH. The same.
- CLYT. Comes he of his free will, or by the host
Appointed ?
- ACH. Chosen, by his own consent.
- CLYT. Bad choice, to be with blood polluted.
- ACH. Him
Will I keep from her.
- CLYT. Would he drag her hence
Against her will ?
- ACH. E'en by her golden locks.
- CLYT. What now behoves me do ?
- ACH. Be firm, and hold
Thy daughter back.
- CLYT. And shall she not be slain
For that ?
- ACH. But he will surely come for this.
- IPH. My mother, hear ye now my words : for thee
Offended with thy husband I behold.
Vain anger ! for where force will take its way,
To struggle is not easy. Our warm thanks
Are to this stranger for his prompt goodwill
Most justly due : yet, it behoves thee, see
Thou art not by the army charged with blame ;
Nothing the more should we avail, on him
Mischief would fall. Hear then what to my mind
Deliberate thought presents. It is decreed
For me to die : this then I wish, to die
With glory, all reluctance banished far.
My mother, weigh this well, that what I speak
Is honour's dictate. All the powers of Greece
Have now their eyes on me ; on me depends
The sailing of the fleet, the fall of Troy,
And not to suffer, should a new attempt
Be dared, the rude Barbarians from blest Greece
To bear in future times her dames by force,

This ruin bursting on them for the loss
 Of Helena, whom Paris bore away.
 By dying all these things shall I achieve,
 And blest, for that I have delivered Greece,
 Shall be my fame. To be too fond of life
 Becomes not me ; nor for thyself alone,
 But to all Greece a blessing, didst thou bear me.
 Shall thousands, when their country's injured, lift
 Their shields, shall thousands grasp the oar, and dare,
 Advancing bravely 'gainst the foe, to die
 For Greece ? And shall my life, my single life,
 Obstruct all this ? Would this be just ? What word
 Can we reply ? Nay more ; it is not right
 That he with all the Grecians should contend
 In fight, should die, and for a woman. No ;
 More than a thousand women is one man
 Worthy to see the light of life. If me
 The chaste Diana wills t' accept, shall I,
 A mortal, dare oppose her heavenly will ?
 Vain the attempt : for Greece I give my life.
 Slay me, demolish Troy : for these shall be
 Long time my monuments, my children these,
 My nuptials, and my glory. It is meet
 That Greece should o'er Barbarians bear the sway,
 Not that Barbarians lord it over Greece :
 Nature hath formed them slaves, the Grecians free.

CHOR. Thine, royal virgin, is a generous part :
 But harsh what Fortune and the Goddess wills.

ACH. Daughter of Agamemnon, highly blest
 Some god would make me, if I might attain
 Thy nuptials. Greece in thee I happy deem,
 And thee in Greece. This hast thou nobly spoken,
 And worthy of thy country : to contend
 Against a goddess of superior power
 Desisting, thou hast judged the public good
 A better, nay, a necessary part.
 For this more ardent my desire to gain thee
 My bride, this disposition when I see,
 For it is generous. But consider well :

To do thee good, to lead thee to my house,
Is my warm wish ; and much I should be grieved,
Be witness Thetis, if I save thee not
In arms against the Grecians. In thy thought
Revolve this well : death is a dreadful thing.

IPH. Reflecting not on any this I speak,
Enough of wars and slaughters from the charms
Of Helen rise : but die not thou for me,
O stranger, nor distain thy sword with blood ;
But let me save my country, if I may.

ACH. O glorious spirit ! Nought have I 'gainst this
To urge, since such thy will ; for what thou sayst
Is generous : why should not the truth be spoken ?
But of thy purpose thou mayst yet repent.
Know then my resolution : I will go,
And nigh the altar place these arms, thy death
Preventing, not permitting : thou perchance
Mayst soon approve my purpose, nigh thy throat
When thou shalt see the sword : and for that cause
I will not, for a rash unweighed resolve,
Abandon thee to die ; but with these arms
Wait near Diana's temple till thou come.

CLYTEMNESTRA, IPHIGENIA, CHORUS.

IPH. Why, mother, dost thou shed these silent tears ?

CLYT. I have a cruel cause, that rends my heart.

IPH. Forbear, nor sink my spirit. Grant me this.

CLYT. Say what : by me my child shall ne'er be wronged.

IPH. Clip not those crisped tresses from thine head,
Nor robe thee in the sable garb of woe.

CLYT. What hast thou said, my child ? When thou art
lost——

IPH. Not lost, but saved : through me thou shalt be famed.

CLYT. What, for thy death shall I not mourn, my child ?

IPH. No, since for me a tomb shall not be raised.

CLYT. To die then, is not that to be entombed ?

IPH. The altar of the goddess is my tomb.

CLYT. Well dost thou speak, my child : I will comply.

IPH. And deem me blest, as working good to Greece.

CLYT. What message to thy sisters shall I bear ?

IPH. Them too array not in the garbs of woe.

CLYT. What greetings to the virgins dost thou send ?

IPH. My last farewell. To manhood train Orestes.

CLYT. Embrace him, for thou ne'er shalt see him more.

IPH. Far as thou couldst, thou didst assist thy friends.

[*To Orestes.*]

CLYT. At Argos can I do aught pleasing to thee ?

IPH. My father, and thy husband, do not hate.

CLYT. For thy dear sake fierce contests must he bear.

IPH. For Greece, reluctant, me to death he yields.

CLYT. Basely, with guile, unworthy Atreus' son.

IPH. Who goes with me, and leads me, by the hair

Ere I am dragged ?

CLYT. I will go with thee.

IPH. No :

That were unseemly.

CLYT. Hanging on thy robes.

IPH. Let me prevail, my mother ; stay. To me

As more becoming this, and more to thee.

Let one of these, th' attendants of my father,

Conduct me to Diana's hallowed mead,

Where I shall fall a victim.

CLYT. O my child,

Dost thou then go ?

IPH. And never to return.

CLYT. And wilt thou leave thy mother ?

IPH. As thou seest,

Not as I merit.

CLYT. Stay, forsake me not.

IPH. I suffer not a tear to fall. But you,

Ye virgins, to my fate attune the hymn,

"Diana, daughter of almighty Jove."

With fav'ring omens sing "Success to Greece."

Come, with the basket one begin the rites,

One with the purifying cakes the flames

Enkindle ; let my father his right hand

Place on the altar ; for I come to give

Safety to Greece, and conquest to her arms.

Lead me : mine the glorious fate
To o'erturn the Phrygian state ;
Ilium's towers their head shall bow.
With the garlands bind my brow,
Bring them, be these tresses crowned.
Round the shrine, the altar round
Bear the lavers, which you fill
From the pure translucent rill.
High your choral voices raise,
Tuned to hymn Diana's praise,
Blest Diana, royal maid.
Since the fates demand my aid,
I fulfil their awful power
By my slaughter, by my gore.

CHOR. Reverenced, reverenced mother, now
Thus for thee our tears shall flow :
For unhallowed would a tear
'Midst the solemn rites appear.

IPH. Swell the notes, ye virgin train,
To Diana swell the strain,
Queen of Chalcis, adverse land,
Queen of Aulis, on whose strand,
Winding to a narrow bay,
Fierce to take its angry way
Waits the war, and calls on me
Its retarded force to free.
O my country, where these eyes
Opened on Pelasgic skies !
O ye virgins, once my pride,
In Mycenæ who reside !

CHOR. Why of Perseus name the town,
Which Cyclopean rampires crown ?

IPH. Me you reared a beam of light :
Freely now I sink in night.

CHOR. And for this immortal fame,
Virgin, shall attend thy name.

IPH. Ah, thou beaming lamp of day,
Jove-born, bright, ethereal ray,
Other regions me await,
Other life, and other fate !

Farewell, beauteous lamp of day,
Farewell, bright ethereal ray !

CHOR. See, she goes : her glorious fate
To o'erturn the Phrygian state ;
Soon the wreaths shall bind her brow ;
Soon the lustral waters flow ;
Soon that beauteous neck shall feel
Piercing deep the fatal steel,
And the ruthless altar o'er
Sprinkle drops of gushing gore.
By thy father's dread command
There the cleansing lavers stand ;
There in arms the Grecian powers
Burn to march 'gainst Ilium's towers.
But our voices let us raise,
Tuned to hymn Diana's praise,
Virgin daughter she of Jove,
Queen among the gods above.
That with conquest and renown
She the arms of Greece may crown.
To thee, dread power, we make our vows,
Pleased when the blood of human victims flows.

To Phrygia's hostile strand,
Where rise perfidious Ilium's hated towers,
Waft, O waft the Grecian powers,
And aid this martial band !
On Agamemnon's honoured head,
Whilst wide the spears of Greece their terrors spread,
Th' immortal crown let conquest place,
With glory's brightest grace.

MESSENGER, CLYTEMNESTRA, CHORUS.

MESS. O royal Clytemnestra, from the house
Hither advance, that thou mayst hear my words.

CLYT. Hearing thy voice I come, but with affright
And terror trembling, lest thy coming bring
Tidings of other woes, beyond what now
Afflict me.

MESS. Of thy daughter have I things
Astonishing and awful to relate.

CLYT. Delay not then, but speak them instantly.

MESS. Yes, honoured lady, thou shalt hear them all
Distinct from first to last, if that my sense
Disordered be not faithless to my tongue.
When to Diana's grove and flow'ry meads
We came, where stood th' assembled host of Greece,
Leading thy daughter, straight in close array
Was formed the band of Argives; but the chief
Imperial Agamemnon, when he saw
His daughter as a victim to the grove
Advancing, groaned, and bursting into tears
Turned from the sight his head, before his eyes
Holding his robe. The virgin near him stood,
And thus addressed him: "Father, I to thee
Am present: for my country, and for all
The land of Greece, I freely give myself
A victim: to the altar let them lead me,
Since such the oracle. If aught on me
Depends, be happy, and attain the prize
Of glorious conquest, and revisit safe
Your country: of the Grecians for this cause
Let no one touch me; with intrepid spirit
Silent will I present my neck." She spoke,
And all that heard admired the noble soul
And virtue of the virgin. In the midst
Talthybius standing, such his charge, proclaimed
Silence to all the host: and Chalcas now,
The prophet, in the golden basket placed
Drawn from its sheath the sharp-edged sword, and bound
The sacred garlands round the virgin's head.
The son of Peleus, holding in his hands
The basket and the laver, circled round
The altar of the goddess, and thus spoke:
"Daughter of Jove, Diana, in the chase
Of savage beasts delighting, through the night
Who rollest thy resplendent orb, accept
This victim, which th' associate troops of Greece,
And Agamemnon, our imperial chief,
Present to thee, the unpolluted blood

Now from this beauteous virgin's neck to flow.
Grant that secure our fleets may plough the main,
And that our arms may lay the rampired walls
Of Troy in dust." The sons of Atreus stood,
And all the host fixed on the ground their eyes.
The priest then took the sword, preferred his prayer,
And with his eye marked where to give the blow.
My heart with grief sunk in me, on the earth
Mine eyes were cast; when sudden to the view
A wonder! For the stroke each clearly heard,
But where the virgin was none knew. Aloud
The priest exclaims, and all the host with shouts
Rifted the air, beholding from some god
A prodigy, which struck their wond'ring eyes,
Surpassing faith when seen: for on the ground
Panting was laid a hind of largest bulk,
In form excelling; with its spouting blood
Much was the altar of the goddess dewed.
Calchas at this, think with what joy, exclaimed:
"Ye leaders of th' united host of Greece,
See you this victim, by the goddess brought,
And at her altar laid, a mountain hind?
This, rather than the virgin, she accepts,
Not with the rich stream of her noble blood
To stain the altar; this she hath received
Of her free grace, and gives a fav'ring gale
To swell our sails, and bear th' invading war
To Ilium: therefore rouse, ye naval train,
Your courage. To your ships! for we this day,
Leaving the deep recesses of this shore,
Must pass th' Ægean sea." Soon as the flames
The victim had consumed, he poured a prayer,
That o'er the waves the host might plough their way.
Me Agamemnon sends, that I should bear
To thee these tidings, and declare what fate
The gods assign him, and through Greece t' obtain
Immortal glory. What I now relate
I saw, for I was present; to the gods
Thy daughter, be thou well assured, is fled.

Therefore lament no more, no more retain
Thy anger 'gainst thy lord : to mortal men
Things unexpected oft the gods dispense,
And whom they love they save : this day hath seen
Thy daughter dead, seen her alive again.

CHOR. His tidings with what transport do I hear !
Thy daughter lives, and lives among the gods.

CLYT. And have the gods, my daughter, borne thee hence ?
How then shall I address thee ? Or of this
How deem ! Vain words, perchance, to comfort me
And soothe to peace the anguish of my soul.

MESS. But Agamemnon comes, and will confirm
Each circumstance which thou hast heard from me.

AGAM. Lady, we have much cause to think ourselves,
Touching our daughter, blest : for 'mongst the gods
Commercing she in truth resides. But thee
Behoves it with thine infant son return
To Argos, for the troops with ardour haste
To sail. And now farewell ! My greetings to thee
From Troy will be unfrequent, and at times
Of distant interval : mayst thou be blest !

CHOR. With joy, Atrides, reach the Phrygian shore ;
With joy return to Greece, and bring with thee
Bright conquest, and the glorious spoils of Troy !

IPHIGENIA IN TAURIS.

THE reader will doubtless be pleased at renewing his acquaintance with the amiable but unhappy Iphigenia : from the altar of Diana at Aulis she was removed by that goddess to her temple in the Tauric Chersonese, a great Peninsula in the Black Sea on the Mæotic Lake, now called Crim Tartary, where she presided as priestess over the cruel and bloody rites there established.

Diodorus Siculus, lib. iv., informs us, " that it was the custom of the Barbarians who inhabited that country to sacrifice such strangers as were driven on that shore to the Tauric Diana. Iphigenia, they say, was in after times appointed the priestess of this goddess, and sacrificed such strangers as were taken. In tracing the history of these sacrifices we find that the Sun was father of Æetes and Perses : Æetes reigned at Colchis, Perses in the Tauric Chersonese, both remarkable for their savage cruelty. Hecate was the daughter of Perses, and exceeded her father in daring and atrocious actions : she took great delight in hunting, and when she failed of success in the chase, transfixed men with her arrows, instead of beasts. She was fond of preparing compositions of a poisonous nature, to try the force of which she mixed them with the food given to strangers. Having acquired great experience in these things, she destroyed her father with poison, and took possession of his kingdom : she then built the temple of Diana, and appointed that the strangers who arrived there should be sacrificed to the goddess : hence her name became terrible for her barbarity. She afterwards married Æetes, and was by him the mother of

Circe and Medea. Iphigenia had for some years, reluctantly indeed, but through necessity, presided over these inhuman rites, when Orestes, with his friend Pylades, arrived on this inhospitable coast, in obedience to the oracle of Apollo: they were seized, and carried to the king, who sent them in chains to the priestess as victims to the goddess: their death now seemed inevitable. The drama is conducted with exquisite skill, and the circumstances arise out of each other so naturally, that, as P. Brumoy well observes, the piece has such an air of truth, that the spectator is persuaded that the event really passed as it is presented to him, and that it could not have passed in any other manner.

The translator feels himself in a very unpleasant situation with regard to this tragedy: the justly approved translation of the late excellent Mr. West rendered his attempt unnecessary: he had no ambition to rival that gentleman, nor has he the vanity to hope for any superiority in the execution of the work: but the respect due to his subscribers and to the public obliged him to present them with *all* the tragedies of Euripides, though at the hazard of his reputation in this particular instance, where *non vinci opimus est triumphus*.

The scene is in the Court of the Temple of Diana.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

IPHIGENIA.

ORESTES.

PYLADES.

THOAS.

HERDSMAN.

MESSENGER.

CHORUS OF GRECIAN WOMEN,

CAPTIVES, ATTENDANTS ON

IPHIGENIA IN THE TEMPLE.

IPHIGENIA.

To Pisa by the fleetest coursers borne
Comes Pelops, son of Tantalus, and weds
The virgin daughter of CEnomaus:
From her sprung Atreus; Menelaus from him,

And Agamemnon ; I from him derive
 My birth, his Iphigenia, by his queen
 Daughter of Tyndarus. Where frequent winds
 Swell the vext Euripus with eddying blasts,
 And roll the dark'ning waves, my father slew me
 A victim to Diana, so he thought,
 For Helen's sake, its bay where Aulis winds
 To fame well known, for there his thousand ships,
 Th' armament of Greece, th' imperial chief
 Convened, desirous that his Greeks should snatch
 The glorious crown of victory from Troy,
 And punish the base insult to the bed
 Of Helen, vengeance grateful to the soul
 Of Menelaus. But 'gainst his ships the sea
 Long barred, and not one fav'ring breeze to swell
 His flagging sails, the hallowed flames the chief
 Consults, and Calchas thus disclosed the fates :
 " Imperial leader of the Grecian host,
 Hence shalt thou not unmoor thy vessels ere
 Diana as a victim shall receive
 Thy daughter Iphigenia. What the year
 Most beauteous should produce, thou to the queen
 Dispensing, light didst vow to sacrifice :
 A daughter, Clytemnestra in thy house
 Then 'ere (the peerless grace of beauty thus
 To me assigning) : her must thou devote
 The victim." Then Ulysses by his arts
 Me to Achilles as designed a bride,
 He on from my mother. My unhappy fate
 To Aulis brought me ; on the altar there
 High was I placed, and o'er me gleamed the sword
 Aiming the fatal wound : but from the stroke
 Diana snatched me, in exchange a hind
 Giving the Grecians ; through the lucid air
 Me she conveyed to Tauris, here to dwell,
 Where o'er barbarians a barbaric king
 Holds his rude sway, named Thoas, whose swift foot
 Equals the rapid wing : me he appoints
 The priestess of this temple, where such rites

Are pleasing to Diana, that the name
Alone claims honour ; for I sacrifice
(Such, ere I came, the custom of the state)
Whatever Grecian to this savage shore
Is driven. The previous rites are mine ; the deed
Of blood, too horrid to be told, devolves
On others in the temple ; but the rest,
In reverence to the goddess, I forbear.
But the strange visions, which the night now past
Brought with it, to the air, if that may soothe
My troubled thought, I will relate. I seemed,
As I lay sleeping, from this land removed
To dwell at Argos, resting on my couch
'Midst the apartments of the virgin train.
Sudden the firm earth shook ; I fled, and stood
Without ; the battlements I saw, and all
The rocking roof fall from its lofty height
In ruins to the ground ; of all the house,
My father's house, one pillar, as I thought,
Alone was left, which from its cornice waved
A length of auburn-locks, and human voice
Assumed. The bloody office, which is mine
'To strangers here, respecting, I to death,
Sprinkling the lustral drops, devoted it
With many tears. My dream I thus expound
Orestes, whom I hallowed by my rites,
Is dead : for sons are pillars of the house,
They, whom my lustral lavers sprinkle, die.
I cannot to my friends apply my dream,
For Strophius, when I perished, had no son.
Now to my brother, absent though he be,
Libations will I offer ; this at least,
With the attendants given me by the king,
Virgins of Greece, I can : but what the cause
They yet attend me not within the house,
The temple of the goddess where I dwell ?

ORESTES, PYLADES.

ORES. Keep careful watch, lest some one come this way.

PYL. I watch, and turn mine eye to every part.

ORES. And dost thou, Pylades, imagine this

The temple of the goddess which we seek,

Our sails from Argos sweeping o'er the main?

PYL. Orestes, such my thought, and must be thine.

ORES. And this the altar wet with Grecian blood?

PYL. Crimsoned with gore behold its sculptured wreaths.

ORES. See, from the battlements what trophies hang!

PYL. The spoils of strangers that have here been slain,

ORES. Behoves us then to watch with careful eye,

O Phœbus, by thy oracles again

Why hast thou led me to these toils? E'er since

In vengeance for my father's blood I slew

My mother, ceaseless by the Furies driven,

Vagrant, an outcast, many a bending course

My feet have trod: to thee I came, of thee

Inquired this whirling frenzy by what means,

And by what means my labours I might end.

Thy voice commanded me to speed my course

To this wild coast of Tauris, where a shrine

Thy sister hath, Diana; thence to take

The statue of the goddess, which from heaven,

So say the natives, to this temple fell:

This image or by fraud or fortune won,

The dangerous toil achieved, to place the prize

In the Athenian land: no more was said;

But that performing this I should obtain

Rest from my toils. Obedient to thy words

On this unknown, unhospitable coast

Am I arrived. Now, Pylades, for thou

Art my associate in this dangerous task,

Of thee I ask, What shall we do? for high

The walls, thou seest, which fence the temple round:

Shall we ascend their height? But how escape

Observing eyes? Or burst the brazen bars?

Of these we nothing know. In the attempt

To force the gates, or meditating means
To enter, if detected, we shall die.
Shall we then, ere we die, by flight regain
The ship, in which we hither ploughed the sea?

PYL. Of flight we brook no thought, nor such hath been
Our wont ; nor may the god's commanding voice
Be disobeyed : but from the temple now
Retiring, in some cave, which the black sea
Beats with its billows, we may lie concealed
At distance from our bark, lest some, whose eyes
May note it, bear the tidings to the king,
And we be seized by force. But when the eye
Of night comes darkling on, then must we dare,
And take the polished image from the shrine,
Attempting all things : and the vacant space
Between the triglyphs, mark it well, enough
Is open to admit us ; by that way
Attempt we to descend. In toils the brave
Are daring ; of no worth the abject soul.

ORES. This length of sea we ploughed not from this coast,
Nothing effected, to return : but well
Hast thou advised ; the god must be obeyed.
Retire we then where we may lie concealed :
For never from the god will come the cause
That what his sacred voice commands should fall
Effectless. We must dare. No toil to youth
Excuse, which justifies inaction, brings.

IPHIGENIA, CHORUS.

IPH. You, who your savage dwellings hold
Nigh this inhospitable main,
'Gainst clashing rocks with fury rolled,
From all but hallowed words abstain.
Virgin queen, Latona's grace,
Joying in the mountain chase,
To thy court, thy rich domain,
To thy beauteous-pillared fane,
Where our wond'ring eyes behold
Battlements that blaze with gold,

Thus my virgin steps I bend,
Holy, the holy to attend,
Servant, virgin queen, to thee,
Power, who bearest life's golden key,
Far from Greece for steeds renowned,
From her walls with towers crowned,
From the beauteous-planted meads
Where his train Eurotas leads,
Visiting the loved retreats
Once my royal father's seats.

CHOR. I come. What cares disturb thy rest?
Why hast thou brought me to the shrine?
Doth some fresh grief afflict thy breast?
Why bring me to this seat divine?
Thou daughter of that chief, whose powers
Ploughed with a thousand keels the strand,
And ranged in arms shook Troy's proud towers
Beneath th' Atridæ's great command!

IPH. O ye attendant train,
How is my heart oppressed with woe!
What notes, save notes of grief, can flow,
A harsh and unmelodious strain?
My soul domestic ills oppress with dread,
And bid me mourn a brother dead.
What visions did my sleeping sense appal
In the past dark and midnight hour?
'Tis ruin, ruin all.
My father's house—it is no more;
No more is his illustrious line.
What dreadful deeds hath Argos known!
One only brother, Fate, was mine;
And dost thou rend him from me? Is he gone
To Pluto's dreary realms below?
For him, as dead, with pious care
This goblet I prepare;
And on the bosom of the earth shall flow
Streams from the heifer mountain-bred,
The grape's rich juice, and mixed with these
The labour of the yellow bees,
Libations soothing to the dead.

Give me th' oblation ; let me hold
The foaming goblet's hallowed gold.

O thou, the earth beneath,
Who didst from Agamemnon spring,
To thee deprived of vital breath
I these libations bring.
Accept them : to thy honoured tomb
Never, ah ! never shall I come ;
Never these golden tresses bear
To place them there, there shed the tear :
For from my country far, a hind
There deemed as slain, my wild abode I find.

CHOR. To thee thy faithful train
The Asiatic hymn will raise,
A doleful, a barbaric strain,
Responsive to thy lays,
And steep in tears the mournful song,
Notes which to the dead belong,
Dismal notes attuned to woe
By Pluto in the realms below :
No sprightly air shall we employ
To cheer the soul, and wake the sense of joy.

IPH. Th' Atridæ are no more :
Extinct their sceptre's golden light ;
My father's house from its proud height
Is fall'n : its ruins I deplore.
Who of her kings at Argos holds his reign,
Her kings once blest ? But Sorrow's train
Rolls on impetuous for the rapid steeds
Which o'er the strand with Pelops fly.
From what atrocious deeds
Starts the sun back, his sacred eye
Of brightness, loathing, turned aside ?
And fatal to their house arose
From the rich Ram, Thessalia's golden pride,
Slaughter on slaughter, woes on woes.
Thence from the dead of ages past
Vengeance came rushing on its prey,

And swept the race of Tantalus away :
Fatal to thee its ruthless haste ;
To me too fatal from the hour
My mother wedded, from the night
She gave me to life's opening light,
Nursed by affliction's cruel power.
Early to me the fates unkind
To know what sorrow is assigned ;
Me, Leda's daughter, hapless dame,
First blooming offspring of her bed
(A father's conduct here I blame),
A joyless victim bred ;
When o'er the strand of Aulis, in the pride
Of beauty kindling flames of love,
High on my splendid car I move,
Betrothed to Thetis' son a bride :
Ah hapless bride, to all the train
Of Grecian fair preferred in vain !
But now a stranger on this strand,
'Gainst which the wild waves beat,
I hold my dreary, joyless seat,
Far distant from my native land ;
Nor nuptial bed is mine, nor child, nor friend.
At Argos now no more I raise
The festal song in Juno's praise ;
Nor o'er the loom sweet-sounding bend,
As the creative shuttle flies,
Give forms of Titans fierce to rise,
And dreadful with her purple spear
Image Athenian Pallas there.
But on this barb'rous shore
Th' unhappy stranger's fate I moan,
The ruthless altar stained with gore,
His deep and dying groan :
And for each tear that weeps his woes,
From me a tear of pity flows.
Of these the sad remembrance now must sleep :
A brother dead, ah me ! I weep :
At Argos him by fate opprest

I left an infant at the breast.
 A beauteous bud, whose opening charms
 Then blossomed in his mother's arms,
 Orestes, born to high command,
 Th' imperial sceptre of the Argive land.

CHOR. Leaving the sea-washed shore a herdsman comes
 Speeding, with some fresh tidings to thee fraught.

HERDSMAN, IPHIGENIA, CHORUS.

HERD. Daughter of Agamemnon, and bright gem
 Of Clytemnestra, hear strange things from me.

IPH. And what of terror doth thy tale import?

HERD. Two youths, swift-rowing 'twixt the clashing rocks
 Of our wild sea, are landed on the beach;
 A grateful offering at Diana's shrine,
 And victims to the goddess. Haste, prepare
 The sacred lavers and the previous rites.

IPH. Whence are the strangers? from what country named?

HERD. From Greece: this only, nothing more, I know.

IPH. Didst thou not hear what names the strangers bear?

HERD. One by the other was called Pylades.

IPH. How is the stranger, his companion, named?

HERD. This none of us can tell: we heard it not.

IPH. How saw you them? how seized them? by what chance?

HERD. 'Midst the rude cliffs that o'er the Euxine hang——

IPH. And what concern have herdsmen with the sea?

HERD. To wash our herds in the salt wave we came.

IPH. To what I asked return: how seized you them?

Tell me the manner; this I wish to know.

For slow the victims come, nor hath some while

The altar of the goddess, as was wont,

Been crimsoned with the streams of Grecian blood.

HERD. Our herds, which in the forests feed, we drove
 Amidst the tide that rushes to the shore

'Twixt the Symplegades: it was the place

Where in the rifted rock the chafing surge

Hath hollowed a rude cave, the haunt of those

Whose quest is purple. Of our number there

A herdsman saw two youths, and back returned

With soft and silent step ; then pointing said,
"Do you not see them? These are deities
That sit there." One, who with religious awe
Revered the gods, with hands uplifted prayed,
His eyes fixed on them: "Son of the sea-nymph
Leucothoe, guardian of the lab'ring bark,
Our Lord Palæmon, be propitious to us !
Or sit you on our shores, bright sons of Jove,
Castor and Pollux ! Or the glorious boast
Of Nereus, father of the noble choir
O' fifty Nereids?" One, whose untaught mind
Audacious folly hardened 'gainst the sense
Of holy awe, scoffed at his prayers, and said :
"These are wrecked mariners, that take their seat
In the cleft rock through fear, as they have heard
Our prescribed rite, that here we sacrifice
The stranger." To the greater part he seemed
Well to have spoken, and we judged it meet
To seize the victims, by our country's law
Due to the goddess. Of the stranger youths
One at this instant started from the rock ;
Awhile he stood, and wildly tossed his head,
And groaned, his loose arms trembling all their length,
Convulsed with madness : as a hunter loud
Then cried : "Dost thou behold her, Pylades,
Dost thou not see this dragon fierce from hell
Rushing to kill me, and against me rousing
Her horrid vipers? See this other here,
Emitting fire and slaughter from her vests,
Sails on her wings, my mother in her arms
Bearing, to hurl this mass of rock upon me !
Ah, she will kill me ! Whither shall I fly?"
His visage might we see no more the same,
And his voice varied, now the roar of bulls,
The howl of dogs now uttering, mimic sounds
Sent by the madd'ning Furies, as they say.
Together thronging, as of death assured,
We sit in silence : but he drew his sword,
And like a lion rushing 'midst our herds

Plunged in their sides the weapon, weening thus
To drive the Furies, till the briny wave
Foamed with their blood. But when among our hords
We saw this havoc made, we all 'gan rouse
To arms, and blew our sounding shells t' alarm
The neighb'ring peasants ; for we thought in fight
Rude herdsmen to these youthful strangers, trained
To arms, ill matched ; and forthwith to our aid
Flocked numbers. But, his frenzy of its force
Abating, on the earth the stranger falls,
Foam bursting from his mouth ? But when we saw
Th' advantage, each adventured on, and hurled
What might annoy him fall'n : the other youth
Wiped off the foam, took of his person care,
His fine-wrought robe spread over him, with heed
The flying stones observing warded off
The wounds, and each kind office to his friend
Attentively performed. His sense returned,
The stranger started up, and soon perceived
The tide of foes that rolled impetuous on,
The danger and distress that closed them round.
He heaved a sigh An unremitting storm
Of stones we poured, and each incited each.
Then we his dreadful exhortation heard :
" Pylades, we shall die ; but let us die
With glory ; draw thy sword, and follow me."
But when we saw the enemies advance
With brandished swords, the steep heights crowned with wood,
We fill in flight : but others, if one flies,
Press on them ; if again they drive these back,
What before fled turns, with a storm of stones
Assaulting them ; but, what exceeds belief,
Hurled by a thousand hands not one could hit
The victims of the goddess : scarce at length,
Not by brave daring seized we them, but 'round
We closed upon them, and their swords with stones
Beat, wily, from their hands, for on their knees
They through fatigue had sunk upon the ground.
We bare them to the monarch of this land :

He viewed them, and without delay to thee
Sent them, devoted to the cleansing vase
And to the altar. Victims such as these,
O virgin, wish to find ; for if such youths
Thou offer, for thy slaughter Greece will pay,
Her wrongs to thee at Aulis well avenged.

CHOR. These things are wonderful, which thou hast told
Of him, whoe'er he be, the youth from Greece
Arrived on this unhospitable shore.

IPH. 'Tis well. Go thou, and bring the strangers hither.
What here is to be done shall be our care.

O my unhappy heart ! before this hour
To strangers thou wast gentle, always touched
With pity, and with tears their tears repaid,
When Grecians, natives of my country, came
Into my hands : but from the dreams, which prompt
To deeds ungentle, showing that no more
Orestes views the sun's fair light, whoe'er
Ye are that hither come, me will you find
Relentless now. This is the truth, my friends :
My heart is rent ; and never will the wretch,
Who feels affliction's cruel tortures, bear
Goodwill to those that are more fortunate.
Never came gale from Jove, nor flying bark,
Which 'twixt the dang'rous rocks of th' Euxine sea
Brought Helen hither, who my ruin wrought,
Nor Menelaus ; that on them my foul wrongs
I might repay, and with an Aulis here
Requite the Aulis there, where I was seized,
And, as a heifer, by the Grecians slain.
My father too, who gave me birth, was priest.
Ah me ! the sad remembrance of those ills
Yet lives : how often did I stroke thy cheek,
And, hanging on thy knees, address thee thus :
Alas, my father ! I by thee am led
A bride to bridal rites unblest and base :
Them, whilst by thee I bleed, my mother hymns,
And th' Argive dames, with hymeneal strains,
And with the jocund pipe the house resounds :

But at the altar I by thee am slain ;
 For Pluto was th' Achilles, not the son
 Of Peleus, whom to me thou didst announce
 Th' affianced bridegroom, and by guile didst bring
 To bloody nuptials in the rolling car.
 But, o'er mine eyes the veil's fine texture spread,
 This brother in my hands, who now is lost,
 I clasped not, though his sister, did not press
 My lips to his through virgin modesty,
 As going to the house of Peleus : then
 Each fond embrace I to another time
 Deferred, as soon to Argos to return.
 If, O unhappy brother, thou art dead,
 From what a state, thy father's envied height
 Of glory, loved Orestes, art thou torn !—
 These false rules of the goddess much I blame :
 Whoe'er of mortals is with slaughter stained,
 Or hath at childbirth given assisting hands,
 Or chanced to touch aught dead, she as impure
 Drives from her altars ; yet herself delights
 In human victims bleeding at her shrine.
 Ne'er did Latona, from th' embrace of Jove,
 Bring forth such inconsistency : I then deem
 The feast of Tantalus, where gods were guests,
 Unworthy of belief, as that they fed
 On his son's flesh delighted : and I think
 These people, who themselves have a wild joy
 In shedding human blood, their savage guilt
 Charge on the goddess : for this truth I hold,
 None of the gods is evil or doth wrong.

CHORUS.

Strophe 1.

Ye rocks, ye clashing rocks, whose brow
 Frowns o'er the darkened deeps below,
 Whose wild inhospitable wave,
 From Argos flying and her native spring,
 The virgin once was known to brave,
 Tormented with the Bryze's madd'ning sting,

From Europe when the rude sea o'er
 She pass'd to Asia's adverse shore ;
 Who are these hapless youths, that dare to land,
 Leaving those soft irriguous meads,
 Where, his green margin fringed with reeds,
 Eurotas rolls his ample tide,
 Or Dirce's hallowed waters glide,
 And touch this barb'rous, stranger-hating strand,
 The altars where a virgin dew,
 And blood the pillared shrine imbrues ?

Strophe 2.

Did they with oars impetuous sweep,
 Rank answering rank, the foamy deep,
 And wing their bark with flying sails,
 To raise their humble fortune their desire,
 Eager to catch the rising gales,
 Their bosoms with the love of gain on fire ?
 For sweet is Hope, to man's fond breast,
 The hope of gain, insatiate guest,
 Though on her oft attends Misfortune's train ;
 For daring man she tempts to brave
 The dangers of the boist'rous wave,
 And leads him heedless of his fate
 Through many a distant, barb'rous state ;
 Vain his opinions, his pursuits are vain !
 Boundless o'er some her power is shown,
 But some her temp'rate influence own.

Antistrophe 1.

How did they pass the dang'rous rocks,
 Clashing with rude, tremendous shocks ?
 How pass the savage-howling shore
 Where once th' unhappy Phineus held his reign,
 And sleep affrighted flies its roar,
 Steering their rough course o'er this boist'rous main,
 Formed in a ring beneath whose waves
 The Nereid train in high-arched caves

Weave the light dance, and raise the sprightly song,
 Whilst whisp'ring in their swelling sails
 Soft Zephyrs breathe, or southern gales
 Piping amidst their tackling play,
 As their bark ploughs its wat'ry way
 Those hoary cliffs, the haunts of birds, along,
 To that wild strand, the rapid race
 Where once Achilles deigned to grace?

Antistrophe 2.

Oh that from Troy some chance would bear
 Leda's loved daughter, fatal fair
 (The royal virgin's vows are mine),
 That her bright tresses rolled in crimson dew,
 Her warm blood flowing at this shrine,
 The altar of the goddess might imbrue,
 And Vengeance, righteous to repay
 Her former mischiefs, seize her prey!
 But with what rapture should I hear his voice,
 If one this shore should reach from Greece,
 And bid the toils of slav'ry cease!
 Or might I in the hour of rest
 With pleasing dreams of Greece be blest,
 So in my house, my native land rejoice,
 In sleep enjoy the pleasing strain
 For happiness restored again!

IPH. But the two youths, their hands fast bound in chains,
 The late-seized victims to the goddess, come.
 Silence, my friends: for destined at the shrine
 To bleed the Grecian strangers near approach,
 And no false tidings did the herdsman bring.

CHOR. Goddess revered, if grateful to thy soul
 This state presents such sacrifice, accept
 The victims, which the custom of this land
 Gives thee, but deemed unholy by the Greeks.

IPHIGENIA, ORESTES, PYLADES, CHORUS.

IPH. No more ; that to the goddess each due rite
Be well performed shall be my care. Unchain
The strangers' hands, that, hallowed as they are,
They may no more be bound. Go you, prepare
Within the temple what the rites require.
Unhappy youths, what mother brought you forth ?
Your father who ? Your sister, if perchance
Ye have a sister, of what youths deprived ?
For brother she shall have no more. Who knows
Whom such misfortunes may attend ? For dark
What the gods will creeps on ; and none can tell
The ills to come : this fortune from the sight
Obscures. But, O unhappy strangers, say
Whence came you ? Sailed you long since for this land ?
But long will be your absence from your homes,
For ever, in the dreary realms below.

ORES. Lady, whoe'er thou art, why for these things
Dost thou lament ? Why mourn for ills, which soon
Will fall on us ? Him I esteem unwise,
Who, when he sees death near, tries to o'ercome
Its terrors with bewailings, without hope
Of safety : ill he adds to ill, and makes
His folly known, yet dies. We must give way
To fortune : therefore mourn not thou for us :
We know, we are acquainted with your rites.

IPH. Which of you by the name of Pylades
Is called ? This first it is my wish to know.

ORES. If aught of pleasure that may give thee, he.

IPH. A native of what Grecian state, declare.

ORES. What profit, knowing this, wouldst thou obtain ?

IPH. And are you brothers, of one mother born ?

ORES. Brothers by friendship, lady, not by birth.

IPH. To thee what name was by thy father given ?

ORES. With just cause I Unhappy might be called.

IPH. I ask not that ; to fortune that ascribe.

ORES. Dying unknown rude scoffs I shall avoid.

IPH. Wilt thou refuse ? Why are thy thoughts so high ?

ORES. My body thou mayst kill, but not my name.

IPH. Wilt thou not say a native of what state?

ORES. The question nought avails, since I must die.

IPH. What hinders thee from granting me this grace?

ORES. Th' illustrious Argos I my country boast.

IPH. By the gods, stranger, is thy birth from thence?

ORES. My birth is from Mycenæ, once the blest.

IPH. Dost thou an exile fly, or by what fate?

ORES. Of my free will, in part not free, I fly.

IPH. Wilt thou then tell me what I wish to know?

ORES. Whate'er is foreign to my private griefs.

IPH. To my dear wish from Argos art thou come.

ORES. Not to my wish : but if to thine, enjoy it.

IPH. Troy, whose fame spreads so wide, perchance thou knowst.

ORES. Oh that I ne'er had known her, e'en in dreams !

IPH. They say she is no more, by war destroyed.

ORES. It is so : you have heard no false reports.

IPH. Is Helena with Menelaus returned?

ORES. She is : and one I love her coming rues.

IPH. Where is she ? Me too she of old hath wronged.

ORES. At Sparta with her former lord she dwells.

IPH. By Greece, and not by me alone, abhorred !

ORES. I from her nuptials have my share of grief.

IPH. And are the Greeks, as fame reports, returned?

ORES. How briefly all things dost thou ask at once?

IPH. This favour, ere thou die, I wish t' obtain.

ORES. Ask then : since such thy wish, I will inform thee.

IPH. Calchas, a prophet, came he back from Troy?

ORES. He perished : at Mycenæ such the fame.

IPH. Goddess revered ! But doth Ulysses live?

ORES. He lives they say ; but is not yet returned.

IPH. Perish the wretch, nor see his country more !

ORES. Wish him not ill, for all with him is ill.

IPH. But doth the son of sea-born Thetis live?

ORES. He lives not : vain his nuptial rites at Aulis.

IPH. That all was fraud, as those, who felt it, say.

ORES. But who art thou, inquiring thus of Greece?

IPH. I am from thence, in early youth undone.

ORES. Thou hast a right t' inquire what there hath passed.

IPH. What knowst thou of the chief, men call the blest?

ORES. Who? Of the blest was not the chief I knew.

IPH. The royal Agememnon, son of Atreus.

ORES. Of him I know not, lady; cease to ask.

IPH. Nay, by the gods, tell me, and cheer my soul.

ORES. He's dead, th' unhappy chief; no single ill.

IPH. Dead! By what adverse fate? Oh wretched me!

ORES. Why mourn for this? How doth it touch thy breast?

IPH. The glories of his former state I mourn.

ORES. Dreadfully murdered by a woman's hand.

IPH. How wretched she that slew him, he thus slain!

ORES. Now then forbear: of him inquire no more.

IPH. This only; lives th' unhappy monarch's wife?

ORES. She, lady, is no more, slain by her son.

IPH. Alas, the ruined house! What his intent?

ORES. T' avenge on her his noble father slain.

IPH. An ill, but righteous deed, how justly done!

ORES. Though righteous, by the gods he is not blest.

IPH. Hath Agamemnon other offspring left?

ORES. He left one virgin daughter, named Electra.

IPH. Of her, that died a victim, is aught said?

ORES. This only, dead she sees the light no more.

IPH. Unhappy she! the father too, who slew her!

ORES. For a bad woman she unseemly died.

IPH. At Argos lives the murdered father's son?

ORES. Nowhere he lives, poor wretch, and everywhere.

IPH. False dreams, farewell: for nothing you import.

ORES. Nor are those gods, that have the name of wise.

Less false than fleeting dreams. In things divine,

And in things human, great confusion reigns.

One thing is left; that, not unwise of soul,

Obedient to the prophet's voice he perished;

For that he perished they, who know, report.

CHOR. What shall we know, what of our parents know?

If yet they live, or not, who can inform us?

IPH. Hear me: this converse prompts a thought, which
gives

Promise of good, ye youths of Greece, to you,

To these, and me ; thus may it well be done,
If willing to my purpose all assent.
Wilt thou, if I shall save thee, go for me
A messenger to Argos, to my friends
Charged with a letter, which a captive wrote,
Who pitied me, nor murd'rous thought my hand,
But that he died beneath the law, these rites
The goddess deeming just ? For from that hour
I have not found who might to Argos bear
Himself my message, back with life returned,
Or send to any of my friends my letter.
Thou therefore, since it seems thou dost not bear
Ill will to me, and dost Mycenæ know,
And those I wish t' address, be safe, and live,
No base reward for a light letter life
Receiving : and let him, since thus the state
Requires, without thee to the goddess bleed.

ORES. Virgin unknown, well hast thou said in all
Save this, that to the goddess he should bleed
A victim ; that were heavy grief indeed.
I steered the vessel to these ills, he sailed
Attendant on my toils : to gain thy grace
By his destruction, and withdraw myself
From sufferings, were unjust. Thus let it be :
Give him the letter ; to fulfil thy wish
To Argos he will bear it : me let him,
Who claims that office, slay. Base is his soul,
Who in calamities involves his friends,
And saves himself : this is a friend, whose life,
Dear to me as my own, I would preserve.

IPH. Excellent spirit ! From some noble root
It shows thee sprung, and to thy friends a friend
Sincere : of those that share my blood if one
Remains, such may he be ; for I am not
Without a brother, strangers, from my sight
Though distant now. Since then thy wish is such,
Him will I send to Argos : he shall bear
My letter, thou shalt die ; for this desire
Hath strong possession of thy noble soul.

ORES. Who then shall do the dreadful deed, and slay me?

IPH. I: to atone the goddess is my charge.

ORES. A charge unenvied, virgin, and unblest.

IPH. Necessity constrains: I must obey.

ORES. Wilt thou, a woman, plunge the sword in men?

IPH. No: but thy locks to sprinkle round is mine.

ORES. Whose then, if I may ask, the bloody deed?

IPH. To some within the temple this belongs.

ORES. What tomb is destined to receive my corse?

IPH. The hallowed fire within, and a dark cave.

ORES. Oh that a sister's hand might wrap these limbs!

IPH. Vain wish, unhappy youth, whoe'er thou art,

Hast thou conceived; for from this barbarous land

Far is her dwelling. Yet of what my power

Permits, since thou from Argos drawst thy birth,

No grace will I omit; for in thy tomb

I will place much of ornament, and pour

The dulcet labour of the yellow bee,

From mountain flowers extracted, on thy pyre.

But I will go, and from the temple bring

The letter: yet 'gainst me no hostile thought

Conceive. You that attend here, guard them well,

But without chains. To one, whom most I love

Of all my friends, to Argos I shall send

Tidings perchance unlooked for; and this letter,

Declaring those, whom he thought dead, alive,

Shall bear him an assured and solid joy.

PYLADES, ORESTES, CHORUS.

CHOR. Thee, o'er whose limbs the bloody drops shall soon
Be from the lavers sprinkled, I lament.

ORES. This asks no pity, strangers: but farewell.

CHOR. Thee, for thy happy fate we reverence, youth,
Who to thy country shalt again return.

PYL. To friends unwished, who leave their friends to die.

CHOR. Painful dismissal: Which shall I esteem
Most lost, alas, alas! which most undone!
For doubts my wav'ring judgment yet divide,
If chief for thee my sighs should swell, or thee.

ORES. By the gods, Pylades, is thy mind touched
In manner like as mine ?

PYL. I cannot tell ;
Nor to thy question have I to reply.

ORES. Who is this virgin ? With what zeal for Greece
Made she inquiries of us what the toils
At Troy, if yet the Grecians were returned,
And Calchas, from the flight of birds who formed
Presages of the future ? And she named
Achilles : with what tenderness bewailed
Th' unhappy Agamemnon ! Of his wife
She asked me, of his children : thence her race
This unknown virgin draws, an Argive ; else
Ne'er would she send this letter, nor have wished
To know these things, as if she bore a share,
If Argos flourish, in its prosperous state.

.. PYL. Such were my thoughts (but thou hast given them
words,

Preventing me), of every circumstance,
Save one : the fate of kings all know, whose state
Holds aught of rank. But pass to other thoughts.

ORES. What ? Share them ; so thou best mayst be in-
formed.

PYL. That thou shouldst die, and I behold this light,
Were base : with thee I sailed, with thee to die
Becomes me ; else shall I obtain the name
Of a vile coward through the Argive state,
And the deep vales of Phocis. Most will think,
For most think ill, that by betraying thee
I saved myself, home to return alone :
Or haply that I slew thee, and thy death
Contrived, that in the ruin of thy house
Thy empire I might grasp, to me devolved
As wedded to thy sister, now sole heir.
These things I fear, and hold them infamous.
Behoves me then with thee to die, with thee
To bleed a victim, on the pyre with thine
To give my body to the flames ; for this
Becomes me as thy friend, who dread reproach.

ORES. Speak more auspicious words: 'tis mine to bear
Ills that are mine : and single when the woe,
I would not bear it double. What thou sayst
Is vile and infamous, would light on me,
Should I cause thee to die, who in my toils
Hast borne a share : to me, who from the gods
Suffer afflictions which I suffer, death
Is not unwelcome : thou art happy, thine
An unpolluted and a prosperous house ;
Mine impious and unblest. If thou art saved,
And from my sister, whom I gave to thee
Betrothed thy bride, art blessed with sons, my name
May yet remain, nor all my father's house
In total ruin sink. Go then, and live ;
Dwell in the mansion of thy ancestors.
And when thou comst to Greece, to Argos famed
For warrior-steeds. by this right hand I charge thee
Raise a sepulchral mound, and on its place
A monument to me ; and to my tomb
Her tears, her tresses let my sister give :
And say that by an Argive woman's hand
I perished, to the altar's bloody rites
A hallowed victim. Never let thy soul
Betray my sister, for thou seest her state
Of friends how destitute, her father's house
How desolate. Farewell ! Of all my friends
Thee have I found most friendly, from my youth
Trained up with me, in all my sylvan sports
Thou dear associate, and through many toils
Thou faithful partner of my miseries.
Me Phœbus, though a prophet, hath deceived,
And meditating guile hath driven me far
From Greece, of former oracles ashamed ;
To him resigned, obedient to his words,
I slew my mother, and my meed is death.

PYL. Yes, I will raise thy tomb : thy sister's bed
I never will betray, unhappy youth,
For I will hold thee dearer when thou'rt dead,
Than while thou livest ; nor hath yet the voice

Of Phœbus quite destroyed thee, though thou stand
To slaughter nigh ; but sometimes mighty woes
Yield mighty changes, so when fortune wills.

ORES. Forbear : the words of Phœbus nought avail me ;
For passing from the shrine the virgin comes.

IPHIGENIA, ORESTES, PYLADES, CHORUS.

IPH. Go you away [*to the Guards*], and in the shrine prepare
What those, who o'er the rites preside, require.—
Here, strangers, is the letter folded close.
What I would further, hear : the mind of man
In dangers, and again from fear relieved
Of safety when assured, is not the same :
I therefore fear lest he, who should convey
To Argos this epistle, when returned
Safe to his native country will neglect
My letter, as a thing of little worth.

ORES. What wouldst thou then ? What is thy anxious
thought ?

IPH. This ; let him give an oath that he will bear
To Argos this epistle to those friends
To whom it is my ardent wish to send it.

ORES. And wilt thou in return give him thy oath ?

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

ORES. To send him from this barbarous shore alive.

IPH. That's just ; how should he bear my letter else ?

ORES. But will the monarch to these things assent ?

IPH. By me induced. Him I will see embarked.

ORES. Swear then ; and thou propose the righteous oath.

IPH. This, let him say, he to my friends will give.

PYL. Well ; to thy friends this letter I will give.

IPH. Thee will I send safe through the dark'ning rocks.

PYL. What god dost thou invoke t' attest thy oath ?

IPH. Diana, at whose shrine high charge I hold.

PYL. And I heaven's potent king, the awful Jove.

IPH. But if thou slight thy oath, and do me wrong ?

PYL. Never may I return. But if thou fail,
And save me not ?

IPH. Then never whilst I live

May I revisit my loved Argos more.

PYL. One thing, not mentioned, thy attention claims.

IPH. If honour owns it, this will touch us both.

PYL. Let me in this be pardoned, if the bark

Be lost, and with it in the surging waves

Thy letter perish, and I naked gain

The shore, no longer binding be the oath.

IPH. Knowst thou what I will do? For various ills

Arise to those that plough the dangerous deep.

What in this letter is contained, what here

Is written, all I will repeat to thee,

That thou mayst bear my message to my friends.

'Gainst danger thus I guard : if thou preserve

The letter, that though silent will declare

My purport : if it perish in the sea

Saving thyself my words too thou wilt save.

PYL. Well hast thou said touching the gods and me.

Say then, to whom at Argos shall I bear

This letter? What relate as heard from thee?

IPH. This message to Orestes, to the son

Of Agamemnon bear : "She, who was slain

At Aulis, Iphigenia, sends thee this :

She lives, but not to those who then were there."

ORES. Where is she? From the dead returned to life?

IPH. She whom thou seest ; but interrupt me not.

To Argos, O my brother, ere I die

Hear me from this barbaric land, and far

Remove me from this altar's bloody rites,

At which to slay the stranger is my charge.

ORES. What shall I say? Where are we, Pylades?

IPH. Or on thy house for vengeance will I call,

Orestes — Twice repeated, learn the name.

ORES. Ye gods !

IPH. In my cause why invoke the gods?

ORES. Nothing ; proceed. My thoughts were wand'ring

wide.

Strange things of thee unasked I soon shall learn.

IPH. Tell him the goddess saved me, in exchange

A hind presenting, which my father slew
 A victim, deeming that he plunged his sword
 Deep in my breast ; me in this land she placed.
 Thou hast my charge ; and this my letter speaks.

PYL. Oh thou hast bound me with an easy oath ;
 What I have sworn with honest purpose, long
 Defer I not, but thus discharge mine oath.
 To thee a letter from thy sister, lo,
 I bear, Orestes ; and I give it thee.

ORES. I do receive it, but forbear t' unclose
 Its foldings, greater pleasure first t' enjoy
 Than words can give. My sister, O most dear,
 Astonished e'en to disbelief I throw
 Mine arms around thee with a fond embrace,
 In transport at the wond'rous things I hear.

CHOR. Stranger, thou dost not well with hands profane
 Thus to pollute the priestess of the shrine,
 Grasping her garments hallowed from the touch.

ORES. My sister, my dear sister, from one sire,
 From Agamemnon sprung, turn not away,
 Holding thy brother thus beyond all hope.

IPH. My brother ! Thou my brother ! Wilt thou not
 Unsay these words ? At Argos far he dwells.

ORES. Thy brother, O unhappy ! is not there.

IPH. Thee did the Spartan Tyndarus bring forth ?

ORES. And from the son of Pelops' son I sprung.

IPH. What sayst thou ? Canst thou give me proof of
 this ?

ORES. I can : ask something of my father's house.

IPH. Nay, it is thine to speak, mine to attend.

ORES. First let me mention things which I have heard
 Electra speak : to thee is known the strife
 Which fierce 'twixt Atreus and Thyestes rose.

IPH. Yes, I have heard it ; for the golden ram.

ORES. In the rich texture didst thou not inweave it ?

IPH. O thou most dear ! Thou windest near my heart.

ORES. And image in the web th' averted sun ?

IPH. In the fine threads that figure did I work.

ORES. For Aulis did thy mother bathe thy limbs ?

IPH. I know it, to unlucky spousals led.

ORES. Why to thy mother didst thou send thy locks?

IPH. Devoted for my body to the tomb.

ORES. What I myself have seen I now as proofs
Will mention. In thy father's house hung high
Within thy virgin chambers the old spear
Of Pelops, which he brandished when he slew
Ænomaus, and won his beauteous bride,
The virgin Hippodamia, Pisa's boast.

IPH. O thou most dear, for thou art he, most dear
Acknowledged, thee, Orestes, do I hold,
From Argos, from thy country distant far?

ORES. And hold I thee, my sister, long deemed dead?
Grief mixed with joy, and tears, not taught by woe
To rise, stand melting in thy eyes and mine.

IPH. Thee yet an infant in thy nurse's arms
I left, a babe I left thee in the house.
Thou art more happy, O my soul, than speech
Knows to express. What shall I say? 'Tis all
Surpassing wonder and the power of words.

ORES. May we together from this hour be blest!

IPH. An unexpected pleasure, O my friends,
Have I received; yet fear I from my hands
Lest to the air it fly. O sacred hearths
Raised by the Cyclops! O my country, loved
Mycenæ! Now that thou didst give me birth
I thank thee; now I thank thee that my youth
Thou trainedst, since my brother thou hast trained,
A beam of light, the glory of his house.

ORES. We in our race are happy; but our life,
My sister, by misfortunes is unhappy.

IPH. I was, I know, unhappy when the sword
My father, frenetic, pointed at my neck.

ORES. Ah me! methinks e'en now I see thee there.

IPH. When to Achilles, brother, not a bride
I to the sacrifice by guile was led,
And tears and groans the altar compassed round.

ORES. Alas the lovers there!

IPH.

I mourned the deed

My father dared ; unlike a father's love,
Cruel, unlike a father's love, to me.

ORES. Ill deeds succeed to ill ; if thou hadst slain
Thy brother, by some god impelled, what griefs
Must have been thine at such a dreadful deed !

IPH. Dreadful, my brother, oh how dreadful ! Scarce
Hast thou escaped a foul, unhallowed death,
Slain by my hands. But how will these things end ?
What fortune will assist me ? What safe means
Shall I devise to send thee from this state,
From slaughter, to thy native land, to Argos,
Ere with thy blood the cruel sword be stained ?
This to devise, O my unhappy soul !
This to devise is thine. Wilt thou by land,
Thy bark deserted, speed thy flight on foot ?
Perils await thee 'midst these barbarous tribes
Through pathless wilds. And 'twixt the clashing rocks
Narrow the passage for the flying bark,
And long. Unhappy, ah unhappy me !
What god, what mortal, what unlooked-for chance
Will expedite our dangerous way, and show
Two sprung from Atreus a release from ills ?

CHOR. What having seen and heard I shall relate
Is marvellous, and passes fabling tales.

PYL. When after absence long, Orestes, friend
Meets friend, embraces will express their joy.
Behoves us now, bidding farewell to grief
And heedful to obtain the glorious name
Of safety, from this barbarous land to fly.
The wise, of fortune not regardless, seize
Th' occasion, and to happiness advance.

ORES. Well hast thou said ; and Fortune here, I ween,
Will aid us : to the firm and strenuous mind
More potent works the influence divine.

IPH. Nothing shall check, nothing restrain my speech :
First will I question thee what fortune waits
Electra : this to know would yield me joy.

ORES. With him she dwells, and happy is her life.

IPH. Whence then is he ? and from what father sprung ?

ORES. From Phocis : Strophius is his father named.

IPH. By Atreus' daughter to my blood allied ?

ORES. Nearly allied : my only faithful friend.

IPH. He was not then, me when my father slew.

ORES. Childless was Strophius for some length of time.

IPH. O thou, the husband of my sister, hail !

ORES. More than relation, my preserver too.

IPH. But to thy mother why that dreadful deed ?

ORES. Of that no more : t' avenge my father's death.

IPH. But for what cause did she her husband slay ?

ORES. Of her inquire not : thou wouldst blush to hear.

IPH. The eyes of Argos now are raised to thee.

ORES. There Menelaus is lord ; I, outcast, fly.

IPH. Hath he then wronged his brother's ruined house ?

ORES. Not so : the Furies fright me from the land.

IPH. The madness this, which seized thee on the shore ?

ORES. I was not first beheld unhappy there.

IPH. Stern powers ; they haunt thee for thy mother's blood.

ORES. And ruthless make me champ the bloody bit.

IPH. Why to this region hast thou steered thy course ?

ORES. Commanded by Apollo's voice I come.

IPH. With that intent ? if that may be disclosed.

ORES. I will inform thee, though to length of speech

This leads. When vengeance from my hands o'ertook

My mother's deed, foul deeds which let me pass

In silence, by the Furies' fierce assaults

To flight I was impelled : to Athens then

Apollo sent me, that, my cause there heard,

I might appease the vengeful powers, whose names

May not be uttered. The tribunal there

Is holy, which for Mars when stained with blood

Jove in old times established. There arrived

None willingly received me, by the gods

As one abhorred ; and they, who felt the touch

Of shame, the hospitable board alone

Yielded, and though one common roof beneath,

Their silence showing they disdained to hold

Converse with me, I took from them apart

A lone repast ; to each was placed a bowl
Of the same measure ; this they filled with wine,
And bathed their spirits in delight. Unmeet
I deemed it to express offence at those
Who entertained me, but in silence grieved,
Showing a cheer as though I marked it not,
And sighed for that I shed my mother's blood.
A feast, I hear, at Athens is ordained
From this my evil plight, e'en yet observed,
In which the equal-measured bowl then used
Is by that people held in honour high.
But when to the tribunal on the mount
Of Mars I came, one stand I took, and one
The eldest of the Furies opposite :
The cause was heard touching my mother's blood,
And Phœbus saved me by his evidence ;
Equal, by Pallas numbered, were the votes,
And I from doom of blood victorious freed.
Such of the Furies as there sate, appeased
By the just sentence, nigh the court resolved
To fix their seat ; but others, whom the law
Appeased not, with relentless tortures still
Pursued me, till I reached the hallowed soil
Of Phœbus. Stretched before his shrine I swore
Foodless to waste my wretched life away,
Unless the god, by whom I was undone,
Would save me. From the golden tripod burst
The voice divine, and sent me to this shore,
Commanding me to bear the image hence,
Which fell from Jove, and in th' Athenian land
To fix it. What th' oracular voice assigned
My safety, do thou aid. If we obtain
The statue of the goddess, I no more
With madness shall be tortured, but this arm
Shall place thee in my bark, which ploughs the waves
With many an oar, and to Mycenæ safe
Bear thee again. Show then a sister's love,
O thou most dear, preserve thy father's house,
Preserve me too ; for me destruction waits,

And all the race of Pelops, it we bear not
This heaven-descended image from the shrine.

CHOR. The anger of the gods hath raged severe,
And plunged the race of Tantalus in woes.

IPH. Ere thy arrival here, a fond desire
To be again at Argos, and to see
Thee, my loved brother, filled my soul. Thy wish
Is my warm wish, to free thee from thy toils,
And from its ruins raise my father's house ;
Nor harbour I 'gainst him, that slew me, thought
Of harsh resentment : from thy blood my hands
Would I keep pure, thy house I would preserve.
But from the goddess how may this be hid ?
The tyrant too I fear, when he shall find
The statue on its marble base no more.
What then from death will save me ? What excuse
Shall I devise ? Yet by one daring deed
Might these things be achieved, couldst thou bear hence
The image, me too in thy gallant bark
Placing secure, how glorious were th' attempt !
Me if thou join not with thee, I am lost
Indeed ; but thou, with prudent measures formed,
Return. I fly no danger, not e'en death,
Be death required, to save thee. No : the man
Dying is mourned as to his house a loss ;
But woman's weakness is of light esteem.

ORES. I would not be the murderer of my mother,
And of thee too ; sufficient is her blood.
No ; I will share thy fortune, live with thee,
Or with thee die : to Argos I will lead thee,
If here I perish not ; or dying here
Remain with thee. But what my mind suggests
Hear : if Diana were averse to this,
How could the voice of Phœbus from his shrine
Declare that to the state of Pallas hence
The statue of the goddess I should bear,
And see thy face ? All this together weighed
Gives hope of fair success, and our return.

IPH. But how effect it, that we neither d e.

And what we wish achieve? For our return
On this depends : this claims deliberate thought.

ORES. Have we not means to work the tyrant's death?

IPH. For strangers full of peril were th' attempt.

ORES. Thee would it save and me, it must be dared.

IPH. I could not : yet thy promptness I approve.

ORES. What if thou lodge me in the shrine concealed?

IPH. That in the shades of night we may escape?

ORES. Night is a friend to frauds, the light to truth.

IPH. Within are sacred guards ; we 'scape not them.

ORES. Ruin then waits us : how can we be saved?

IPH. I think I have some new and safe device.

ORES. What is it? Let me know : impart thy thought.

IPH. Thy sufferings for my purpose I will use.

ORES. To form devices quick is woman's wit.

IPH. And say, thy mother slain thou fledst from Argos.

ORES. If to aught good, avail thee of my ills.

IPH. Unmeet then at this shrine to offer thee.

ORES. What cause alleged? I reach not thine intent.

IPH. As now impure : when hallowed, I will slay thee.

ORES. How is the image thus more promptly gained?

IPH. Thee I will hallow in the ocean waves.

ORES. The statue we would gain is in the temple.

IPH. That, by thy touch polluted, I would cleanse.

ORES. Where? On the wat'ry margin of the main?

IPH. Where thy tall bark secured with cables rides.

ORES. And who shall bear the image in his hands?

IPH. Myself : profaned by any touch but mine.

ORES. What of this blood shall on my friend be charged?

IPH. His hands it shall be said, like thine are stained.

ORES. In secret this, or to the king disclosed?

IPH. With his assent ; I cannot hide it from him.

ORES. My bark with ready oars attends thee near.

IPH. That all be well appointed be thy charge.

ORES. One thing alone remains, that these conceal
Our purpose : but address them, teach thy tongue
Persuasive words : a woman hath the power
To melt the heart to pity : thus perchance
All things may to our warmest wish succeed.

IPH. Ye train of females, to my soul most dear,
 On you mine eyes are turned, on you depends
 My fate: with prosperous fortune to be blest,
 Or to be nothing, to my country lost,
 Of a dear kinsman and a much loved brother
 Deprived. This plea I first would urge, that we
 Are women, and have hearts by nature form'd
 To love each other, of our mutual trusts
 Most firm preservers. Touching our design
 Be silent, and assist our flight; nought claims
 More honour than the faithful tongue. You see
 How the same fortune links us three, most dear
 Each to the other, to revisit safe
 Our country, or to die. If I am saved,
 That thou mayst share my fortune, I to Greece
 Will bring thee safe: but thee by this right hand,
 Thee I conjure, and thee; by this loved cheek
 Thee, by thy knees, by all that in your house
 Is dearest to you, father, mother, child,
 If you have children. What do you reply?
 Which of you speaks assent? Or which dissents?
 But be you all assenting: for my plea
 If you approve not, ruin falls on me,
 And my unhappy brother too must die.

CHOR. Be confident, loved lady, and consult
 Only thy safety: all thou givst in charge,
 Be witness, mighty Jove, I will conceal.

IPH. Oh for this generous promise be you blest!
 To enter now the temple be thy part,
 And thine: for soon the monarch of the land
 Will come, inquiring if the strangers yet
 Have bowed their necks as victims at the shrine.—
 Goddess revered, who in the dreadful bay
 Of Aulis from my father's slaughtering hand
 Didst save me, save me now, and these; through thee
 Else will the voice of Phœbus be no more
 Held true by mortals: from this barbarous land
 To Athens go propitious; here to dwell
 Beseems thee not: thine be a polished state!

CHORUS.

Strophe 1.

O bird, that round each craggy height
 Projecting o'er the sea below,
 Wheelest thy melancholy flight,
 Thy song attuned to notes of woe ;
 The wise thy tender sorrows own,
 Which thy lost lord unceasing moan :
 Like thine, sad Halcyon, be my strain,
 A bird that have no wings to fly :
 With fond desire for Greece I sigh,
 And for my much loved social train ;
 Sigh for Diana, pitying maid,
 Who joys to rove o'er Cynthus' heights,
 Or in the branching laurel's shade,
 Or in the soft-haired palm delights,
 Or the hoar olive's sacred boughs,
 Lenient of sad Latona's woes,
 Or in the lake that rolls its wave
 Where swans their plumage love to lave,
 Then to the Muses soaring high,
 The homage pay of melody.

Antistrophe 1.

Ye tears, what frequent-falling showers
 Rolled down these cheeks in streams of woe,
 When in the dust my country's towers
 Lay levelled by the conquering foe ;
 And, to their spears a prey, their oars
 Brought me to these barbaric shores !
 For gold exchanged, a traffic base,
 No vulgar slave, the task is mine
 Here at Diana's awful shrine,
 Who loves the woodland hind to chase.
 The virgin priestess to attend,
 Daughter of rich Mycenæ's lord ;
 At other shrines her wish to bend,
 Where bleeds the victim less abhorred :

No respite to her griefs she knows,
Not so the heart inured to woes,
As trained to sorrow's rigid lore :
Now comes a change, it mourns no more.
But to long bliss when ill succeeds
The anguished heart for ever bleeds.

Strophe 2.

Thee, loved virgin, freed from fear
Home the Argive bark shall bear :
Mountain Pan, with shrilling strain,
To the oars that dash the main
In just cadence well agreed,
Shall accord his wax-joined reed :
Phœbus, with a prophet's fire
Sweeping o'er his seven-stringed lyre,
And his voice attuning high
To the swelling harmony,
Thee shall guide the wild waves o'er
To the soft Athenian shore.
Leaving me, thy oars shall sweep
Eager o'er the foaming deep ;
Thou shalt catch the rising gales
Swelling in thy firm-bound sails,
And thy bark in gallant pride
Light shall o'er the billows glide.

Antistrophe 2.

Might I through the lucid air
Fly where rolls yon flaming car,
O'er these loved and modest bowers,
Where I passed my youthful hours,
I would stay my weary flight,
Wave no more my pennons light,
But amidst the virgin band,
Once my loved companions, stand :
Once 'midst them my charms could move,
Blooming then, the flames of love,

When the mazy dance I trod,
 Whilst with joy my mother glowed ;
 When to vie in grace was mine,
 And in splendid robes to shine ;
 For with radiant tints imprest
 Glowed for me the gorgeous vest ;
 And these tresses gave new grace,
 As their ringlets shade my face.

THOAS, IPHIGENIA, CHORUS.

THO. Where is the Grecian lady, to whose charge
 This temple is committed ? Have her rites
 Hallowed the strangers ? Do their bodies burn
 In the recesses of the sacred shrine ?

CHOR. She comes, and will inform thee, king, of all.

THO. Daughter of Agamemnon, what means this !
 The statue of the goddess in thine arms
 Why dost thou bear from its firm base removed ?

IPH. There in the portal, monarch, stay thy step.

THO. What of strange import in the shrine hath chanced ?

IPH. Things ominous : that word I, holy, speak.

THO. To what is tuned thy proem ? Plainly speak.

IPH. Not pure the victims, king, you lately seized.

THO. What showed thee this ? Or speakest thou but thy
 thought ?

IPH. Back turned the sacred image on its base.

THO. Spontaneous turned, or by an earthquake moved ?

IPH. Spontaneous ; and, averted, closed its eyes.

THO. What was the cause ? The blood-stained strangers' guilt ?

IPH. That and nought else ; for horrible their deeds.

THO. What, have they slain some Scythian on the shore ?

IPH. They came polluted with domestic blood.

THO. What blood ? I have a strong desire to know.

IPH. They slew their mother with confederate swords.

THO. O Phœbus ! This hath no barbarian dared.

IPH. All Greece indignant chased them from her realms.

THO. Bearst thou for this the image from the shrine ?

IPH. To the pure air, from stain of blood removed.

THO. By what means didst thou know the strangers' guilt?

IPH. I learned it as the statue started back.

THO. Greece trained thee wise: this well hast thou discerned.

IPH. Now with sweet blandishments they soothe my soul.

THO. Some glozing tale from Argos telling thee?

IPH. I have one brother: he, they say, lives happy.

THO. That thou mayst save them for their pleasing news?

IPH. And that my father lives, by fortune blessed.

THO. But on the goddess well thy thoughts are turned.

IPH. I hate all Greece; for it hath ruined me.

THO. What with the strangers, say then, should be done?

IPH. The law ordained in reverence we must hold.

THO. Are then thy lavers ready, and the sword?

IPH. First I would cleanse them with ablutions pure.

THO. In fountain waters, or the ocean wave?

IPH. All man's pollutions doth the salt sea cleanse.

THO. More holy to the goddess will they bleed.

IPH. And better what I have in charge advance.

THO. Doth not the wave e'en 'gainst the temple beat?

IPH. This requires solitude: more must I do.

THO. Lead where thou wilt: on secret rites I pry not.

IPH. The image of the goddess I must cleanse.

THO. If it be stained with touch of mother's blood,

IPH. I could not else have borne it from its base.

THO. Just is thy provident and pious thought:

For this by all the state thou art revered.

IPH. Knowst thou what next I would?

THO. 'Tis thine thy will

To signify.

IPH. Give for these strangers chains.

THO. To what place can they fly?

IPH. A Grecian knows

Nought faithful.

THO. Of my train go some for chains.

IPH. Let them lead forth the strangers.

THO. Be it so.

IPH. And veil their faces.

THO. From the sun's bright beams?

IPH. Some of thy train send with me.

THO. These shall go

Attending thee.

IPH. One to the city send.

THO. With what instructions charged?

IPH. That all remain

Within their houses.

THO. That the stain of blood

They meet not?

IPH. These things have pollution in them.

THO. Go thou, and bear th' instructions.

IPH. That none come

In sight.

THO. How wisely careful for the city!

IPH. Warn our friends most.

THO. This speaks thy care for me.

IPH. Stay thou before the shrine.

THO. To what intent?

IPH. Cleanse it with lustral fires.

THO. That thy return

May find it pure?

IPH. But when the strangers come

Forth from the temple.

THO. What must I then do?

IPH. Spread o'er thine eyes a veil.

THO. That I receive not

Pollution?

IPH. Tedious if my stay appear.

THO. What bounds may be assigned?

IPH. Deem it not strange.

THO. At leisure what the rites require perform.

IPH. May this lustration as I wish succeed.

THO. Thy wish is mine.

IPH. But from the temple, see,

The strangers come, the sacred ornaments,

The hallowed lambs, for I with blood must wash

This execrable blood away, the light

Of torches, and what else my rites require

To purify these strangers to the goddess.

But to the natives of this land my voice
Proclaims, from this pollution far remove,
Art thou attendant at the shrine, who liftest
Pure to the gods thy hands, or nuptial rites
Dost thou prepare, or pregnant matron, hence
Be gone, that this defilement none may touch.
Thou, daughter of Latona and high Jove,
O royal virgin, if I cleanse the stain
Of these, and where I ought with holy rites
Address thee, thou shalt hold thy residence
In a pure mansion ; we too shall be blest !
More though I speak not, goddess, unexpressed
All things to thee and to the gods are known.

CHOR. Latona's glorious offspring claims the song,

Born the hallowed shades among
Where fruitful Delos winds her valleys low ;
Bright-haired Phœbus skilled t' inspire
Raptures as he sweeps the lyre,
And she that glories in th' unerring bow.

From the rocky ridges steep,
At whose foot the hushed waves sleep,
Left their far famed native shore,
Them th' exulting mother bore
To Parnassus, on whose heights
Bacchus shouting holds his rites ;
Glitt'ring in the burnished shade,
By the laurel's branches made,
Where th' enormous dragon lies,
Brass his scales, and flame his eyes,
Earth-born monster, that around
Rolling guards th' oracular ground :
Him, while yet a sportive child
In his mother's arms that smiled,
Phœbus slew, and seized the shrine
Whence proceeds the voice divine ;
On the golden tripod placed,
Throne by falsehood ne'er disgraced,
Where Castalia's pure stream flows,
He the fates to mortals shows.

But when Themis, whom of yore
 Earth, her fruitful mother, bore,
 From her hallowed seat he drove,
 Earth t' avenge her daughter strove,
 Forming visions of the night,
 Which, in rapt dreams hov'ring light,
 All that Time's dark volumes hold
 Might to mortal sense unfold,
 When in midnight's sable shades
 Sleep the silent couch invades :
 Thus did Earth her vengeance boast.
 His prophetic honours lost,
 Royal Phœbus speeds his flight
 To Olympus, on whose height
 At the throne of Jove he stands,
 Stretching forth his little hands,
 Suppliant that the Pythian shrine
 Feel no more the wrath divine ;
 That the goddess he appease,
 That her nightly visions cease.
 Jove with smiles beheld his son
 Early thus address his throne,
 Suing with ambitious pride
 O'er the rich shrine to preside :
 He assenting bowed his head.
 Straight the nightly visions fled ;
 And prophetic dreams no more
 Hovered slumb'ring mortals o'er :
 Now to Phœbus given again
 All his honours pure remain ;
 Votaries distant regions send
 His frequented throne t' attend,
 And the firm decrees of fate
 On his faithful voice await.

MESSENGER, CHORUS.

MESS. Say you, that keep the temple and attend
 The altar, where is Thoas, Scythia's king ?
 Open these strong-compacted gates, and call
 Forth from the shrine the monarch of the land.

CHOR. Wherefore? At thy command if I must speak.

MESS. The two young men are gone, through the device
Of Agamemnon's daughter; from this land
They fly, and in their Grecian galley placed
The sacred image of the goddess bear.

CHOR. Incredible thy tale: but whom thou seekest
The monarch from the temple went in haste.

MESS. Whither? For what is doing he should know.

CHOR. We know not: but go thou and seek for him;
Where'er thou find him, thou wilt tell him this.

MESS. See, what a faithless race you women are!
In all that hath been done you have a part.

CHOR. Sure thou art mad? What with the strangers'
flight

Have we to do? But wilt thou not with all
The speed thou mayst go to the monarch's house?

* MESS. Not till I first am well informed if here
Within the temple be the king or not.
Unbar the gates: to you within I speak;
And tell your lord that at the portal here
I stand, and bring him tidings of fresh ills.

THOAS, MESSENGER, CHORUS.

THO. Who at the temple of the goddess dares
This clamour raise, and thund'ring at the gates
Strikes terror through the ample space within?

MESS. With falsehoods would these women drive me hence,
Without to seek thee; thou wast in the shrine.

THO. With what intent? Or what advantage sought?

MESS. Of these hereafter: what more urgent now
Imports thee, hear: the virgin, in this place
Presiding at the altars, from this land
Is with the strangers fled, and bears with her
The sacred image of the goddess: all
Of her ablutions but a false pretence.

THO. How sayst thou? What is her accursed design?

MESS. To save Orestes: this too will amaze thee.

THO. Whom? What Orestes? Clytemnestra's son?

MESS. Him at the altar hallowed now to bleed.

THO. Portentous ! For what less can it be called ?

MESS. Think not on that, but hear me ; with deep thought

Reflect ; weigh well what thou shalt hear, devise
By what pursuit to reach and seize the strangers.

THO. Speak : thou advisest well ; the sea though nigh,
They fly not so as to escape my spear.

MESS. When to the shore we came, where stationed rode
The galley of Orestes by the rocks
Concealed, to us, whom thou hadst sent with her
To hold the strangers' chains, the royal maid
Made signs that we retire, and stand aloof,
As if with secret rites she would perform
The purposed expiation : on she went,
In her own hands holding the strangers' chains
Behind them : not without suspicion this,
Yet by thy servants, king, allowed. At length,
That we might deem her in some purpose high
Employed, she raised her voice, and chaunted loud
Barbaric strains, as if with mystic rites
She cleansed the stain of blood. When we had sate
A tedious while, it came into our thought
That from their chains unloosed the stranger youths
Might kill her, and escape by flight ; yet fear
Of seeing what we ought not kept us still
In silence ; but at length we all resolved
To go, though not permitted, where they were.
There we behold the Grecian bark, with oars
Well furnished, winged for flight ; and at their seats
Grasping their oars were fifty rowers ; free
From chains beside the stern the two youths stood.
Some from the prow relieved the keel with poles ;
Some weighed the anchors up ; the climbing ropes
Some hastened, through their hands the cables drew,
Launched the light bark, and gave her to the main.
But when we saw their treacherous wiles, we rushed
Heedless of danger, seized the priestess, seized
The halsers, hung upon the helm, and strove
To rend the rudder-bands away. Debate

Now rose : " What mean you, sailing o'er the seas,
The statue and the priestess from the land
By stealth conveying? Whence art thou, and who,
That bearest her, like a purchased slave, away?"
He said : " I am her brother, be of this
Informed, Orestes, son of Agamemnon ;
My sister, so long lost, I bear away,
Recovered here." But nought the less for that
Held we the priestess, and by force would lead
Again to thee ; hence dreadful on our cheeks
The blows ; for in their hands no sword they held,
Nor we ; but many a rattling stroke the youths
Dealt with their fists, against our sides and breasts
Their arms fierce darting, till our battered limbs
Were all disabled. Now with dreadful marks
Disfigured up the precipice we fly,
Some bearing on their heads, some in their eyes
The bloody bruises ; standing on the heights
Our fight was safer, and we hurled at them
Fragments of rocks ; but standing on the stern
The archers with their arrows drove us thence.
And now a swelling wave rolled in, which drove
The galley tow'ards the land ; the sailors feared
The sudden swell. On his left arm sustained
Orestes bore his sister through the tide,
Mounted the bark's tall side, and on the deck
Safe placed her, and Diana's holy image
Which fell from heaven : from the midship his voice
He sent aloud, " Ye youths, that in this bark
From Argos ploughed the deep, now ply your oars,
And dash the billows till they foam : those things
Are ours, for which we swept the Euxine sea,
And steered our course within its clashing rocks."
They gave a cheerful shout, and with their oars
Dashed the salt wave. The galley, whilst it rode
Within the harbour, worked its easy way ;
But having passed its mouth, the swelling flood
Rolled on it, and with sudden force the wind
Impetuous rising drove it back ; their oars

They slacked not, stoutly struggling 'gainst the wave ;
But tow'rds the land the reflux flood impelled
The galley ; then the royal virgin stood,
And prayed : " O daughter of Latona, save me,
Thy priestess save ; from this barbaric land
To Greece restore me, and forgive my thefts ;
For thou, O goddess, dost thy brother love,
Deem then that I love those allied to me."

The mariners responsive to her prayer
Shouted loud pæans, and their naked arms,
Each cheering each, to their stout oars apply.
But nearer, and yet nearer to the rock
The galley drove ; some rushed into the sea,
Some strained the ropes that bind the loosened sails.
Straight was I hither sent to thee, O king,
T' inform thee of these accidents. But haste,
Take chains and gyves with thee ; for if the flood
Subside not to a calm, there is no hope
Of safety to the strangers. Be assured
That Neptune, awful monarch of the main,
Remembers Troy, and, hostile to the race
Of Pelops, will deliver to thy hands,
And to thy people, as is meet, the son
Of Agamemnon ; and bring back to thee
His sister, who the goddess hath betrayed,
Unmindful of the blood at Aulis shed.

CHOR. Unhappy Iphigenia, thou must die,
Thy brother too must die, if thou again,
Seized in thy flight, to thy lord's hands shalt come.

TIIO. Inhabitants of this barbaric land,
Will you not rein your steeds, will you not fly
Along the shore, to seize whate'er this skiff
Of Greece casts forth, and for your goddess roused
Hunt down these impious men ? Will you not launch
Instant your swift-oared barks, by sea, by land
To catch them, from the rugged rock to hurl
Their bodies, or impale them on the stake ?
But for you women, in these dark designs
Accomplices, hereafter, as I find

Convenient leisure, I will punish you.
Th' occasion urges now, and gives no pause.

MIN. Whither, O royal Thoas, dost thou lead
This vengeful chase? Attend; Minerva speaks.
Cease thy pursuit, and stop this rushing flood
Of arms; for hither by the fateful voice
Of Phœbus came Orestes, warned to fly
The anger of the Furies, to convey
His sister to her native Argos back,
And to my land the sacred image bear.
Thoas, I speak to thee: him, whom thy rage
Would kill, Orestes, on the wild waves seized,
Neptune, to do me grace, already wafts
On the smooth sea, the swelling surges calmed.
And thou, Orestes (for my voice thou hearest,
Though distant far), to my commands attend:
Go, with the sacred image, which thou bearest,
And with thy sister: but when thou shalt come
To Athens, built by gods, there is a place
On th' extreme borders of the Attic land,
Close neighb'ring to Carystia's craggy height,
Sacred, my people call it Alæ: there
A temple raise, and fix the statue there,
Which from the Tauric goddess shall receive
Its name, and from thy toils, which thou, through Greece
Driven by the Furies' madd'ning stings, hast borne;
And mortals shall in future times with hymns
The Tauric goddess there, Diana, hail.
And be this law established, when the feast
For thy deliverance from this shrine is held,
To a man's throat that they apply the sword,
And draw the blood, in memory of these rites,
That of her honours nought the goddess lose.
Thou, Iphigenia, on the hallowed heights
Of Brauron on this goddess shalt attend
Her priestess, dying shalt be there interred,
Graced with the honours of the gorgeous vests
Of finest texture, in their houses left
By matrons who in childbed pangs expired.

These Grecian dames back to their country lead,
I charge thee : justice this return demands ;
For I saved thee, when on the mount of Mars
The votes were equal : and from that decree,
The shells in number equal, still absolve.
But, son of Agamemnon, from this land
Thy sister bear ; nor, Thoas, be thou angry.

THO. Royal Minerva, he that hears the gods
Commanding, and obeys not, is unwise.
My anger 'gainst Orestes flames no more,
Gone though he be, and bears with him away
The statue of the goddess, and his sister.
Have mortals glory 'gainst the powerful gods
Contending ? Let them go, and to thy land
The sacred image bear, and fix it there ;
Good fortune go with them. To favoured Greece
These dames, at thy high bidding, I will send.
My arms will I restrain, which I had raised
Against the strangers, and my swift-oared barks,
Since, potent goddess, this is pleasing to thee.

MIN. I praise thy resolution ; for the power
Of fate o'er thee and o'er the gods prevails.
Breathe soft ye fav'ring gales, to Athens bear
These sprung from Agamemnon ; on their course
Attending I will go, and heedful save
My sister's sacred image. You too go [*to the CHORUS*]
Prosperous, and in the fate that guards you blest.

CHOR. O thou, among th' immortal gods revered,
And mortal men, Minerva, we will do
As thou commandest ; for with transport high,
Exceeding hope, our ears receive thy words.
O Victory, I revere thy awful power :
Guard thou my life, nor ever cease to crown me !

THE TROJAN DAMES.

A MIGHTY kingdom overturned, its imperial city wasted and levelled with the ground, its venerable king, his numerous sons, and all the brave defenders of their country fallen by the sword, their unhappy wives captive and assigned to slavery in a foreign land, are events of such complicated misery as must deeply affect the human heart. Euripides knew how to give these woes their full force : his tender and pathetic spirit raises here the most exquisite sensations of pity, which increase to terror, and swell on to distraction. One would have thought that the real existence of evils could not be greater, and that the imagination could not form a deeper distress than that of Hecuba on her first appearance, lying on the ground before the tent of Agamemnon : but every new scene presents her with some new cause of grief of the most affecting nature ; the gradation is astonishing ; and the whole drama resembles a terrible storm whose fury falls upon some magnificent edifice. At first it is awful and alarming ; but its violence increases, every flash of lightning sets some part of the structure on fire, every clap of thunder shakes some part to the ground, till at length the whole is one dreadful scene of tempest, flames, and ruin.

The scene is in the plains of Troy, before the tent of Agamemnon.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

NEPTUNE.

MINERVA.

HECUBA.

CASSANDRA

ANDROMACHE,

HELENA.

MENELAUS.

TALTHYBIUS.

CHORUS OF TROJAN DAMES.

NEPTUNE.

FROM the vast depths of the Ægean sea,
 Where many a maze with graceful-moving feet
 Unwinds the choir of Nereids, Neptune comes.
 For from the time when Phœbus and myself
 Raised on this land the rampired towers of Troy
 With exact skill, my mind hath never lost
 Its fondness for this city of the Phrygians,
 Which now in ruins by the arms of Greece
 Smokes on the ground : for by Minerva's art
 Epœus of Parnassian Phocis framed
 A horse, whose hollow womb was full of arms,
 And sent within the walls th' enormous bulk
 Big with destruction ; hence in after times
 It shall be called "The Horse of Spears," the spear
 In its dark sides concealed. The sacred groves
 Are desolate, the temples of the gods
 Flooded with gore, and Priam at the steps
 Ascending to the shrine of guardian Jove
 Hath fall'n and died : much gold, and Phrygian spoils
 Are to the Grecian vessels borne ; the troops
 Expect the fav'ring gale to breathe from shore,
 That after ten long years, which they have passed
 In arms to lay this city low, with joy
 They may behold their children and their wives.
 But I, by Argive Juno, mighty queen,
 O'erpowered, and Pallas, whose united force
 Hath crushed the Phrygians, quit the once famed towers

Of Ilium, and my altars : for when once
 Wide through a city desolation spreads,
 The hallowed rites, the worship of the gods
 Must be neglected. Now with loud laments
 Of captive dames to their new lords assigned
 Scamander's banks resound : th' Arcadian some,
 Some the Thessalian bands, and some the sons
 Of Theseus, chiefs of Athens, as decides
 The lot, obtain. Beneath this roof are those
 Of Troy's unhappy daughters by no lot
 Disposed, but to the leaders of the host
 Selected ; these among, by righteous doom
 A captive led, the Spartan Helena.
 And Hecuba, if any wish to see
 Her and her wretched state, before the gates
 Lies stretched, and pours an ample flood of tears ;
 And she hath ample cause, for at the tomb
 Raised to Achilles hath her daughter died,
 How piteously ! the poor Polyxena ;
 Priam is fall'n, her sons are fall'n ; and her,
 Cassandra, whom the royal Phœbus gave
 To rove a virgin, and declare the fates,
 To secret nuptials Agamemnon leads
 Perforce, religion and the gods despised.
 But, O my town once flourishing, once crowned
 With beauteous-structured battlements, farewell !
 Had not Minerva sunk thee in the dust,
 On thy firm base e'en now thou mightst have stood.

NEPTUNE, MINERVA.

MIN. Is it permitted me, all former thoughts
 Of variance laid aside, t' address a god
 Nearest by lineage to my sire allied,
 Of mighty power, and honoured by the gods ?

NEPT. It is permitted thee : for kindred blood,
 Royal Minerva, hath a potent charm
 To reconcile the alienated mind.

MIN. Thy gentleness in anger claims my praise.
 What I would offer, king, imports us both.

NEPT. Hast thou of new aught from the gods to speak,
From Jove, or other of the heavenly powers?

MIN. No: for the sake of Troy I to thy power
Am come, to use it in one common cause.

NEPT. Dost thou, thy former hostile thoughts appeased,
Pity its ruins blazing in the flames?

MIN. First speak to this: wilt thou with joint design,
Joint labour, aid in what I wish to do?

NEPT. Most willingly: but wish to know thy purpose,
If to the Trojans friendly, or to Greece.

MIN. The Trojans hated once, would I delight,
To th' Argive host embittering their return.

NEPT. Why have thy measures this quick change, in love
Or hate, whiche'er betides, too violent?

MIN. Me knowst thou not how outraged, and my shrine?

NEPT. I know: Cassandra Ajax dragged by force.

MIN. Nor punished by the Grecians, nor reprov'd.

NEPT. Yet by thy power these Grecians wasted Troy.

MIN. Therefore with thee I now would work them woe.

NEPT. Thy purpose finds me prompt: what wouldst thou do?

MIN. With rig'rous vengeance sadden their return.

NEPT. On land, or when they plough the briny wave?

MIN. When o'er the deep they steer their course for Greece,
The stormy rain, the fierce-descending hail,
And the dark fury of tempestuous winds
My sire will send: to me, his word is passed,
His fiery thunder will he give, to hurl
Against the Grecians, and with lightning flames
To burn their ships. Do thou, for thine the power,
With foaming billows vast and whirling gulfs
Tempest the vexed Ægean; with their dead
Fill the Eubœan bay: that they may learn
Henceforth with reverence to approach my shrines,
And pay due honours to the other gods.

NEPT. It shall be so: few words this favour needs.
With tempests will I chafe th' Ægean sea;
The shores of Mycone, the Delian rocks,
Scyrus, and Lemnus, and the rugged brow
Of steep Caphareus shall with numerous dead

Be covered. But to high Olympus go,
The bolts of thunder from thy father's hands
Receive: then wait till they unmoor their fleet.
Unwise is he, whoe'er of mortals storms
Beleaguered towns, and crushed in ruins wastes
The temples of the gods, the hallowed tombs
Where sleep the dead; for he shall perish soon.

HEC. Rise, thou unhappy; from the cold ground raise
Thy head, thy neck. This is no longer Troy,
In Troy we rule no longer. Ah the change
Of fortune! Bear the change; sail with the tide.
With fortune sail, nor turn the prow of life
Against the wave, nor struggle with thy fate.—
Oh woe, woe, woe! Why is it not allowed
A wretch like me to moan my country lost,
My children, and my husband! Thou high boast
Of noble ancestry, how art thou shrunk,
How vanished! What shall I in silence hold?
Or what not hold in silence? What bewail?
In what a woful state are these poor limbs
Reclined, how ill on this hard bed now stretched?
Ah me, my head! Ah me, my temples! Ah,
My sides! O how I long to change my place,
To roll, and roll, and shift from side to side,
Proofs of the restless torture of my mind!
E'en here th' unhappy have a Muse, to give
These woes a voice, far other than the notes
To joy and dance attuned. Ye wingéd barks,
Which through the purple seas and sheltered bays
Of Greece, whilst to the inauspicious sound
Of flutes and oaten pipes your oars kept time,
With all your streamers flying, proudly sailed
To sacred Ilium, to the ports of Troy
Bringing the hated wife of Menelaus,
A foul disgrace to Castor, and a stain
Dishonouring Eurotas. She hath slain
Priam, the reverend sire of fifty children,
And in this gulf of misery hath plunged
The wretched Hecuba. My seat is now—

Ah, what a seat !—at Agamemnon's tent ;
And I am led, in my old age am led
A captive from my house, of its hoar hairs,
Sad argument of grief, this head despoiled.
But, O ye wretched wives of Trojans once
Valiant in war, ye virgins, and ye brides
Torn from your loves, Troy smokes : let us lament ;
And, as the parent bird that o'er her young
Swells her shrill notes, I will begin the strain,
Not such as in my happier days I raised,
Leaning on Priam's sceptre, when my foot
In Phrygian measures, by the Graces taught,
Led to th' immortal gods the festive dance.

HECUBA, CHORUS.

CHOR. Why, Hecuba, these cries, these cries of woe ?
Why dost thou raise these loud laments ? I hear
The wailings, which thou utterest, o'er these roofs
Resound ; and terror strikes each Trojan dame,
That in this tent bemoans her slavery.

HEC. O children, in the vessels of the Greeks
The hand now grasps the oar. O wretched me,
What will they do ? Will they with spreading sails
Far from my country bear my hapless age ?

CHOR. I know not ; but my mind presages ill.
Alas, alas, distracted with our woes,
Soon we shall hear, " Ye Trojan dames, come forth.
The Grecians are preparing their return."

HEC. Ah, send not now the mad Cassandra to me,
That shame to Greece : her ravings to my woe
Would add fresh woe. O Troy, unhappy Troy,
Thou art no more. Unhappy they who leave thee,
Unhappy are the living and the slain.

CHOR. Ah me ! With trembling foot I leave the tent
Of Agamemnon, from thee, queen, to learn
Whether the sentence of the Greeks be passed
To kill me, wretched me ; or in the ships
The sailors are prepared to plough the main.

HEC. Early, my child, my soul with terror struck,
Was I brought hither; from the Grecians now
A herald comes informing me to whom
I am assigned—ah wretched me!—a slave.

CHOR. Soon will thy lot be cast.

HEC. Ah me! Ah me!

CHOR. Me, miserable me, what Argive leads,
Or who of Phthia's vales, or of the isles
Encircled by the ocean, far from Troy?

HEC. To whom am I, unhappy, in what land
Assigned a slave, useless, worn out with age,
The wretched form of one that is no more,
A lifeless image on a monument?

To keep their gates will they assign my charge?
Or on their children shall my office be
T' attend, at Troy with royal honours graced?

CHOR. Ah, with what plaints thy miseries dost thou scan?

HEC. No more these hands in the Idæan looms
The shuttle with alternate cast shall throw:
No more my children's sportive youth I see;
Nor, as in youth, shall I to lighter toils
Be destined, or approach some Grecian's bed:
The night itself and fortune cheerless frowns.
But at Pirene's fount shall be my task,
My wretched task, to draw its sacred streams.

CHOR. Oh, to that happy country might we come,
O'er which th' illustrious Theseus held his reign!

HEC. But never to Therapnæ, hated town
Of Helen, seated where Eurotas whirls
His eddying stream; exposed my servile state
To Menelaus, who wasted sacred Troy.
The lovely tract, through which Penæus flows,
Delightful base, from which his awful height
Olympus rears, in wealth, so fame reports,
Abounds, and boasts its blooming fruitfulness.
This, next the honoured and divine domains
Where Theseus reigned, would be most pleasing to me.
Much have I heard of the Etnæan coast
Sacred to Vulcan, to the Punic shore

That rises opposite, the mighty mother
 Of the Sicilian mountains, where the wreath
 Blooms ever fresh ; and of the neighbouring land,
 Sweet habitation in th' Ionian sea,
 Irriguous with the beauteous-flowing stream
 Of Crathis, which the yellow tresses gilds,
 And blessings from its sacred fountains pours
 Through a rich land, that boasts a generous race.

CHOR. But from the Grecian host a herald comes,
 Fraught with fresh tidings : hasty is his step.
 What brings he ? what announces ? For in truth
 We of the Dorian land e'en now are slaves.

TALTHYBIUS, HECUBA, CHORUS.

TALT. Thou, Hecuba, hast seen Talthybius oft
 In Troy, a herald from the Grecian host
 In frequent intercourse : but now to thee,
 In past time not unknown, I come, and bring
 The public mandate, which concerns you all.

HEC. This, this, my friends, ye dames of Troy, long
 since
 This was my fear.

TALT. You are by lot assigned,
 If this was what you feared.

HEC. Alas, alas !
 To what Thessalian, or what Phthian town,
 Or to Cadmæan Thebes ? I pray thee tell me.

TALT. Singly to single chiefs are you allotted,
 And not together all.

HEC. To whom, to whom
 Am I appointed, say. What happy fate
 Awaits each Trojan dame ?

TALT. I can inform thee :
 But singly ask of each, not all at once.

HEC. The poor Cassandra, my unhappy daughter,
 Where falls her lot ?

TALT. Her, a selected prize,
 The royal Agamemnon hath received.

HEC. What ! For his Spartan spouse a slave ? Ah me !

TALT. No : but in secret to the nuptial bed.

HEC. The virgin of Apollo, whom the god
Radiant with golden locks allowed to live
In her pure vow of maiden chastity !

TALT. With love the raptured virgin smote his heart.

HEC. Cast from thee, O my daughter, cast away
Thy sacred wand, rend off the honoured wreaths,
The splendid ornaments that grace thy brows.

TALT. Is it not great to share a monarch's bed ?

HEC. But where is she, whom late you took from me,
Where is my daughter ?

TALT. Of Polyxena,
Or of whom else is this inquiry made ?

HEC. To whom is she allotted ?

TALT. At the tomb
Raised to Achilles it is hers to serve.

HEC. Unhappy me ! Have I brought forth a child
Doomed at a tomb to serve ? But tell me, friend.
What custom or what rite of Greece is this ?

TALT. Pronounce her happy : all with her is well.

HEC. What mean thy words ? Views she the sun's bright
beams ?

TALT. Her doth fate hold from every ill released.

HEC. What of Andromache, the wretched wife
Of helméd Hector ? Tell me what her fate ?

TALT. Her without lot Achilles' son receives.

HEC. And I, whose age-enfeebled limbs require
A staff, to whom am I assigned a slave ?

TALT. Thee hath Ulysses, king of Ithaca,
By lot obtained : to him thou art a slave.

HEC. Ah, let me beat this head, and rend these cheeks,
O miserable me ! I am enslaved

To a detested, an insidious foe,
A creeping viper, who with baleful bite
Impoisons justice ; one, whose double tongue
With glozing arguments from side to side
All things perverts, and turns to hostile hate
What was before most friendly. Mourn for me,

Ye Trojan dames, for I am wretched, sunk
To the most abject fortune, woe is me,
Totally sunk by this ill-fated lot.

CHOR. Thy fortune, venerable queen, I know ;
But mine what Argive or what Greek commands ?

TALT. Go, ye attendants ; with what speed you may
Conduct Cassandra hither ; I must give her
To the king's hand. The other captives then,
Each as allotted, lead to their new lords.—
But what is this ? Why flames the blazing torch
Within ? What mean these Trojan dames ? To fire
The inmost tent ? that, since the hour draws nigh
When from this land they must perforce be borne
To Argos, they may perish in the flames,
Seeking to die ; ill brooks th' excessive love
Of freedom woes like these. Open these doors,
Open, lest what to these may give delight,
And grief to Greece, may to my blame be charged.

HEC. It is not so ; they raise no flames ; but forth
My frenetic child, Cassandra, rushes to us.

CASSANDRA, HECUBA, TALTHYBIUS, CHORUS.

CASS. Wave the torch, and spread its light ;
Thus I bear it blazing bright,
Rev'rence and illume the shrine ;
Royal Hymen, it is thine.
See, the happy bridegroom see,
And the happy bride in me :
At Argos I shall mount the nuptial bed,
Royal Hymen, by thee led.
Since thy tears, my mother, flow,
And thy heart is rent with woe,
For my slaughtered father's fate,
And my country's ruined state,
At my spousals I will raise
A fire shall shine, shall flame, shall blaze,
And, royal Hymen, on the bridal night
Give to Hecate the light,

For a virgin's nuptial bands ;
 Sacred custom this demands.
 Nimble let your feet advance,
 Quiv'ring high in festive dance,
 As if Priam's prosperous throne
 Bright with royal splendours shone.
 The choir is hallowed : with them, Phœbus, move :
 In thy sacred laurel grove
 Off'rings at thy shrine I lay,
 Hymen, 'tis my bridal day.
 Lead the dance, my mother, lead,
 Quick in varying motions tread,
 And, my gliding steps to grace,
 Light the mazy measure trace.
 To royal Hymen raise, O hallowed train,
 Raise the joy-announcing strain ;
 Hail the bride with songs of joy,
 Gorgeous-vested nymphs of Troy ;
 Hail the bridegroom, to my bed
 By the Fates' appointment led.

CHOR. Wilt thou not, queen, thy raving daughter hold,
 That she appear not 'midst the host of Greece
 Possessed with this indecent levity ?

HEC. O Vulcan, thou indeed the nuptial torch
 Of mortals bearest, but a baleful flame
 Dost thou now wave, and void of each fond hope.
 Alas, my daughter, little did I think
 That ever thou shouldst wed beneath the spear,
 Beneath the arms of Greece ! Give me the torch ;
 Ill it seems thee frenetic thus, with step
 Thus wild, to bear its flame : nor to thy mind
 Have thy misfortunes brought more sober sense ;
 But, my poor child, thy state remains the same.
 Bear in the torches ; and, ye Trojan dames,
 For tears exchange her nuptial melody.

CASS. Mother, adorn my head ; for I have gained
 A conquest : in my nuptials with a king
 Rejoice. Come, lead me. If I go too slow,
 Push me by force ; for this is not Apollo.

Th' illustrious Agamemnon, king of Greece,
Weds me; but in these nuptials he shall find
More woe than Paris when he wedded Helen;
For I will kill him, and lay waste his house;
Thus for my brothers' and my father's death
I will have vengeance: but no words of this:
I will say nothing of the axe, which goes
Into my neck, and that of others too;
Nor of the contest where a mother bleeds
(This shall my nuptials raise); nor of the house
Of Atreus sunk in ruins: I will show
This city than the Grecians far more blest
(I feel th' inspiring god, but will awhile
Bid the prophetic fury cease to swell):
They for one woman, and one fatal bed
Sought Helen, and lost thousands; their wise chief
Himself, to gain what most the soul abhors,
Hath thrown away what most it loves, and given
The sweet domestic pleasures of his children
To win his brother's wife; yet was she borne
Consentingly, not forcibly away.
When to Scamander's banks they came, they died;
Nor from their country, or its high-tow'red towns,
Were they driven forth: those whom the sword destroyed
Their children saw no more, nor were their limbs
By their wives' hands in decent vestments wrapt,
But in a foreign land they lie. At home
Like desolation reigns: their widowed wives
Are dead; their parents, childless, have in vain
Reared offspring in their houses; not a son
Survives to pour libations at their tombs.
Such are the triumphs of this martial host.
Deeds of impurity are better hushed
In silence: never Muse be mine, to chaunt
What raises on the modest cheek a blush.
The Trojans, what is glory's brightest grace,
Died for their country: they, beneath the spear
Who fell, were by their friends borne home, and dead

Found in their native land a sepulchre,
Entombed by those from whom those rites were due.
But such, as fell not in the field, each day
Dwelt with their wives and children ; whilst the Greeks
Were strangers to that sweet society.
Mournful the fate of Hector seems to thee :
But weigh it well : he dies, among the brave
Esteemed the bravest ; this high fame the Greeks
By their arrival raised ; had they not come
The hero's virtues had remained obscure.
Paris espoused the daughter of high Jove ;
Had she not been his bride, he would at home
Have formed some mean alliance, unrenowned.
War then the man, whom prudence rules, will shun :
But if its flames are kindled, no mean crown
He wins who bravely for his country dies :
Not to act bravely is inglorious shame.
Therefore behoves thee, mother, not to wail
Thy country, or my bed ; for those to thee
Whose deeds have been most hostile, and to me,
I by my nuptials to the dust will bow.

CHOR. How sweetly at thy house's ills thou smilest,
Chaunting what haply thou wilt not show true !

TALT. But that Apollo hath with frenzy hurt
Thy sense, unpunished with such taunting speech
Thou shouldst not from this country send the chiefs.
But what commands respect, and is held high
As wise, is nothing better than the mean
Of no repute : for this most potent king
Of all the Grecians, the much honoured son
Of Atreus, is enamoured with his prize,
This frenetic raver. I am a poor man,
Yet would I not receive her to my bed.
For thee, since thou hast not thy perfect sense,
All thy reproaches on the Greeks and all
Thy praises of the Trojans, to the winds
I give to scatter them. But to the ships
Attend me, beauteous minion of our chief.

Thou, since Ulysses wills to lead thee with him,
Follow ; a virtuous lady shalt thou serve,
As they, who came to Ilium, speak her fame.

CASS. This is a busy slave. What one name suits
All heralds ? The abhorrence of mankind,
Ye ministers of tyrants and of states,
And dost thou say that to Ulysses' house
My mother shall be led ? Where are the words
Of Phœbus then, which say, by me made known,
Here she shall die ? The rest revile I not :
But he, unhappy, knows not what a train
Of sufferings waits him, so that he shall deem
Mine and the Phrygians' ills, with his compared,
Treasures of gold : for after ten long years
To ten long years here wasted, he shall reach
His native land alone ; but visit first
The straits, amidst whose gulfs, that now disgorge
And now resorb the floods, Charybdis holds
Her terrible abode ; the blood-stained cave
Of the huge Cyclops, mountain savage, gorged
With flesh where life yet quivers ; Circe's isle,
Whose charmed cup transforms whoever taste
To swine ; tempestuous seas with wrecks o'erspread ;
Men in the flow'ry Lotus who delight ;
The sacred heifers of the sun, whose flesh
Shall send forth lowings, to Ulysses sound
Of horror : to be brief, to Pluto's realms
Alive shall he descend : and from the waves
Escaped, returning to his country find
A thousand ills. But why repeat the toils
That wait Ulysses ? Go, that I with speed
May wed a bridegroom in the shades below.
Thou, who in thought some glorious deed art now
Achieving, leader of the Grecian host,
Wretch, shall be buried wretchedly by night,
Not in the day ; and me, a livid corse,
Naked, cast out, the torrent floods shall leave
In their rough channels, nigh my bridegroom's tomb,
A prey to beasts, this priestess of Apollo.

Ye garlands of the gods, most dear to me,
 Prophetic ornaments, farewell : the feasts,
 In which I once delighted, are to me
 No more. Begone! I rend you from me. While
 I yet am chaste, I give them to the winds,
 To toss, to scatter them, prophetic king !
 Where is the leader's bark? How shall my foot
 Mount its tall sides? No longer shall thy sails
 Wait for the breathing gales ; but thou shalt bear me
 A Fury, an Erinny, from this land.
 Farewell, my mother ! Do not shed a tear.
 O my loved country, O my brother, sunk
 To the dark realms below, O father soon
 Shall you receive me ; to your shades I come
 Triumphant from the ruin of the house
 Of Atreus, by whose sons we thus are fall'n !

HECUBA, CHORUS.

CHOR. Ye, who attend the aged Hecuba,
 Behold you not the queen, how to the ground
 Speechless she sinks? Shall not your hands with care
 Support her? Wretches, will you let her age
 Lie on the earth? Haste, raise her, upright raise her.

HEC. Forbear, ye virgins ; what was pleasing once
 Pleases no more : here let me lie thus fall'n,
 A fall that suits what I have suffered, what
 I suffer, and shall suffer. O ye gods,
 Unkind associates I indeed invoke,
 Yet when affliction rends the anguished heart,
 We with becoming grace invoke the gods.
 First it is pleasing to me to recount
 My happier fortunes : thus my woes shall raise
 A stronger pity. Royal was my birth,
 And marriage joined me to a royal house ;
 There I was mother of illustrious sons,
 Sons with superior excellence adorned
 Above the Phrygians ; such no Trojan dame,
 No Grecian, no Barbarian e'er could boast .

These I saw fall'n beneath the Grecian spear,
And laid my severed tresses on their tomb.
For Priam too, their father, flow'd my tears ;
His fate I heard not from report, but saw it.
These eyes beheld him murdered at the altar
Of guardian Jove ; my vanquished city storm'd ;
My daughters, whom I nurtured high in hope
Of choosing honourable nuptials for them,
For others nurtured from my hands are rent ;
There is no hope that me they e'er shall see,
And I shall never see them more. Th' extreme,
The height of my afflicting ills is this :
I to some house shall go a hoary slave,
To some base task, most irksome to my age,
Assigned ; or at their doors to keep the keys
A portress shall I wait, the mother once
Of Hector, or to labour at the mill ;
For royal couches, on the ground to make
My rugged bed ; and o'er these worn-out limbs
The tattered remnant of a worn-out robe,
Unseemly to my happier state, to throw.
Ah, for one woman's nuptial bed, what woes
Are mine, and will be mine ! Alas, my child,
My poor Cassandra, madd'ning with the gods,
By what misfortunes is thy purity
Defiled ? And where art thou, Polyxena,
O thou unhappy ! Thus of all my sons
And all my daughters, many though they were,
Not one is left to soothe my miseries.
Why do you raise me, virgins ? With what hope
Lead you this foot, which once with stately port
In Troy advanced, but now a slave, to seek
A bed of leaves strewn on the ground, a stone
My pillow, there to lie, to perish there
Wasted with tears ? Then deem not of the great
Now flourishing as happy, ere they die.

CHORUS.

Strophe.

For Troy, O Muse, attune thy woe,
 And steep in tears the solemn-breathing song ;
 To such a theme such notes belong :
 For Troy unwonted measures now shall flow,
 Shall tell my sorrows, how beneath
 The guileful fabric, big with death,
 I feel a captive to the Argive spear :
 When from th' enormous beast, that hides
 A host within its caverned sides,
 With golden trappings hung around,
 Rolled to the gates with thund'ring sound,
 Issuing in arms the chiefs of Greece appear.
 But from the rock of Ilium high
 With shouts the blinded Phrygians cry,
 "Go, from your toils released, ye sons of Troy.
 This hallowed fabric draw with joy :
 To Jove-born Pallas place the pledge divine
 In favoured Ilium's rampired shrine."
 The young, the old promiscuous throng,
 And roll with songs of joy the fraudulent pest along.

Antistrophe.

From every street with eager pace,
 The pines of Ida flaming in their hands,
 Rush to the gates the Trojan bands,
 To Pallas in her favoured tower to place
 The fabric formed with Argive wiles,
 The pest which Phrygia's state beguiles,
 The heaven-framed present of the unyoked steed :
 With twisted cables thrown around
 They drag it o'er the fatal ground,
 Like a new bark in gallant state,
 To Pallas in her rocky seat.
 To toil and joy the shades of night succeed :

The Libyan pipe swells clear and high,
 Attuned to Phrygian melody ;
 To the light notes in many an airy round
 The frolic virgins nimbly bound,
 And joyful as they dance their voices raise,
 Sweet warbling spritely-fancied lays.
 In every house the blazing fires
 Sink at the hour of rest, and their swart light expires.

Epode.

Then too my vaulted roofs around
 The voice of joy was heard to sound ;
 We to Diana raised the strain,
 Chaste huntress-queen that leads the mountain train.
 Sudden a wild tumultuous roar
 With shudd'ring horror strikes our souls :
 Loud and more loud the city o'er
 To Pergamus it deep'ning rolls :
 My dear, dear infants round their mother prest,
 And grasped with trembling hands my vest.
 Now, by Minerva's guardian care,
 Rushed from its ambush the imprisoned war :
 Round the polluted altars slain
 In blood are rolled the sons of Troy :
 O'er the rich rooms, once scenes of joy,
 Horror and desolation reign,
 And bear to Greece, her victor sons t' adorn,
 The crown from weeping Phrygia borne.

HECUBA, ANDROMACHE, CHORUS.

CHOR. See, royal lady, on this foreign car
 Andromache is borne ; and at her breast,
 Which trembles to the motion of the wheels,
 Astyanax, the son of Hector, laid.

HEC. Whither, unhappy woman, art thou borne,
 Placed in that car beside the brazen arms

Of Hector, and the spoils by the strong spear
Rent from the Phrygians? Distant far from Troy
In Phthia these the proud son of Achilles
Shall hang, to crown the temples of the gods.

ANDR. My Grecian lords force me away.

HEC.

Alh me!

ANDR. Why dost thou heave my sighs?

HEC.

Alh wretched me!

ANDR. That for my sorrows—

HEC.

Seest thou this, O Jove!

ANDR. And my distresses rise.

HEC.

Alas, my children!

ANDR. We were thy children once.

HEC.

My state is fall'n;

Troy too is fall'n.

ANDR.

Unhappy!

HEC.

And my sons,

My noble sons are fall'n.

ANDR.

Alas, alas!

HEC. Alas my ills, the miserable fate

ANDR. Of ruined Troy.

HEC.

Which smokes upon the ground.

ANDR. Oh, wouldst thou come, my husband!

HEC.

Thou dost call

My son, unhappy, in the realms below!

ANDR. Thou bulwark of thy wife!

HEC.

And thou, whose soul

Swelled high against the Grecians, Priam, once

The aged father of my children, lead,

O lead me to the gloomy realms below!

CHOR. These griefs are great.

HEC.

And dreadful are the ills

We suffer.

CHOR. For thy ruined country: woes,

Such is the pleasure of the gods, succeed

To woes. Nor hath thy son escaped from death,

Who for a bed abhorred hath sunk in dust

The towers of Troy, and near the rampired rock

Of Pallas stretched the bodies of the slain,

Wet'ring in blood, by vultures to be torn :
And Troy is bowed beneath the servile yoke.

HEC. My country, my unhappy country, thee
Wasted I weep.

CHOR. Thou seest its wretched end.

HEC. And thee my house, where oft I was a mother.

CHOR. Unhappy children, wasted is your town,
Your mother desolate.

HEC. What strains are these,
What strains of woe ! Tears after tears stream down
In sorrow for my house : the dead forgets
His sorrows, and his tears stream down no more.

CHOR. How sweet are tears to those who suffer ills ?
Sweet are the strains of lamentation, sweet
The mournful Muse that tunes her notes to woe.

ANDR. Mother of Hector, that brave chief, whose spear
Once pierced the Grecian squadrons, seest thou this ?

HEC. I see th' appointment of the gods ; the low
How they exalt, and hurl the mighty down.

ANDR. I, with my child, am led away, the spoil
Of war : th' illustrious progeny of kings,
O fatal change, is sunk to slavery.

HEC. Necessity is rig'rous : from me late
Cassandra went, torn from my arms by force.

ANDR. Alas ! Another Ajax then, it seems,
Thy daughter finds : but thou hast other ills.

HEC. Unmeasured and unnumbered are my ills :
Afflictions with afflictions still contend.

ANDR. Polyxena, thy daughter, is no more :
Devoted to Achilles, on his tomb
An offering to the lifeless dead she fell.

HEC. Ah wretched me ! This was the dread event
Talthybius hinted to me in dark terms.

ANDR. I saw her, and descending from this car
Wrapt the vests round her, and bewailed her dead.

HEC. Alas, my daughter, what unhallowed rites !
Alas, alas ! unseemly hast thou perished.

ANDR. She perished, as she perished : but her fate
In death is happier far than mine who live.

HEC. 'Tis not one thing, my child, to live or die :
The living hopes await, the dead are nothing.

ANDR. Hear, that with pleasure I may touch thy soul
Not to be born, I argue, and to die,
Are equal : but to die is better far
Than to live wretched ; for he knows not grief
Who hath no sense of misery : but to fall
From fortune's blessed height, to the low state
Of abject wretchedness, distracts the soul
With the keen sense of former happiness.
Like as the light of life she ne'er had seen,
Polyxena is dead, and of her ills
Knows nothing : I, who aimed at glorious rank,
And reached my aim, from fortune widely erred :
All that to prudent matrons gives a grace,
In Hector's house was ever my employ.
First, for in this to women blame is due,
Charged or not charged, to such as rove abroad,
I checked this wand'ring humour, and remained
At home, within my house ; nor gay discourse
Of females there admitted, but intent
On ordering what was useful, deemed myself
Well occupied. With silence of the tongue
And cheerfulness of look I entertained
My husband : where my province to command
I knew, and where to yield obedience to him.
The fame of this was bruited through the host
Of Greece, and wrought my ruin ; for the son
Of fierce Achilles, soon as I was made
A captive, wished to take me as his wife,
Doomed in the house of those, whose slaught'ring hands
I rue, to be a slave. From my fond heart
Could I rend Hector, and expand my breast
To this new husband, faithless to the dead
Should I appear : if I disdain his love,
I shall excite the malice of my lords.
Short time, they say, to a new lord disarms
A woman's hate : but her my soul abhors,
Who for new nuptials slights her former husband,

And loves another : e'en the social steed,
 Divided from its fellow, draws the yoke
 Reluctant ; yet the beast, by nature formed
 Less excellent, nor speech nor reason knows.
 O my loved Hector, I was blest in thee,
 Thou wast the lord of all my wishes, great
 In understanding, noble birth, and wealth,
 And valour : from my father's house thou first
 Led'st me a virgin to the bridal bed :
 Now thou are perished, and I mount the bark
 For Greece, a captive to the servile yoke.
 Hath not the death then of Polyxena,
 Whom thou bewailest, lighter ills than mine !
 For not to me e'en Hope, which still is left
 To all of mortal race, remains ; no thought
 That better fortune e'er will visit me
 With pleasing expectation cheats my mind.

CHOR. Alike our suff'rings ; and thou teachest me,
 Thine own ills wailing, my unhappy state.

HEC. I never entered bark ; my knowledge springs
 From what in picture I have seen, or heard
 From others. When a storm, whose moderate force
 May be sustained, the curling billows swells,
 With prompt alacrity the sailors toil
 To guide the vessel safe ; one at the helm
 His station takes, one tends the sails, one plies
 The pump : but if the wild tempestuous sea
 Mocks their vain efforts, they to fortune yield,
 And leave her to the rolling of the waves.
 So fares it now with me : with various ills
 Encompassed I am silent, give them way,
 And check my vain complaints ; for from the gods
 This cruel storm o'erpowers me. But do thou,
 O my loved child, on Hector's fate no more
 Fix thy sad thoughts ; not all thy streaming tears
 Will save him : honour then thy present lord,
 And with thy gentle manners win his soul ;
 This doing, thou shalt cheer thy friends, and train
 This child, my Hector's son, to manhood, strong

To succour Troy ; that sons from him may spring,
 Who shall again the towers of Ilium raise,
 And once more to its state restore the town.
 But trouble yet perchance from trouble springs ;
 This Grecian officer I see again
 Advancing to us, bearing new commands.

TALTHYBIUS, HECUBA, ANDROMACHE, CHORUS.

TALT. Thou wife of Hector, of the Phrygians once
 The bravest, do not hate me : for my tongue
 Unwillingly will utter what the Greeks
 Decree and the Pelopidæ command.

ANDR. Why with this tragic proem dost thou greet me ?

TALT. It is decreed thy son—how shall I speak it !

ANDR. What ? that he have not the same lord with me ?

TALT. None of the Grecians e'er shall be his lord.

ANDR. To leave him here, a relic of the Trojans ?

TALT. I cannot utter, but with pain, thy ills.

ANDR. I praise thy modest awe, speak thou but good.

TALT. This great ill thou must know : they slay thy son.

ANDR. This than my marriage is a greater ill.

TALT. Ulysses 'midst th' assembled Greeks prevails.

ANDR. Ah, these are ills too grievous to be borne.

TALT. Not to bring up a valiant warrior's son.

ANDR. Thus for his own sons may his voice prevail !

TALT. But that they cast him from the towers of Troy.

In this sad trial be thy prudence shown :

Withhold him not, with noble fortitude

Support thy griefs : nor think that thou hast power,

Where all thou canst is nothing. Thou canst find

No succour : it behoves thee weigh this well.

Low lies thy city, low thy husband lies,

Thou art a captive : we have force enough

Against one woman. Wish not then to strive ;

Let no indecent, no despiteful deed

Dishonour thee. Nor would I have thee vent

Thy curses on the Greeks ; for shouldst thou speak

What shall disgust the troops, thy son perchance

May lie unpitied, and denied the rites
Of sepulture : but if thou bear thine ills
In silence and with fortitude, his corse
Will not be left unburied, and thyself
Wilt from the Grecians find more courtesy.

ANDR. O my dear child, my fondly cherished son,
Thou by the foes shalt die, ah me ! and leave
Thy wretched mother. Yes, thy father's worth
Shall kill thee, which to others is a shield
Yielding protection. In an evil hour
For thee thy father's virtues are renowned.
O my unhappy bed, and nuptial rites,
Which led me to the house of Hector, there
Not to be mother of a son to fall
A victim by the Grecians, but to reign
Lord of the fruitful Asia ! Dost thou weep,
My son ? Hast thou a sense of thy ill fate ?
Why dost thou clasp me with thy hands, why hold
My robes, and shelter thee beneath my wings
Like a young bird ? No more my Hector comes
Returning from the tomb, he grasps no more
His glitt'ring spear, bringing protection to thee .
No more thy father's kindred, or the force
Of the brave Phrygians : but from Ilium's height,
By merciless hands hurled headlong, shalt thou fall,
And crushed breathe out thy life. O soft embrace,
And to thy mother dear ! O fragrant breath !
In vain I swathed thy infant limbs, in vain
I gave thee nurture at this breast, and toiled
Wasted with care. If ever, now embrace,
Now clasp thy mother, throw thine arms around
My neck, and join thy cheek, thy lips to mine.
Why, O ye Grecians, studying barb'rous ills,
Why will you kill my son ? He hath not wronged you.
Daughter of Tyndarus, but not of Jove,
From many fathers must I deem thee sprung,
From Vengeance first, then Hate, from Slaughter, Death,
And all the ills earth breeds : for ne'er from Jove
Durst I pronounce thy birth. Thou fatal pest

To many Phrygians, and to many Greeks,
 Perdition seize thee ! By thy beauteous eyes
 Thou vilely hast destroyed the realms of Troy.
 Here, take him, bear him, hurl him from the height,
 If ye must hurl him, feast upon his flesh :
 For from the gods hath ruin fall'n on us :
 We have no power to save my child from death.
 Cover this wretched body, wrap it close,
 Cast it into your galley ; for I come
 To glorious nuptials, having lost my son.

CHOR. Unhappy Troy, what numbers hast thou lost,
 Through one vile woman, and her hateful bed !

ANDR. Forbear, my son, forbear thy fond embrace
 Of thy afflicted mother. Go, ascend
 The summit of those towers, thy father's once,
 There leave thy life, for so hath Greece decreed
 Take him : fit herald of this deed is he,
 Who knows no touch of pity or of shame,
 But rather to your mandate gives assent.

HEC. O child, O son of my unhappy son,
 We of thy life, beyond our thoughts, are reft,
 I, and thy mother ! What can I, poor boy,
 What can I do for thee, but smite this head,
 And beat this breast ? That we can give thee, that
 Is in our power. Ah me, what griefs for Troy
 I suffer, what for thee ! Is there an ill
 We have not ? What is wanting to the woes,
 Which all the dreadful band of Ruin brings ?

HECUBA, CHORUS.

CHORUS.

Strophe 1.

Thou lord of Salamis, where love
 The honey-gath'ring bees to rove,
 Thou, who didst hold thy island-seat
 Around whose rocks the billows beat,
 Whose hallowed mounds first boast to show
 Ranged down their sloping sides the olive bough,

Of blue-eyed Pallas heavenly crown,
 And glory of her polished town :
 Thou with Alcmena's son, whose hand
 Grasped the strong bow, heldst high command.
 Thy soul, like his, to glorious action bold,
 To Troy, O Telamon, to Troy,
 Our rampired city to destroy,
 Thou camst, from Greece thou camst in times of old.

Antistrophe 1.

When, raging for the steeds denied,
 Of Greece he led the blooming pride ;
 Where Simois pours his beauteous flood
 The hero's barks at anchor stood ;
 Dauntless he leaped upon the strand,
 His bow and arrows grasping in his hand :
 Laomedon with wild affright
 Marked how they winged their slaught'ring flight.
 Though Phœbus squared each polished stone,
 The high-raised rampires are o'erthrown ;
 Around the ruddy flames devouring rise,
 And Troy a heap of ruin lies :
 Twice raged the spear around her walls,
 And twice with thund'ring sound the city falls.

Strophe 2.

In vain then at the golden bowls of Jove
 Hast thou thy honoured place,
 Thy steps composed with sweetest grace,
 Presenting at the feast divine
 To heaven's high king the sparkling wine ;
 Vain, Dardan boy, thy glorious charge above ;
 For war and wasting flames destroy,
 Sunk to the ground, thy native Troy.
 The sea-washed shores around
 Loud cries and shrieks resound,
 As for her young when the poor bird complains,
 And anguish swells her strains :

Their husbands some, and some their sons deplore,
 Their mothers some, with age that bow,
 Lament with pious woe.
 Thy brimmed baths are now no more,
 A silent waste the circus lies,
 Once thy loved scene of manly exercise,
 But thou the throne of Jove beside,
 Blooming in all youth's roseate pride,
 Sweetly serene dost woo each grace
 To give new beauties to thy face :
 Yet Priam's realms lie waste, a desert drear,
 Beneath the Grecian spear.

Antistrophe 2.

O Love, O Love, that to the seats of Troy,
 Thy gently glowing fire
 Kindling in heavenly breasts desire,
 Didst once direct thy pleasing flight,
 To what a splendid, stately height,
 Whilst gods her dear alliance sought with joy,
 Didst thou exalt her glorious fame?
 Now must thou bear another name;
 No more joy-kindling Love,
 But the reproach of Jove.
 This fatal morn, with silver-waving wings
 Which light to mortals brings,
 Hath seen destruction wide its ravage spread,
 Hath seen the towers of Troy laid low
 Beneath th' insulting foe :
 With offspring yet to bless her bed
 Her husband from this land she bore ;
 The favoured youth yon orient regions o'er
 Her four ethereal coursers bear,
 Placed by her in the golden car.
 Hence to thy country Hope might rise,
 Graced with the favour of the skies :
 But all the love, which touched the gods with joy,
 Shrinks from the aid of Troy.

MENELAUS, HECUBA, CHORUS.

MEN. O thou bright-beaming radiance of this sun,
He'en in thee, my wife, these hands shall seize,
After the many toils I have sustained,
I, and the Grecian host. I came to Troy,
Not for a woman, as some lightly think,
But armed with vengeance 'gainst the man who broke
Each hospitable law, and from my house
Bore, as his spoil, my wife. But the just gods
He hath his meed, he and his country fall'n
Beneath the arms of Greece. The Spartan dame,
For not with pleasure can my tongue pronounce
Her name who was my wife, once was, I come
To lead from hence : for in this tent, among
The other captive dames of Troy enrolled,
Is she detained. For they, whose toiling spear
Achieved her, have presented her to me
To kill her, or, if such my will, to Greece
Alive to lead her : but my purpose is
The death of Helen to forbear at Troy,
And bear her in my stout bark o'er the seas
To Greece ; and there, in vengeance for my friends
Who beneath Ilium died, to give her death.
But, ye attendants, go into the tent,
Bring her forth, drag her by the hair with blood
Deeply polluted : when the fav'ring winds
Breathe in our sails, to Greece shall she be sent.

HEC. O Jove, who rulest the rolling of the earth,
And o'er it hast thy throne, whoe'er thou art,
The ruling mind, or the necessity
Of nature, I adore thee. Dark thy ways
And silent are thy steps ; to mortal man
Yet thou with justice all things dost ordain.

MEN. Why to the gods dost thou renew thy vows ?

HEC. I praise thy resolution, Menelaus,
If thou shalt kill thy wife. But fly her sight :
She captivates the eyes of men, takes towns ;

Sets houses all on fire ; such blandishments
 She hath t' allure the soul ; I know her well,
 Thou knowst her, and all they that suffer by her.

HELENA, MENELAUS, HECUBA, CHORUS.

HEL. This is a prelude which may well cause fear ;
 For by thy servants, Menelaus, by force
 I from the tent am dragged. But little wants
 T' assure me that I am detested by thee.
 Yet I would ask thee, by the states of Greece
 And thee touching my life what is decreed.

MEN. Justice hath not pronounced fixed sentence on thee ;
 But all the host of Greece, whom thou hast wronged,
 Give thee to me, and thou by me shalt die.

HEL. May I have leave 'gainst this to urge my plea,
 That, if I die, not justly I shall die ?

MEN. Not to hold converse came I, but to kill thee.

HEC. Yet hear her, Menelaus, nor let her die,
 Her bland excuse not urged : but to her plea
 Let me reply, for of the ills in Troy
 Thou nothing knowst ; but when I sum them all,
 From death no refuge shall be left to her.

MEN. This requires leisure ; yet if she would speak,
 She is allowed : but let her know thy words
 Gain her this leave ; no grace to her I grant.

HEL. Let me or well or ill appear to speak,
 Thou no reply wilt haply deign me, deemed [*to MENELAUS*]
 An enemy : yet to the crime, of which *Heaven*
 I know thou wilt accuse me, I will make [*to HELEN*]
 Reply, and to thy charge my pleas oppose,
 'Gainst thee my charge. She first, then, to these ills
 Gave birth, when she gave Paris birth ; and next
 The aged Priam ruined Troy and thee,
 The infant not destroying, at his birth
 Denounced a baleful firebrand. Hear from thence
 What followed. 'Twixt the rival goddesses
 Paris was judge. From Pallas was his meed
 To lead the Phrygian arms, and conquer Greece ;

From Juno, if to her his voice adjudged
The prize, to hold o'er Asia and the bounds
Of Europe his wide empire : but, my form
Extolling, Venus promised to his arms
To give me, if in beauty she surpassed
The other goddesses. Mark now th' event.
The prize is given to Venus; and so far
My nuptials profit Greece : you are not fall'n
Beneath Barbarians or a tyrant's sway,
Nor to protect your country stand in arms.
I, in what Greece is happy, am undone,
Sold for my beauty, and with cruel taunts
Reviled for what my head deserves a crown.
But thou wilt say that to an obvious charge
I have not yet replied, that from thy house
I fled by stealth. Her son, for ruin born,
Or Paris called or Alexander, came,
And brought no feeble goddess in his train :
Him, thou most worthless, leaving in thy house,
From Sparta didst thou hoist thy sails for Crete.
Well, what ensued of thee I will not ask,
But of myself : what could induce my thought,
My country for a stranger, and my house
Betrayed, to follow him ? Thy vengeance rouse
Against the goddess, and be thou than Jove
More potent ; he o'er other gods bears rule,
But is her slave : I then may pardon find.
But hence against me thou mayst urge a charge
Of specious argument : When Paris died,
And low in earth was laid, behoved me then.
Since by no god my nuptials then were wrought,
To leave his house, and to the Grecian ships
To come. On this I earnestly was bent ;
Witness, ye guards who kept the gates, and you
Who stationed on the walls held careful watch,
How oft you found me from the battlements
With ropes attempting to slide down by stealth :
But this new husband seizing me by force,
Deiphobus, the Trojans much averse,

Held me his wife. How then can justice doom me
To die? With justice how can I be slain
By thee, my husband, since he wedded me
By force? Thus from my house was I a slave
Sold for the prize of conquest. If thou aim
T' exceed the gods in power, the thought is folly.

CHOR. Defend thy children and thy country, queen;
Refute her glozing speech. Her words are fair,
Her actions foul. In this much danger lies.

HEC. The goddesses my voice shall first defend,
And show that she unjustly charges blame
On them. For Juno never will I deem,
Or virgin Pallas, to such frenzy sunk,
That Argos to Barbarians she would sell,
Or Pallas to the Phrygians e'er enslave
Her favoured Athens, who in sportive mood
And dainty dalliance to Ida came,
For form contesting. Whence this strong desire
In royal Juno of superior charms?
Was it to win a greater lord than Jove?
Did Pallas, of her father who had asked
To keep her virgin purity unsoiled,
Flying connubial rites, aim now t' obtain
The nuptials of some god? Forbear to charge
These goddesses with folly, to set off
Thy own misdeeds; no credence with the wise
Wilt thou acquire. But Venus, thou hast said
(High subject this for laughter), with my son
Came to the house of Menelaus. At rest
In heaven remaining, could she not have brought her,
And e'en Amyclæ, had she pleased, to Troy?
My son was with surpassing beauty graced;
And thy fond passion, when he struck thy sight,
Became a Venus: for each foolish fondness
To mortals is a Venus, and the soul
Bereaves of reason. When thine eyes beheld him
Glitt'ring in rich barbaric vests and gold,
Thy passions were to madness soon inflamed,
At Argos little hadst thou been with wealth

Acquainted. Quitting Sparta, thou hadst hope
The Phrygian state, flowing with gold, would yield
Thy proud expense supplies ; nor could the house
Of Menelaus within its narrow walls
Give thy insulting vanities free scope.
Well, let that pass. My son, thou sayst, by force
Bore thee away. What Spartan of that force
Was sensible ? With what cries didst thou call
Castor, thy brother, to thy aid, then strong
In manhood's prime, then living, to the stars
Not then exalted ? When thou camest to Troy,
And, following close, the Grecians, raged the spear
In conflict fierce ; whene'er his arms obtained
Aught of advantage, Menelaus thy praise
Extolled, to grieve my son in that his love
Met with a potent rival : if success
Favoured the Trojans, he was nothing then.
Thine eyes were fixed on Fortune ; this thy care,
To follow her ; to Virtue thou wouldst pay
No homage. Yet with ropes didst thou attempt,
Such is thy plea, down from the walls to slide
By stealth, as if detained against thy will :
By whom wast thou surprised in act to fix
The pendent rope or point the sharpened sword ?
This would a woman of a gen'rous soul,
Who sorrowed for her husband lost, have done.
Yet much did I admonish thee, and oft,
“ Leave, O my daughter, leave us : other wives
My sons shall wed : I to the Grecian ships
Will send thee secretly, that war no more
’Twixt Greece and us may rage.” To this thy heart
Was much averse ; still in thy husband's house
Thy insolence of grandeur wouldst thou hold,
Imperious still from thy barbaric train
Claim prostrate adoration : there thy pride
Found rich supplies ; from thence didst thou come forth
Gorgeously vested, and the same bright sky
View with thy husband, O detested wretch,
When it became thee with thy garments rent,

Humble, and cowering, and thy tresses shorn,
To have appeared, and for thy former faults
To veil thy shameless pride with modesty.
But, Menelaus, that thou mayst know what end
My words would have, give Greece a glorious crown
By killing her, and this thy law confirm
To other women, "She who dares betray
Her husband, faithless to his bed, shall die."

CHOR. Oh, for the honour of thy ancestors,
And of thy house, punish thy wife. From Greece
Take this vile woman, this reproach, away ;
And show thy gen'rous spirit to thy foes.

MEN. In this thy sentiment accords with mine,
That willingly she left my house, and sought
A foreign bed ; and, to set off her plea,
Is Venus introduced. Go, where with stones
Thou shalt be crushed : and in one hour repay
The Grecians for their tedious toils, by death,
That thou mayst learn ne'er to disgrace me more.

HEL. Low at thy knees a suppliant I beg thee,
To me impute not what the gods have done
Amiss. Ah, do not kill me ; pardon me !

HEC. Thy brave associates in this wasteful war,
Whom she hath slain, I beg thee for their sake,
And for my children's, do not thou betray.

MEN. Forbear, age-honoured lady ; for of her
I have no heed. You, who attend me, hence
To the bark bear her : she shall sail for Greece.

HEC. Let her not enter the same bark with thee.

MEN. Why ? Is the freight more heavy than before ?

HEC. He is no lover, who not always loves.

MEN. That every thought of love may be discharged,
Thy will shall be complied with : the same bark
With me she shall not enter : not amiss
Is thy monition. When she comes to Greece,
For her vile deeds as vilely shall she die,
And teach all other women to be chaste,
No easy lesson : yet her death with fear
Shall strike their folly, be they worse than she.

HECUBA, CHORUS.

CHORUS.

Strophe 1.

* So, to the Grecian arms a prey,
 The temple Ilium's height that crowned,
 The altar breathing odours round,
 O Jove, dost thou betray ;
 The flames of holy sacrifice,
 The clouds of incense wreathing to the skies.
 The towers of Pergamus that rose
 A sacred rampire 'gainst the foes,
 The darksome, ivy-vested woods,
 The woods that wave on Ida's brow,
 Down whose steep sides the cool translucent floods
 In mazy channels flow,
 The height, which first the sun's bright ray
 Impurples with the orient beams of day.

Antistrophe 1.

Ah, banished is each solemn rite ;
 The sacred choirs with tuneful song,
 Echoing thy hollow rocks among,
 No more shall charm the night :
 No more thy summits shall behold
 The forms of gods that breathe in sculptured gold :
 On thee the full-orbed moon no more
 Shall Phrygia's hallowed sports restore.
 O king, in yon ethereal skies
 High-throned who holdst thy sov'reign state,
 Will in thy soul no gentle pity rise,
 For Troy's unhappy fate,
 Sunk to the dust her towered head
 As wide the raging flames their ravage spread ?

Strophe 2.

Dear to my soul, my wedded lord,
Fall'n, fall'n beneath the slaught'ring sword,
Nor cleansing bath, nor decent tomb
Was thine, but in the Stygian gloom
Wanders thy melancholy ghost.
But me the bark that ploughs the main,
Winged with her swelling sails, shall bear
To Argos famed for steeds that whirl the car :
Where by the lab'ring Cyclops rise
The rampired walls that brave the skies.
My children, now a friendless train,
Wailing with sighs and tears their fate,
Call on their mother in the gate :
Their mother from their eyes the Grecian host
In the black vessel bear away,
And dash with oars the foaming sea ;
To sacred Salamis they sweep,
Or where the Isthmus o'er the deep
Stretches its head, and views with pride
An ocean rolling 'gainst each side ;
Where Pelops in the rocky strait
Fixed in old times his royal seat.

Antistrophe 2.

On the detested bark, the waves
In the wide ocean when she braves
May the loud thunder's deep'ning roar
Fierce its tempestuous fury pour ;
And, kindled by Idæan Jove,
The forked lightning's bick'ring flame,
In haughty triumph as she rides,
Fall on her deck, and pierce her rifted sides :
For me from Ilium, bathed in tears,
From my loved country far she bears
A slave to some proud Grecian dame.

Reflecting Helen's winning grace
 The golden mirror there hath place,
 At which the virgins joy their charms t' improve.
 Ne'er may she reach the Spartan shore,
 Her household gods ne'er visit more,
 Through Pitane ne'er proudly pass,
 Nor through Minerva's gates of brass ;
 For Greece, through all its wide domains,
 With shame her fatal marriage stains ;
 And gives through scenes of bitterest woe
 The streams of Simois to flow.

Alas ! In quick succession o'er this land
 Ills roll on ill. Behold, ye Trojan dames
 Oppressed with woes, the dead Astyanax,
 Thrown by the ruthless Grecians from the towers.

TALTHYBIUS, HECUBA, CHORUS.

TALT. One vessel, royal Hecuba, yet waits
 To plough the deep, the treasures that remain,
 Selected for Achilles' son, to bear
 To Phthia's shore : the youthful chief is gone,
 Informed of some calamities, which late
 Have fall'n on Peleus, that Acastus, son
 Of Pelias, hath driven him from his realms :
 On this with quicker speed, than if the time
 Allowed delay, he sailed, and with him bore
 Andromache, who from mine eyes wrung tears
 At her departure, for her country such
 Her mournful sighs, and such at Hector's tomb
 Her invocations : earnest her request
 To thee, that her dead child, who from the tower
 Fell and expired, thou in the earth wouldst lay,
 Thy Hector's son ; and this brass-plated shield,
 The terror of the Grecians, which his father
 Before his breast once raised ; that to the house
 Of Peleus, nay to the same chamber, where
 Andromache, the mother of this child,

Must mount the nuptial bed, she may not bear it,
To sorrow at its sight : but for the chest
Of cedar, for the marble tomb, in this
That thou wouldst bury him ; conjuring me
To give him to thy arms, that with what robes
And crowns thy present fortune yields thee means,
Thou her dead son wouldst grace, since she is gone,
And her lord's haste allowed her not to give
Her dear child to the tomb. When thou hast dressed
The body with what ornaments thou mayst,
The earth will we heap on him ; then we sail.
With thy best speed what is enjoined thee do :
From one toil I have freed thee ; passing o'er
Scamander's stream the body I have bathed,
And washed its wounds : but now I go to sink
Deep in the earth his place of sepulture,
That with more speed, with what thou hast in charge
My toil concurring, we may sail for Greece.

HECUBA, CHORUS.

HEC. Place the orb'd shield of Hector on the ground,
A mournful sight, nor pleasing to mine eyes.
Why, O ye Grecians, who in arms excel
More than in gen'rous minds, why have you wrought,
Fearing this child, a slaughter to this hour
Unheard of? Was it lest the time might come
When he might raise fall'n Troy? There was no cause :
E'en when my Hector shone in prosperous arms,
And thousands with him shook the purple spear,
We perished : since the vanquished city sunk
Your prey, and in the war the Phrygian force
Was wasted, such an infant could you fear?
The fear, which reason disavows, I blame.
O thou most dear, how hapless was thy death?
Hadst thou in manhood's prime, the nuptial bed
Possessed, and high, imperial, godlike power,
Died for thy country, happy hadst thou been,
If aught of these be happy ; now, my child,

These to thine eyes presented and thy thought,
Thou didst not taste, nor aught of what thy house
Contained enjoy. Ah me, how wretchedly
Thy father's walls, the towers by Phœbus raised,
Have rent the crisped ringlets from thy head,
Which thy fond mother cherished, nor withheld
The frequent kiss ! But now, the bones all crushed,
The slaughter riots, to abstain from words
Of harsher utterance. Ah, these hands, whose joints
Once the dear image of thy father's bore,
Now lie with loosened nerves ! O thou dear mouth,
Which utteredst many a spritely pleasantry,
How art thou mangled ? Where thy promise now
Which once thou madst me, hanging on my robes ?
" O mother, didst thou say, these clust'ring locks
Will I for thee cut off, and to thy tomb
With my companions bear them, hailing thee
With dear address." Such honours now to me
Thou dost not pay ; but thee, unhappy child,
Dead in thy early bloom, must I inter,
Old, of my country, of my children reft.
Ah me, are all my fond embraces, all
My nursing pains to lull thy infancy
To sleep, thus lost ? And on thy tomb what verse,
Thy death declaring, shall the bard inscribe ?
" This child the Grecians, for they feared him slew ; "
A verse recording the disgrace of Greece.
But of thy father's wealth though reft, his shield
Shall yet be thine, and on its plated brass
Thou shalt be laid in th' earth. O thou, the fence
Of Hector's nervous arm, thou hast, O shield,
Lost thy best guardian ! Yet how sweet to trace
The mark of his strong grasp, and on the verge
Of thy high orb the sweat, which from his brows
Amidst his toils oft dropt, when to his face
Close he applied thee ! For th' unhappy dead
Bring what of ornament is left us now ;
For not to splendour hath the god assigned
Our fortunes ; but of what I have to grace thee

Thou shalt receive. Of mortals him I deem
Unwise, who, thinking that his state is blest,
Joys as secure : for Fortune, like a man
Distempered in his senses, this way now,
Now that way leaps, inconstant in her course.
No mortal knows stability of bliss.

CHOR. See, from the spoils of Troy their ready hands
Have brought thee ornaments t' inwrap the dead.

HEC. Thee, O my child, not victor with the bow
O'er thy compeers, nor on the spritely steed,
Customs held high by Phrygia's manly sons,
Unwearied in the chase, thy father's mother
Decks with these ornaments from treasures once
Thine own ; but Helen, by the gods abhorred,
Hath rent them from thee, hath destroyed thy life,
And all thy hapless house in ruins laid.

CHOR. O thou hast touched, O thou hast touched my heart,
Thou, who wast once my city's mighty king !

HEC. Around thy limbs I wrap these gorgeous vests
Of Phrygian texture, which thou shouldst have worn
To grace thy nuptials with some noble bride
Surpassing all the Asiatic dames.

And thou, with conquests glorious, mother once
Of num'rous trophies, be thou crowned, loved shield
Of Hector : for, not dying, with the dead
Shalt thou be laid : with honours to be graced,
Thee worthier than the arms of my new lord,
The wise and base Ulysses, I esteem.

CHOR. Ah bitter lamentation ! Thee, O child,
Thee shall the Earth receive : thou, mother, raise
The cry that wails the dead.

HEC. My heart is rent.

CHOR. My heart too for thy dreadful ills is rent.

HEC. Thy wounds with hands medicinal—ah me,
Vain service !—will I bind. Among the dead
All that remains shall be thy father's care.

CHOR. Strike, strike thy head ; loud let thy hands resound.
Ah me !

HEC. Ye females dearest to my soul !

CHOR. Give utterance, royal lady, to thy griefs.

HEC. The gods intended nothing, but my woes,
And hate to Troy, most ruthless hate. In vain
The victims at their altars then we slew.
Yet from the heights above had not their power
Encompassed us, and low beneath the earth
Sunk us in ruin, by the Muse's voice
We had not been recorded, nor the bards
To latest ages given the lofty verse.
Go, in the tomb lay the unhappy dead ;
For, as becomes the shades below, with crowns
He is adorned : but little it imports
The dead, I think, if any shall obtain
Magnificent and costly obsequies :
Vain affectation of the living this.

CHOR. Ah the unhappy mother, in thy life
Who wove her brightest hopes ! Though highly blest,
As from illustrious parents thy rich stream
Of blood deriving, dreadful was thy death.

HEC. Alas, alas ! Whom see I on the heights
Of Ilium, blazing torches in their hands
Waving ? Some fresh misfortune threatens Troy.

TALTHYBIUS, HECUBA, CHORUS.

TALT. Ye leaders of the bands, who have in charge
To burn the town of Priam, from my voice
Hear your instructions : idle in your hands
No longer hold the flames, but hurl them, spread
The wasting blaze, that, Ilium low in dust
O'erturned, we may with joy return to Greece.
And you (for now to you my speech is turned),
Ye Trojan dames, soon as the chiefs shall give
The trumpet's sounding voice, go to the ships
Of Greece, that from this country you may sail.
And thou, unhappy lady worn with age,
Follow : for from Ulysses these are come,
To whom thy fortune sends thee hence a slave.

HEC. O miserable me ! This is the last,

This is the extreme bound of all my ills.
 I from my country go ; my city sinks
 In flames. But haste, my aged foot, though weak,
 That I may yet salute the wretched town :
 O Troy, that once 'mongst the barbaric states
 Stoodst high aspiring, thy illustrious name
 Soon shalt thou lose, for thee the raging flames
 Consume : and from our country us they lead,
 Now lead us slaves. Ye gods ! But why invoke
 The gods ? Invoked before they did not hear.
 But bear me, let me rush into the flames :
 For this would be the greatest glory to me,
 With thee my burning country now to die.

TALT. Unhappy, thou art frenetic with thine ills.
 Lead her, nay force her hence : for to his hand,
 Charged by Ulysses, I must give his prize.

HEC. Woe, woe, woe, woe, intolerable woe !
 O Jove, O sov'reign lord of Phrygia's realms,
 Almighty sire, seest thou our miseries,
 Unworthy of the race of Dardanus ?

CHOR. He sees, yet this magnificent city, now
 No city, is destroyed. Troy is no more.

HEC. O sight of horror ! Ilium blazes ; high
 O'er Pergamus the fiery deluge rolls,
 Rolls o'er the city, and its tow'ring red walls.

CHOR. The glories of my country, e'en as smoke
 Which on light wings is borne aloft in air,
 By war are wasted ; all her blazing domes
 Are sunk beneath the flames and hostile spear.

HEC. O my dear country, fost'ring land, who gavst
 My children nurture !

CHOR. O unhappy land !

HEC. Hear, O my children, know your mother's voice !

CHOR. With mournful voice dost thou address the dead ;
 And throwing on the ground thy aged limbs
 Dig with thy hands the earth. Behold, I bend
 My knee with thine, and grov'ling on the ground
 Call our unhappy husbands laid beneath.

HEC. Ah, we are borne, are dragged,

CHOR.

O mournful voice !

HEC. Dragged to the house of slavery.

CHOR.

From my country.

HEC. O Priam, Priam, thou indeed art fall'n,
Thou hast no tomb, no friend ; but of my woes
Thou knowst not ; for black death hath closed thine eyes ;
By impious slaughter is the pious fall'n !

CHOR. Ye temples of the gods, and thou, loved town,
Destruction from the flames and pointed spear
Is on you ; low on earth you soon will lie,
Your glories vanished ; for the dust, like smoke
On light wings mounting high, will leave my house
An undistinguished ruin ; e'en thy name,
My country, shall be lost. In different forms
Destruction comes on all. Troy is no more.

HEC. Heard you that dreadful crash ? It was the fall
Of Pergamus. The city rocks—it rocks,
And crushed beneath the rolling ruin sinks.
My limbs, my trembling limbs, hence, bear me hence.

TALT. Go to the wretched day of servile life.
Alas, unhappy city ! But from hence
Go, to the Grecian ships advance thy steps.

II

THE BACCHANALS

AND OTHER PLAYS

II

THE BACCHANALS	PAGE 9
ION	47
MEDEA	109
THE PHŒNICIAN DAMSELS	159
THE SUPPLIANTS	223
HIPPOLYTUS	269

INTRODUCTION.

THE beautiful translation of "The Bacchanals" which opens this volume was made by the late Henry Hart Milman, who was Dean of St. Paul's when he died in 1868. It had its origin in English verse translations made to illustrate a course of Latin Lectures on the History of Greek Poetry, delivered when Milman had made his own reputation as a dramatic poet with "Fazio" in 1815, "The Fall of Jerusalem" in 1820, and "The Martyr of Antioch" in 1821. In that year 1821, Milman—who was then Vicar of St. Mary's, Reading—was elected to the Oxford Professorship of Poetry. He had been known in Oxford as a poet from his student years. In 1812 he had carried off the Newdigate Prize for an English Poem on the Apollo Belvedere, and he had three times obtained the Chancellor's Prize. As Poetry Professor he translated specimens of the Greek Dramatists upon whose art he lectured. These translations he published in 1865, with a development of two of the plays—"The Agamemnon" of Æschylus and "The Bacchanals" of Euripides—into complete versions. The volume in which these plays were published,* with the translated Passages of Greek Poetry which had been set in the lectures given many years before, is a beautiful book, illustrated with woodcuts drawn from antique gems—the sort of book that ranks with the best ornaments of a well-furnished home. I thank most heartily the poet's son, Mr. Arthur Milman, and Mr. John Murray the publisher, for leave to borrow from the volume this translation of "The Bacchanals," for the purpose of giving to English readers a fuller sense of the genius of Euripides than they might get from the faithful last century translators upon whom we have chiefly to depend.

The other plays in this volume are given in the translations of Michael Wodhull, who published in 1809 his version of "The Nineteen Tragedies and Fragments of Euripides." Wodhull had published

* "The Agamemnon of Æschylus and the Bacchanals of Euripides with Passages from the Lyric and Later Poets of Greece." Translated by Henry Hart Milman, D.D., Dean of St. Paul's. John Murray. 1865.

a limited edition of 150 copies of his own Poems in 1772, and published also in 1798 a poem on "The Equality of Mankind;" but he did not win, as Milman has won, enduring recognition as an English poet. He spent, however, many years of patient work, with great enjoyment, upon the endeavour to produce an accurate translation of the whole works of Euripides that now remain. His first design was to translate selected plays, but where choice was difficult and zeal was active there was nothing that could be left out. Wodhull's verse has too many prosaic turns, but it is well that the English reader should see Euripides through the eyes of more than one translator.

Dean Milman translated "The Bacchanals" because he regarded it as, on the whole, entitled to the highest place among the plays of Euripides, though there may be passages of more surpassing beauty in "The Medea" and "The Hippolytus;" in "The Alcestis" and "Iphigenia" of greater tenderness. He observed that even Lord Macaulay, with his contemptuous depreciation of Euripides, acknowledged the transcendent excellence of "The Bacchæ," the only surviving Greek tragedy connected with the worship and mystic history of Dionysus—Bacchus.

In the "Christus Patiens," ascribed to Gregory of Nazianzen, who was made Bishop of Constantinople in the year 380 and died in 389, some lines given by Euripides to Agave in "The Bacchanals" were transferred to the Virgin Mary's lament over her son, and this use of the passage led to its omission from all texts of Euripides that have come down to us. "I have been audacious enough," said Dean Milman, "to endeavour to make restitution to the Heathen; and from the hints furnished by the 'Christus Patiens,' and of course other images more suited to her tragic state as the murderess of her son, to supply the speech of Agave, distinguishing it by a different type."

Michael Wodhull includes in his volumes as a guide among the incidents of many of the Greek Plays a "History of the House of Tantalus." In short, it runs thus, to the siege of Troy.

Tmolus, a Lydian king, married Pluto, and, Jupiter intervening, Pluto was mother of Tantalus. Tantalus lived at Sipylus, with riches that became proverbial. The gods came to dine with him, but, through vanity, he told again their counsels that he heard, for which he was placed after death to thirst in the midst of a lake from which it was impossible to drink, or according to Euripides (in "Orestes") had an enormous stone hanging over his head. That he dished up for the gods the limbs of his son Pelops, Iphigenia in Tauris calls a fable of savages who excuse their own cruelty by finding its like in higher places. Tantalus by his wife Euryanassa had two sons, Pelops and Broteas, and one daughter, Niobe. Niobe married Amphion, who raised the walls of Thebes by music of his lyre. Having seen all her children slain by the shafts of Apollo and Diana, Niobe, all tears, was changed into a rock.

The tomb of her seven daughters is spoken of in the play of "The Phœnician Damsels" as not far from the gates of Thebes. Sipylus, in which Tantalus ruled, was swallowed by an earthquake, and Tantalus, having by a false oath denied a pledge, was killed by Jupiter, who hunted him down the mountain at the foot of which Sipylus stood.

Pelops succeeded his father Tantalus. Defeated in contests with Ilius, founder of the Trojan nation, he sought alliance with Greece by marrying Hippodamia, daughter of Cœnomaus, king of Pisa. She was to be given to the man who overcame her father in a chariot race, but he who did not overcome was to be slain. Cœnomaus was first always, because his chariot was driven by Myrtilus, the son of Mercury. But Pelops made a base compact with Myrtilus, who joined the wheels of Cœnomaus to his chariot with wax, and caused his overthrow when in the race with Pelops. A dispute followed, in which Pelops killed Cœnomaus with a spear. He killed also Myrtilus, the son of Mercury, rather than fulfil the compact he had made. This drew down the vengeance of Mercury upon Atreus and Thyestes, the two eldest of the seven sons of Pelops. Pelops himself thrived, made prosperous alliances, and gathered into one the territories of Apia and Pelasgia, so that the whole peninsula of Greece was called after him the Peloponnessus. One of his sons, Pitheus, whom Euripides celebrates for piety, was the father of Æthra who was the mother of Theseus, who was the father of Hippolitus. Pelops had for one daughter Anaxibia, who married Strophilius, king of Phocis, and was the mother of Pylades, friend to his kinsman Orestes; for another daughter, Lysidice, who married Electryon, king of Mycene, and was the mother of Alcmena, who married Amphitryon, and became the mother of Hercules. Pelops had also another daughter, Nicippe, who married Sthenelus. He seized the throne of Mycene when Amphitryon had accidentally killed Electryon his father-in-law. Nicippe and Sthenelus had a son Eurystheus, who succeeded his father in Mycene, and whose ill-treatment of Hercules and of the children of Hercules is treated of by Euripides in his play of "The Children of Hercules."

Pelops had also a natural son, Chrysippus, who was treacherously stolen from him by Laius his guest. For this breach of hospitality Laius, as the oracle foretold, died by the hands of his own son Cœdipus.

After the death of Pelops his eldest sons Atreus and Thyestes ruled together in Argos; until Mercury caused a ram with a golden fleece to appear among the flocks of Atreus, who took it as a sign that he alone should rule. The citizens of Argos were invited to decide. Before they met, Thyestes, by collusion with Ærope the wife of Atreus, conveyed the Golden Ram into his own stalls and obtained the vote of the people. Atreus in revenge caused the two children of his

false wife and Thyestes to be served up to Thyestes at a feast. At this horror portents appeared in the skies. Atreus drowned Ærope, drove Thyestes out of Argos, and not only ruled in Argos but added Mycene when Eurystheus had been slain by the sons of Hercules. But Ægisthus, a son of Thyestes by his own daughter Pelopia, murdered his uncle Atreus and made his father again king in Argos. Atreus had by his wife Ærope, before she gave herself to Thyestes, two sons, Agamemnon and Menelaus. They were sent for protection against their uncle Thyestes to the court of Polyidas, king of Sicyon, who sent them on to Ceneus, king of Etolia.

Agamemnon, while thus in difficulties, killed a Tantalus junior, grandson to the founder of the family. He killed this Tantalus that he might take possession of his wife Clytemnestra, daughter to Tyndarus, king of Sparta. Euripides in the "*Iphigenia in Aulis*" makes Clytemnestra reproach Agamemnon with having also killed the infant child of her first marriage by tearing it out of her arms and dashing it upon the floor. Castor and Pollux, sons of Leda by Jupiter Swan, made war then upon Agamemnon and reduced him to submission. Tyndarus king of Sparta then gave Clytemnestra to Agamemnon for a wife, and also helped him and his brother Menelaus to subdue Thyestes, who took refuge at an altar of Juno, and gave himself up to his nephews on promise that they would spare his life. They deposed him and confined him for the rest of his days in the island of Cithera.

Clytemnestra's sister, the other daughter of Tyndarus, king of Sparta, was Helen, who had the chief princes of Greece for suitors. Tyndarus made them swear to support whatever man she might herself choose for husband, and her choice fell upon Menelaus. But soon after the marriage Paris, one of the sons of Priam, king of Troy, came with a splendid following to Sparta, and while her husband was away on business at Crete, Paris persuaded Helen to elope with him. Menelaus sent to demand her back from Troy. The Trojans kept her, and war followed with the siege of Troy, during which, according to Euripides in his play of "*Helen*," the real Helen had been conveyed by Mercury through the air and placed in the care of Proteus, king of Egypt, where she remained of stainless character, while Paris at Troy had only a cloud-image of her. Menelaus on his return from the ten years' war, driven upon the coast of Egypt, found his own Helen all that he could wish.

II. M

January 1898.

EURIPIDES.

THE BACCHANALS.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

DIONYSUS.

CHORUS OF BACCHANALS.

TIRESIAS.

CADMUS.

PENTHEUS.

ATTENDANT.

MESSENGER.

SECOND MESSENGER.

AGAVE.

DIONYSUS.

UNTO this land of Thebes I come, Jove's son,
Dionysus ; he whom Semele of yore,
'Mid the dread midwifery of lightning fire,
Bore, Cadmus' daughter. In a mortal form,
The God put off, by Dirce's stream I stand,
And cool Ismenos' waters ; and survey
My mother's grave, the thunder-slain, the ruins
Still smouldering of that old ancestral palace,
The flame still living of the lightning fire,
Herè's immortal vengeance 'gainst my mother.

And well hath reverent Cadmus set his ban
On that heaven-stricken, unapproached place.
His daughter's tomb, which I have mantled o'er
With the pale verdure of the trailing vine.

And I have left the golden Lydian shores,
The Phrygian and the Persian sun-seared plains,
And Bactria's walls ; the Medes' wild wintry land

Have passed, and Araby the Blest ; and all
Of Asia, that along the salt-sea coast
Lifts up her high-towered cities, where the Greeks,
With the Barbarians mingled, dwell in peace.

And everywhere my sacred choirs, mine Orgies
Have founded, by mankind confessed a God.
Now first in an Hellenic town I stand.

Of all the Hellenic land here first in Thebes,
I have raised my revel shout, my fawn-skin donned,
Ta'en in my hand my thyrsus, ivy-crowned.

But here, where least beseemed, my mother's sisters
Vowed Dionysus was no son of Jove :
That Semele, by mortal paramour won,
Belied great Jove as author of her sin ;
'Twas but old Cadmus' craft : hence Jove in wrath
Struck dead the bold usurper of his bed.

So from their homes I've goaded them in frenzy ;
Their wits all crazed, they wander o'er the mountains,
And I have forced them wear my wild attire.
There's not a woman of old Cadmus' race,
But I have maddened from her quiet house ;
Unseemly mingled with the sons of Thebes,
On the roofless rocks, 'neath the pale pines, they sit.

Needs must this proud recusant city learn,
In our dread Mysteries initiate,

Her guilt, and humbly seek to make atonement
To me, for Semele, mine outraged mother—
To me, the God confessed, of Jove begot.

Old Cadmus now his might and kingly rule
To Pentheus hath given up, his sister's son,
My godhead's foe ; who from the rich libation
Repels me, nor makes mention of my name
In holy prayer. Wherefore to him, to Thebes,
And all her sons, soon will I terribly show
That I am born a God : and so depart
(Here all things well disposed) to other lands,
Making dread revelation of myself.

But if this Theban city, in her ire,
With arms shall seek to drive from off the mountains

My Bacchanal rout, at my wild Mænads' head
 I'll meet, and mingle in the awful war.
 Hence have I ta'en the likeness of a man,
 Myself transmuted into human form.

But ye, who Tmolus, Lydia's strength, have left
 My Thyasus of women, whom I have led
 From lands barbarian, mine associates here,
 And fellow-pilgrims ; lift ye up your drums,
 Familiar in your native Phrygian cities,
 Made by your mother Rhea's craft and mine ;
 And beat them all round Pentheus' royal palace,
 Beat, till the city of Cadmus throngs to see.
 I to the Bacchanals in the dim glens
 Of wild Cithæron go to lead the dance.

CHOR. From the Asian shore,
 And by the sacred steep of Tmolus hoar,
 Light I danced with wing-like feet,
 Toilless toil and labour sweet !
 Away ! away ! whoe'er he be ;
 Leave our path, our temple free !
 Seal up each silent lip in holy awe.
 But I, obedient to thy law,
 O Dionysus ! chant the choral hymn to thee.

Blest above all of human line,
 Who, deep in mystic rites divine,
 Leads his hallowed life with us,
 Initiate in our Thyasus ;
 And, purified with holiest waters,
 Goes dancing o'er the hills with Bacchus' daughters.
 And thy dark orgies hallows he,
 O mighty Mother, Cybele !
 He his thyrsus shaking round,
 All his locks with ivy crowned,
 O Dionysus ! boasts of thy dread train to be.

Bacchanals ! away, away !
 Lead your God in fleet array ;
 Bacchus lead, the ever young,
 A God himself from Gods that sprung,

From the Phrygian mountains down
 Through every wide-squared Grecian town.
 Him the Theban queen of yore
 'Mid Jove's fast-flashing lightnings bore :
 In her awful travail wild
 Sprung from her womb the untimely child,
 While smitten with the thunderblast
 The sad mother breathed her last.

Instant him Saturnian Jove
 Received with all a mother's love ;
 In his secret thigh immured,
 There with golden clasps secured,
 Safe from Herè's jealous sight ;
 Then, as the Fates fulfilled, to light
 He gave the hornéd god, and wound
 The living snakes his brows around ;
 Whence still the wandéd Mænads bear
 Their serpent prey wreathed in their floating hair.

Put on thy ivy crown,
 O Thebes, thou sacred town !
 O hallowed house of dark-haired Semele !
 Bloom, blossom everywhere,
 With flowers and fruitage fair,
 And let your frenzied steps supported be
 With thyrsi from the oak
 Or the green ash-tree broke :
 Your spotted fawn-skins line with locks
 Torn from the snowy fleecéd flocks :
 Shaking his wanton wand let each advance,
 And all the land shall madden with the dance.

Bromius, that his revel rout
 To the mountains leads about ;
 To the mountains leads along,
 Where awaits the female throng ;
 From the distaff, from the loom,
 Raging with the God they come.
 O ye mountains, wild and high,
 Where the old Kouretæ lie ;

Glens of Crete, where Jove was nurst,
 In your sunless caverns first
 The crested Korybantes found
 The leathern drums mysterious round,
 That, mingling in harmonious strife
 With the sweet-breathed Phrygian fife,
 In Mother Rhea's hands they place,
 Meet the Bacchic song to grace.
 And the frantic Satyrs round
 That ancient Goddess leap and bound :
 And soon the Trieteric dances light
 Began, immortal Bacchus' chief delight.

On the mountains wild 'tis sweet
 When faint with rapid dance our feet ;
 Our limbs on earth all careless thrown
 With the sacred fawn-skins strewn,
 To quaff the goat's delicious blood,
 A strange, a rich, a savage food.
 Then off again the revel goes
 O'er Phrygian, Lydian mountain brows ;
 Evoë ! Evoë ! leads the road,
 Bacchus self the maddening God !
 And flows with milk the plain, and flows with wine,
 Flows with the wild bees' nectar-dews divine ;
 And soars, like smoke, the Syrian incense pale—
 The while the frantic Bacchanal
 The beaconing pine-torch on her wand
 Whirls around with rapid hand,
 And drives the wandering dance about,
 Beating time with joyous shout,
 And casts upon the breezy air
 All her rich luxuriant hair ;
 Ever the burthen of her song,
 " Raging, maddening, haste along
 Bacchus' daughters, ye the pride
 Of golden Tmolus' fabled side ;
 While your heavy cymbals ring,
 Still your 'Evoë ! Evoë !' sing !"

Evoë ! the Evian god rejoices
 In Phrygian tones and Phrygian voices,
 When the soft holy pipe is breathing sweet,
 In notes harmonious to her feet,
 Who to the mountain, to the mountain speeds ;
 Like some young colt that by its mother feeds,
 Gladsome with many a frisking bound,
 The Bacchanal goes forth and treads the echoing ground.

TIR. Ho ! some one in the gates, call from his palace
 Cadmus, Agenor's son, who, Sidon's walls
 Leaving, built up this towered city of Thebes.
 Ho ! some one say, " Tiresias awaits him."
 Well knows he why I am here ; the covenant
 Which I, th' old man, have made with him still older,
 To lift the thyrsus wand, the fawn-skin wear,
 And crown our grey hairs with the ivy leaves.

CAD. Best friend ! with what delight within my palace
 I heard thy speech, the speech of a wise man !
 Lo ! I am here, in the Gods' sacred garb ;
 For needs must we, the son of mine own daughter,
 Dionysus, now 'mongst men a manifest God,
 Even to the utmost of our power extol.
 Where shall we lead the dance, plant the light foot,
 And shake the hoary locks ? Tiresias, thou
 The aged lead the aged : wise art thou,
 Nor will I weary night and day the earth
 Beating with my lithe thyrsus. Oh, how sweetly
 Will we forget we are old !

TIR. Thou'rt as myself :
 I too grow young ; I too essay the dance.
 CAD. Shall we, then, in our chariots seek the mountains ?
 TIR. It were not the same homage to the God.
 CAD. The old man still shall be the old man's tutor.
 TIR. The God will guide us thither without toil.
 CAD. Of all the land, join we alone the dance ?
 TIR. All else misjudge ; we only are the wise.
 CAD. Too long we linger ; hold thou fast mine hand.
 TIR. Lo ! thus true yoke-fellows join hand with hand.
 CAD. I, mortal-born, may not despise the Gods.

TIR. No wile, no paltering with the deities.
The ancestral faith, coeval with our race,
No subtle reasoning, if it soar aloft
Even to the height of wisdom, can o'erthrow.
Some one will say that I disgrace mine age,
Rapt in the dance, and ivy-crowned my head.
The Gods admit no difference : old or young,
All it behoves to mingle in the rite.
From all he will receive the common honour,
Nor deign to count his countless votaries.

CAD. Since thou, Tiresias, seest not day's sweet light,
I, as thy Seer, must tell thee what is coming.
Lo, Pentheus, hurrying homewards to his palace,
Echion's son, to whom I have given the kingdom.
He is strangely moved ! What new thing will he say ?

PEN. I have been absent from this land, and hear
Of strange and evil doings in the city.
Our women all have left their homes, to join
These fabled mysteries. On the shadowy rocks
Frequent they sit, this God of yesterday,
Dionysus, whosoe'er he be, with revels
Dishonourable honouring. In the midst
Stand the crowned goblets ; and each stealing forth,
This way and that, creeps to a lawless bed ;
In pretext, holy sacrificing Mænads,
But serving Aphrodite more than Bacchus.
All whom I've apprehended, in their gyves
Our officers guard in the public prison.
Those that have 'scaped I'll hunt from off the mountains,
Ino, Agave who to Echion bare me,
Her too, Autonoe, Antæus' mother ;
And fettering them all in iron bonds,
I'll put an end to their mad wickedness.
'Tis said a stranger hath appeared among us,
A wizard, sorcerer, from the land of Lydia,
Beauteous with golden locks and purple cheeks,
Eyes moist with Aphrodite's melting fire.
And day and night he is with the throng, to guile
Young maidens to the soft inebriate rites.

But if I catch him 'neath this roof, I'll silence
 The beating of his thyrsus, stay his locks'
 Wild tossing, from his body severing his neck.
 He, say they, is the new God, Dionysus,
 That was sewn up within the thigh of Jove.
 He, with his mother, guiltily that boasted
 Herself Jove's bride, was blasted by the lightning.
 Are not such deeds deserving the base halter?
 Sin heaped on sin! who'er this stranger be.

But lo, new wonders! see I not Tiresias,
 The prophet, in the dappled fawn-skin clad?
 My mother's father too (a sight for laughter!)
 Tossing his hair? My sire, I blush for thee;
 Beholding thine old age thus fatuous grown.
 Wilt not shake off that ivy? free thine hand
 From that unseemly wand, my mother's father!
 This is thy work, Tiresias. This new God
 Wilt thou instal 'mongst men, at higher price
 To vend new auspices, and well paid offerings.
 If thine old age were not thy safeguard, thou
 Shouldst pine in chains among the Bacchanal women.
 False teacher of new rites! For where 'mong women
 The grape's sweet poison mingles with the feast,
 Nought holy may we augur of such worship.

CHOR. Oh impious! dost thou not revere the Gods,
 Nor Cadmus, who the earth-born harvest sowed?
 Echion's son! how dost thou shame thy lineage!

TIR. 'Tis easy to be eloquent, for him
 That's skilled in speech, and hath a stirring theme.
 Thou hast the flowing tongue as of a wise man,
 But there's no wisdom in thy fluent words;
 For the bold demagogue, powerful in speech,
 Is but a dangerous citizen, lacking sense.
 This the new deity thou laugh'st to scorn,
 I may not say how mighty he will be
 Throughout all Hellas. Youth! there are two things
 Man's primal need, Demeter, the boon Goddess
 (Or rather will ye call her Mother Earth?),
 With solid food maintains the race of man.

He, on the other hand, the son of Semele,
Found out the grape's rich juice, and taught us mortals
That which beguiles the miserable of mankind
Of sorrow, when they quaff the vine's rich stream.
Sleep too, and drowsy oblivion of care
He gives, all-healing medicine of our woes.
He 'mong the gods is worshipped a great god,
Author confessed to man of such rich blessings.
Him dost thou laugh to scorn, as in Jove's thigh
Sewn up. This truth profound will I unfold :
When Jove had snatched him from the lightning-fire,
He to Olympus bore the new-born babe.
Stern Herè strove to thrust him out of heaven,
But Jove encountered her with wiles divine :
He clove off part of th' earth-encircling air,
There Dionysus placed the pleasing hostage,
Aloof from jealous Herè. So men said
Hereafter he was cradled in Jove's thigh
(From the assonance of words in our old tongue
For thigh and hostage the wild fable grew).
A prophet is our god, for Bacchanalism
And madness are alike prophetic.
And when the god comes down in all his power,
He makes the mad to rave of things to come.
Of Ares he hath attributes : he the host
In all its firm array and serried arms,
With panic fear scatters, ere lance cross lance :
From Dionysus springs this frenzy too.

And him shall we behold on Delphi's crags
Leaping, with his pine torches lighting up
The rifts of the twin-headed rock ; and shouting
And shaking all around his Bacchic wand
Great through all Hellas. Pentheus, be advised !
Vaunt not thy power o'er man, even if thou thinkest
That thou art wise (it is diseased, thy thought),
Think it not ! In the land receive the god.
Pour wine, and join the dance, and crown thy brows.
Dionysus does not force our modest matrons
To the soft Cyprian rites ; the chaste by nature

Are not so cheated of their chastity.
 Think well of this, for in the Bacchic choir
 The holy woman will not be less holy.
 Thou'rt proud, when men to greet thee throng the gates,
 And the glad city welcomes Pentheus' name ;
 He too, I ween, delights in being honoured.

I, therefore, and old Cadmus whom thou mock'st,
 Will crown our heads with ivy, dance along
 An hoary pair—for dance perforce we must ;
 I war not with the gods. Follow my counsel ;
 Thou'rt at the height of madness, there's no medicine
 Can minister to disease so deep as thine.

CHOR. Old man ! thou sham'st not Phœbus thine own god.
 Wise art thou worshipping that great god Bromius.

CAD. My son ! Tiresias well hath counselled thee ;
 Dwell safe with us within the pale of law.
 Now thou fliest high : thy sense is void of sense.
 Even if, as thou declar'st, he were no god,
 Call thou him god. It were a splendid falsehood
 If Semele be thought t' have borne a god ;
 'Twere honour unto us and to our race.
 Hast thou not seen Actæon's wretched fate ?
 The dogs he bred, who fed from his own board,
 Rent him in wrath to pieces ; for he vaunted
 Than Artemis to be a mightier hunter.
 So do not thou : come, let me crown thine head
 With ivy, and with us adore the god.

PEN. Hold off thine hand ! Away ! Go rave and dance,
 And wipe not off thy folly upon me.
 On him, thy folly's teacher, I will wreak
 Instant relentless justice. Some one go,
 The seats from which he spies the flight of birds—
 False augur—with the iron forks o'erthrow,
 Scattering in wild confusion all abroad,
 And cast his chaplets to the winds and storms ;
 Thou'lt gall him thus, gall to the height of bitterness.
 Ye to the city ! seek that stranger out,
 That womanly man, who with this new disease
 Afflicts our matrons, and defiles their beds :

Seize him and bring him hither straight in chains,
That he may suffer stoning, that dread death.
Such be his woful orgies here in Thebes.

TIR. Oh, miserable ! That know'st not what thou sayest,
Crazed wert thou, now thou'rt at the height of madness :
But go we, Cadmus, and pour forth our prayer,
Even for this savage and ungodly man,
And for our city, lest the god o'ertake us
With some strange vengeance.

Come with thy ivy staff,

Lean thou on me, and I will lean on thee :
'Twere sad for two old men to fall, yet go
We must, and serve great Bacchus, son of Jove.
What woe, O Cadmus, will this woe-named man
Bring to thine house ! I speak not now as prophet,
But a plain simple fact : fools still speak folly.

CHOR. Holy goddess ! Goddess old !
Holy ! thou the crown of gold
In the nether realm that wearest,
Pentheus' awful speech thou hearest,
Hearest his insulting tone
'Gainst Semele's immortal son,
Bromius, of gods the first and best.
At every gay and flower-crowned feast,
His the dance's jocund strife,
And the laughter with the fife,
Every care and grief to lull,
When the sparkling wine-cup full
Crowns the gods' banquets, or lets fall
Sweet sleep on the eyes of men at mortal festival.

Of tongue unbridled without awe,
Of madness spurning holy law,
Sorrow is the Jove-doomed close ;
But the life of calm repose
And modest reverence holds her state
Unbroken by disturbing fate ;
And knits whole houses in the tie
Of sweet domestic harmony.

Beyond the range of mortal eyes
 'Tis not wisdom to be wise.
 Life is brief, the present clasp,
 Nor after some bright future grasp.
 Such were the wisdom, as I ween,
 Only of frantic and ill-counselled men.

Oh, would to Cyprus I might roam,
 Soft Aphrodite's isle,
 Where the young loves have their perennial home,
 That soothe men's hearts with tender guile :
 Or to that wondrous shore where ever
 The hundred-mouthed barbaric river
 Makes teem with wealth the showerless land !
 O lead me ! lead me, till I stand,
 Bromius !—sweet Bromius !—where high swelling
 Soars the Pierian muses' dwelling—
 Olympus' summit hoar and high—
 Thou revel-loving deity !

For there are all the graces,
 And sweet desire is there,
 And to those hallowed places
 To lawful rites the Bacchanals repair.
 The deity, the son of Jove,
 The banquet is his joy,
 Peace, the wealth-giver, doth he love,
 That nurse of many a noble boy.
 Not the rich man's sole possessing ;
 To the poor the painless blessing
 Gives he of the wine-cup bright.
 Him he hates, who day and night,
 Gentle night, and gladsome day,
 Cares not thus to while away.
 Be thou wisely unsevere !
 Shun the stern and the austere !
 Follow the multitude ;
 Their usage still pursue !
 Their homely wisdom rude
 (Such is my sentence) is both right and true.

OFFICER. Pentheus, we are here ! In vain we went not forth ;
 The prey which thou commandest we have taken.
 Gentle our quarry met us, nor turned back
 His foot in flight, but held out both his hands ;
 Became not pale, changed not his ruddy colour.
 Smiling he bade us bind, and lead him off,
 Stood still, and made our work a work of ease.
 Reverent I said, " Stranger, I arrest thee not
 Of mine own will, but by the king's command."
 But all the Bacchanals, whom thou hadst seized
 And bound in chains within the public prison,
 All now have disappeared, released they are leaping
 In their wild orgies, hymning the god Bacchus.
 Spontaneous fell the chains from off their feet ;
 The bolts drew back untouched by mortal hand.
 In truth this man, with many wonders rife
 Comes to our Thebes. 'Tis thine t' ordain the rest.

PEN. Bind fast his hands ! Thus in his manacles
 Sharp must he be indeed to 'scape us now.
 There's beauty, stranger—woman-witching beauty
 (Therefore thou art in Thebes)—in thy soft form ;
 Thy fine bright hair, not coarse like the hard athlete's,
 Is mantling o'er thy cheek warm with desire ;
 And carefully thou hast cherished thy white skin ;
 Not in the sun's swart beams, but in cool shade,
 Wooing soft Aphrodite with thy loveliness.
 But tell me first, from whence hath sprung thy race ?

DIO. There needs no boast ; 'tis easy to tell this :
 Of flowery Tmolus hast thou haply heard ?

PEN. Yea ; that which girds around the Sardinian city.

DIO. Thence am I come, my country Lydia.

PEN. Whence unto Hellas bringest thou thine orgies ?

DIO. Dionysus, son of Jove, hath hallowed them.

PEN. Is there a Jove then, that begets new gods ?

DIO. No, it was here he wedded Semele.

PEN. Hallowed he them by night, or in the eye of day ?

DIO. In open vision he revealed his orgies.

PEN. And what, then, is thine orgies' solemn form ?

DIO. That is not uttered to the uninitiate.

PEN. What profit, then, is theirs who worship him?

DIO. Thou mayst not know, though precious were that knowledge.

PEN. A cunning tale, to make me long to hear thee.

DIO. The orgies of our god scorn impious worshippers.

PEN. Thou saw'st the manifest god! What was his form?

DIO. Whate'er he would: it was not mine to choose.

PEN. Cleverly blinked our question with no answer.

DIO. Who wiseliest speaks, to the fool speaks foolishness.

PEN. And hither com'st thou first with thy new god!

DIO. There's no Barbarian but adores these rites.

PEN. Being much less wise than we Hellenians.

DIO. In this more wise. Their customs differ much.

PEN. Performest thou these rites by night or day?

DIO. Most part by night—night hath more solemn awe.

PEN. A crafty rotten plot to catch our women.

DIO. Even in the day bad men can do bad deeds.

PEN. Thou of thy wiles shalt pay the penalty.

DIO. Thou of thine ignorance—impious towards the gods!

PEN. He's bold, this Bacchus—ready enough in words.

DIO. What penalty? what evil wilt thou do me?

PEN. First will I clip away those soft bright locks.

DIO. My locks are holy, dedicate to my god.

PEN. Next, give thou me that thyrsus in thine hand.

DIO. Take it thyself; 'tis Dionysus' wand.

PEN. I'll bind thy body in strong iron chains.

DIO. My god himself will loose them when he will.

PEN. When thou invok'st him 'mid thy Bacchanals.

DIO. Even now he is present; he beholds me now.

PEN. Where is he then? Mine eyes perceive him not.

DIO. Near me: the impious eyes may not discern him.

PEN. Seize on him, for he doth insult our Thebes.

DIO. I warn thee, bind me not; the insane, the sane.

PEN. I, stronger than thou art, say I will bind thee.

DIO. Thou know'st not where thou art, or what thou art.

PEN. Pentheus, Agave's son, my sire Echion.

DIO. Thou hast a name whose very sound is woe.

PEN. Away, go bind him in our royal stable,
That he may sit in midnight gloom profound:

There lead thy dance ! But those thou hast hither led,
 Thy guilt's accomplices, we'll sell for slaves ;
 Or, silencing their noise and beating drums,
 As handmaids to the distaff set them down.

DIO. Away then ! 'Tis not well I bear such wrong ;
 The vengeance for this outrage he will wreak
 Whose being thou deniest, Dionysus :
 Outraging me, ye bind him in your chains.

CHOR. Holy virgin-haunted water !
 Ancient Achelous' daughter !
 Dirce ! in thy crystal wave
 Thou the child of Jove didst lave.
 Thou, when Zeus, his awful sire,
 Snatched him from the immortal fire ;
 And locked him up within his thigh,
 With a loud but gentle cry—
 " Come, my Dithyrambus, come,
 Enter thou the masculine womb ! "

Lo ! to Thebes I thus proclaim,
 " Twice born ! " thus thy mystic name.
 Blessed Dirce ! dost thou well
 From thy green marge to repel
 Me, and all my jocund round,
 With their ivy garlands crowned.

Why dost fly me ?

Why deny me ?

By all the joys of wine I swear,
 Bromius still shall be my care.

Oh, what pride ! pride unforgiven
 Manifests, against high heaven
 Th' earth-born, whom in mortal birth
 'Gat Echion, son of earth ;
 Pentheus of the dragon brood,
 Not of human flesh and blood ;
 But portent dire, like him whose pride,
 The Titan, all the gods defied.
 Me, great Bromius' handmaid true ;
 Me, with all my festive crew,

Thralled in chains he still would keep
In his palace dungeon deep.

Seest thou this, O son of Jove,
Dionysus, from above?
Thy rapt prophets dost thou see
At strife with dark necessity?

The golden wand

In thy right hand.

Come, come thou down Olympus' side,
And quell the bloody tyrant in his pride.

Art thou holding revel now
On Nysas' wild beast-haunted brow?
Is't thy Thyasus that clambers
O'er Corycia's mountain chambers?
Or on Olympus, thick with wood,
With his harp where Orpheus stood,
And led the forest trees along,
Led the wild beasts with his song.

O Pieria, blessed land,
Evius hallows thee, advancing,
With his wild choir's mystic dancing.

Over rapid Axios' strand
He shall pass; o'er Lydia's tide
Then his whirling Mænads guide.
Lydia, parent boon of health,
Giver to man of boundless wealth;
Washing many a sunny mead,
Where the prancing coursers feed.

DIO. What ho! what ho! ye Bacchanals!
Rouse and wake! your master calls.

CHOR. Who is here? and what is he
That calls upon our wandering train?

DIO. What ho! what ho! I call again!
The son of Jove and Semele.

CHOR. What ho! what ho! our lord and master:
Come, with footsteps fast and faster,
Join our revel! Bromius, speed,
Till quakes the earth beneath our tread.
Alas! alas!

Soon shall Pentheus' palace wall
Shake and crumble to its fall.

DIO. Bacchus treads the palace floor !
Adore him !

CHOR. Oh ! we do adore !
Behold ! behold !

The pillars with their weight above,
Of ponderous marble, shake and move.
Hark ! the trembling roof within
Bacchus shouts his mighty din.

DIO. The kindling lamp of the dark lightning bring !
Fire, fire the palace of the guilty king.

CHOR. Behold ! behold ! it flames ! Do ye not see,
Around the sacred tomb of Semele,
The blaze, that left the lightning there,
When Jove's red thunder fired the air ?
On the earth, supine and low,

Your shuddering limbs, ye Mænads, throw !
The king, the Jove-born god, destroying all,
In widest ruin strews the palace wall.

DIO. O, ye Barbarian women, Thus prostrate in dismay ;
Upon the earth ye've fallen ! See ye not, as ye may,
How Bacchus Pentheus' palace In wrath hath shaken down ?
Rise up ! rise up ! take courage—Shake off that trembling swoon.

CHOR. O light that goodliest shinest Over our mystic rite,
In state forlorn we saw thee—Saw with what deep affright !

DIO. How to despair ye yielded As I boldly entered in
To Pentheus, as if captured, Into the fatal gin.

CHOR. How could I less ? Who guards us If thou shouldst
come to woe ?

But how wast thou delivered From thy ungodly foe ?

DIO. Myself, myself delivered, With ease and effort slight.

CHOR. Thy hands, had he not bound them, In halters strong
and tight ?

DIO. 'Twas even then I mocked him : He thought me in his
chain ; [vain !

He touched me not, nor reached me ; His idle thoughts were
In the stable stood a heifer, Where he thought he had me bound :
Round the beast's knees his cords And cloven hoofs he wound.

Wrath-breathing, from his body The sweat fell like a flood :
 He bit his lips in fury, While I beside who stood
 Looked on in unmoved quiet.

As at ahat instant come,
 Shook Bacchus the strong palace, And on his mother's tomb
 Flames kindled. When he saw it, On fire the palace deeming,
 Hither he rushed and thither, For "water, water," screaming ;
 And every slave 'gan labour, But laboured all in vain.
 The toil he soon abandoned. As though I had fled amain
 He rushed into the palace : In his hand the dark sword gleamed.
 Then, as it seemed, great Bromius—I say, but as it seemed—
 In the hall a bright light kindled. On that he rushed, and there,
 As slaying me in vengeance, Stood stabbing the thin air.
 But then the avenging Bacchus Wrought new calamities ;
 From roof to base that palace In smouldering ruin lies.
 Bitter ruing our imprisonment, With toil forspent he threw
 On earth his useless weapon. Mortal, he had dared to do
 'Gainst a god unholy battle. But I, in quiet state,
 Unheeding Pentheus' anger, Came through the palace gate.
 It seems even now his sandal Is sounding on its way :
 Soon is he here before us, And what now will he say ?
 With ease will I confront him, Ire-breathing though he stand.
 'Tis easy to a wise man To practise self-command.

PEN. I am outraged—mocked ! The stranger hath escaped me
 Whom I so late had bound in iron chains.
 Off, off ! He is here !—the man ? How's this ? How stands he
 Before our palace, as just issuing forth ?

DIO. Stay thou thy step ! Subdue thy wrath to peace !

PEN. How, having burst thy chains, hast thou come forth ?

DIO. Said I not—heardst thou not ? "There's one will free
 me !"

PEN. What one ? Thou speakest still words new and strange.

DIO. He who for man plants the rich-tendrilled vine.

PEN. Well layest thou this reproach on Dionysus.

Without there, close and bar the towers around !

DIO. What ! and the gods ! O'erleap they not all walls ?

PEN. Wise in all wisdom save in that thou shouldst have !

DIO. In that I should have wisest still am I.

But listen first, and hear the words of him

Who comes to thee with tidings from the mountains.
Here will we stay. Fear not, we will not fly !

MES. Pentheus, that rulest o'er this land of Thebes !
I come from high Cithæron, ever white
With the bright glittering snow's perennial rays.

PEN. Why com'st thou ? On what pressing mission bound ?

MES. I've seen the frenzied Bacchanals, who had fled
On their white feet, forth goaded from the land.
I come to tell to thee and to this city
The awful deeds they do, surpassing wonder.
But answer first, if I shall freely say
Ail that's done there, or furl my prudent speech ;
For thy quick temper I do fear, O king,
Thy sharp resentment and o'er-royal pride.

PEN. Speak freely. Thou shall part unharmed by me ;
Wrath were not seemly 'gainst the unoffending.
But the more awful what thou sayst of these
Mad women, I the more on him, who hath guiled them
To their wild life, will wreak my just revenge.

MES. Mine herds of heifers I was driving, slow
Winding their way along the mountain crags,
When the sun pours his full beams on the earth.
I saw three bands, three choirs of women : one
Autonoe led, thy mother led the second,
Agave—and the third Ino : and all
Quietly slept, their languid limbs stretched out :
Some resting on the ash-trees' stem their tresses ;
Some with their heads upon the oak-leaves thrown
Careless, but not immodest ; as thou sayest,
That drunken with the goblet and shrill life
In the dusk woods they prowl for lawless love.
Thy mother, as she heard the hornéd steers
Deep lowing, stood up 'mid the Bacchanals
And shouted loud to wake them from their rest.
They from their lids shaking the freshening sleep,
Rose upright, wonderous in their decent guise,
The young, the old, the maiden yet unwed.
And first they loosed their locks over their shoulders.
Their fawn-skins fastened, wheresoe'er the clasps

Had lost their hold, and all the dappled furs
With serpents bound, that lolled out their lithe tongues.
Some in their arms held kid, or wild-wolf's cub,
Suckling it with her white milk ; all the young mothers
Who had left their new-born babes, and stood with breasts
Full swelling : and they all put on their crowns
Of ivy, oak, or flowering eglantine.

One took a thyrsus wand, and struck the rock,
Leaped forth at once a dewy mist of water ;
And one her rod plunged deep in the earth, and there
The god sent up a fountain of bright wine.

And all that longed for the white blameless draught
Light scraping with their finger-ends the soil
Had streams of exquisite milk ; the ivy wands
Distilled from all their tops rich store of honey.

Hadst thou been there, seeing these things, the god
Thou now revil'st thou hadst adored with prayer.

And we, herdsmen and shepherds, gathered around.
And there was strife among us in our words
Of these strange things they did, these marvellous things.
One city-bred, a glib and practised speaker,
Addressed us thus : " Ye that inhabit here
The holy mountain slopes, shall we not chase
Agave, Pentheus' mother, from the Bacchanals,
And win the royal favour ? " Well to us
He seemed to speak ; so, crouched in the thick bushes,
We lay in ambush. They at the appointed hour
Shook their wild thyrsi in the Bacchic dance,
" Iacchus " with one voice, the son of Jove,
" Bromius " invoking. The hills danced with them ;
And the wild beasts ; was nothing stood unmoved.

And I leaped forth, as though to seize on her,
Leaving the sedge where I had hidden myself.
But she shrieked out, " Ho, my swift-footed dogs !
These men would hunt us down, but follow me—
Follow me, all your hands with thyrsi armed."
We fled amain, or by the Bacchanals
We had been torn in pieces. They, with hands
Unarmed with iron, rushed on the browsing steers.

One ye might see a young and vigorous heifer
Hold, lowing in her grasp, like prize of war.
And some were tearing asunder the young calves ;
And ye might see the ribs or cloven hoofs
Hurled wildly up and down, and mangled skins
Were hanging from the ash boughs, dropping blood.
The wanton bulls, proud of their tossing horns
Of yore, fell stumbling, staggering to the ground,
Dragged down by the strong hands of thousand maidens.
And swifter were the entrails torn away
Than drop the lids over your royal eyeballs.

Like birds that skim the earth, they glide along
O'er the wide plains, that by Asopus' streams
Shoot up for Thebes the rich and yellow corn ;
And Hysie and Erythræ, that beneath
Cithæron's crag dwell lowly, like fierce foes
Invading, all with ravage waste and wide
Confounded ; infants snatched from their sweet homes ;
And what they threw across their shoulders, clung
Unfastened, nor fell down to the black ground.
No brass, nor ponderous iron : on their locks
Was fire that burned them not. Of those they spoiled
Some in their sudden fury rushed to arms.
Then was a mightier wonder seen, O king :
From them the pointed lances drew no blood.
But they their thyrsi hurling, javelin-like,
Drave all before, and smote their shameful backs :
Women drave men, but not without the god.

So did they straight return from whence they came,
Even to the fountains, which the god made flow ;
Washed off the blood, and from their cheeks the drops
The serpents licked, and made them bright and clean.
This godhead then, whoever he be, my master !
Receive within our city. Great in all things,
In this I hear men say he is the greatest—
He hath given the sorrow-soothing vine to man
For where wine is not love will never be,
Nor any other joy of human life.

CHOR. I am afraid to speak the words of freedom

Before the tyrant, yet it must be said :

"Inferior to no god is Dionysus."

PEN. 'Tis here then, like a wild fire, burning on,
This Bacchic insolence, Hellas' deep disgrace.
Off with delay ! Go to the Electrian gates
And summon all that bear the shield, and all
The cavalry upon their prancing steeds,
And those that couch the lance, and of the bow
Twang the sharp string. Against these Bacchanals
We will go war. It were indeed too much
From women to endure what we endure.

DIO. Thou wilt not be persuaded by my words,
Pentheus ! Yet though of thee I have suffered wrong,
I warn thee, rise not up against the god.
Rest thou in peace. Bromius will never brook
Ye drive his Mænads from their mountain haunts.

PEN. Wilt teach me ? Better fly and save thyself,
Ere yet I wreak stern justice upon thee.

DIO. Rather do sacrifice, than in thy wrath
Kick 'gainst the pricks—a mortal 'gainst a god.

PEN. I'll sacrifice, and in Cithæron's glens,
As they deserve, a hecatomb of women.

DIO. Soon will ye fly. 'Twere shame that shields of brass
Before the Bacchic thyrsi turn in rout.

PEN. I am bewildered by this dubious stranger ;
Doing or suffering, he holds not his peace.

DIO. My friend ! Thou still mayest bring this to good end.

PEN. How so ? By being the slave of mine own slaves ?

DIO. These women—without force of arms, I'll bring them.

PEN. Alas ! he is plotting now some wile against me !

DIO. But what if I could save thee by mine arts ?

PEN. Ye are all in league, that ye may hold your orgies.

DIO. I am in a league 'tis true, but with the god !

PEN. Bring out mine armour ! Thou, have done thy speech !

DIO. Ha ! wouldst thou see them seated on the mountains ?

PEN. Ay ! for the sight give thousand weight of gold.

DIO. Why hast thou fallen upon this strange desire ?

PEN. 'Twere grief to see them in their drunkenness.

DIO. Yet gladly wouldst thou see, what seen would grieve thee.

PEN. Mark well ! in silence seated 'neath the ash-trees.

- DIO. But if thou goest in secret they will scent thee.
PEN. Best openly, in this thou hast said well.
DIO. But if we lead thee, wilt thou dare the way?
PEN. Lead on, and swiftly! Let no time be lost!
DIO. But first enwrap thee in these linen robes.
PEN. What, will he of a man make me a woman!
DIO. Lest they should kill thee, seeing thee as a man.
PEN. Well dost thou speak; so spake the wise of old.
DIO. Dionysus hath instructed me in this.
PEN. How then can we best do what thou advisest?
DIO. I'll enter in the house, and there array thee.
PEN. What dress? A woman's? I am ashamed to wear it.
DIO. Art thou not eager to behold the Mænads?
PEN. And what dress sayst thou I must wrap around me?
DIO. I'll smooth thine hair down lightly on thy brow.
PEN. What is the second portion of my dress?
DIO. Robes to thy feet, a bonnet on thine head.
PEN. Wilt thou array me then in more than this?
DIO. A thyrsus in thy hand, a dappled fawn-skin.
PEN. I cannot clothe me in a woman's dress.
DIO. Thou wilt have bloodshed, warring on the Mænads.
PEN. 'Tis right, I must go first survey the field.
DIO. 'Twere wiser than to hunt evil with evil.
PEN. How pass the city, unseen of the Thebans?
DIO. We'll go by lone byways; I'll lead thee safe.
PEN. Aught better than be mocked by these loose Bacchanals.
When we come back, we'll counsel what were best.
DIO. Even as you will: I am here at your command.
PEN. So let us on; I must go forth in arms,
Or follow the advice thou givest me.
DIO. Women! this man is in our net; he goes
To find his just doom 'mid the Bacchanals.
Dionysus, to thy work! thou'rt not far off;
Vengeance is ours. Bereave him first of sense;
Yet be his frenzy slight. In his right mind
He never had put on a woman's dress;
But now, thus shaken in his mind, he'll wear it.
A laughing-stock I'll make him to all Thebes,
Led in a woman's dress through the wide city,
For those fierce threats in which he was so great.

But I must go, and Pentheus—in the garb
Which wearing, even by his own mother's hand
Slain, he goes down to Hades. Know he must
Dionysus, son of Jove, among the gods
Mightiest, yet mildest to the sons of men.

CHOR. O when, through the long night,
With fleet foot glancing white,
Shall I go dancing in my revelry,
My neck cast back, and bare
Unto the dewy air,
Like sportive fawn in the green meadow's glee?
Lo, in her fear she springs
Over th' encircling rings,
Over the well-woven nets far off and fast;
While swift along her track
The huntsman cheers his pack,
With panting toil, and fiery storm-wind haste.
Where down the river-bank spreads the wide meadow,
Rejoices she in the untrod solitude.
Couches at length beneath the silent shadow
Of the old hospitable wood.

What is wisest? what is fairest,
Of god's boons to man the rarest?
With the conscious conquering hand
Above the foeman's head to stand.
What is fairest still is dearest.

Slow come, but come at length,
In their majestic strength,
Faithful and true, the avenging deities:
And chastening human folly,
And the mad pride unholy,
Of those who to the gods bow not their knees.
For hidden still and mute,
As glides their printless foot,
The impious on their winding path they hound.
For it is ill to know,
And it is ill to do,
Beyond the law's inexorable bound.

'Tis but light cost in his own power sublime
 To array the godhead, whosoe'er he be ;
 And law is old, even as the oldest time,
 Nature's own unrepealed decree.

What is wisest ? what is fairest,
 Of god's boons to man the rarest ?
 With the conscious conquering hand
 Above the foeman's head to stand.
 What is fairest still is rarest.

Who hath 'scaped the turbulent sea,
 And reached the haven, happy he !
 Happy he whose toils are o'er,
 In the race of wealth and power !
 This one here, and that one there,
 Passes by, and everywhere
 Still expectant thousands over
 Thousand hopes are seen to hover.
 Some to mortals end in bliss ;
 Some have already fled away :
 Happiness alone is his
 That happy is to-day.

DIO. Thou art mad to see that which thou shouldst not see,
 And covetous of that thou shouldst not covet.
 Pentheus ! I say, come forth ! Appear before me,
 Clothed in the Bacchic Mænads' womanly dress ;
 Spy on thy mother and her holy crew,
 Come like in form to one of Cadmus' daughters.

PEN. Ha ! now indeed two suns I seem to see,
 A double Thebes, two seven-gated cities ;
 Thou, as a bull, seemest to go before me,
 And horns have grown upon thine head. Art thou
 A beast indeed ? Thou seem'st a very bull.

DIO. The god is with us ; unpropitious once,
 But now at truce : now seest thou what thou shouldst see ?

PEN. What see I ? Is not that the step of Ino ?
 And is not Agave there, my mother ?

DIO. Methinks 'tis even they whom thou behoid'st ;

But, lo ! this tress hath strayed out of its place,
Not as I braided it, beneath thy bonnet.

PEN. Tossing it this way now, now tossing that,
In Bacchic glee, I have shaken it from its place.

DIO. But we, whose charge it is to watch o'er thee,
Will braid it up again. Lift up thy head.

PEN. Braid as thou wilt, we yield ourselves to thee.

DIO. Thy zone is loosened, and thy robe's long folds
Droop outward, nor conceal thine ankles now.

PEN. Around my right foot so it seems, yet sure
Around the other it sits close and well.

DIO. Wilt thou not hold me for thy best of friends,
Thus strangely seeing the coy Bacchanals ?

PEN. The thyrsus—in my right hand shall I hold it ?
Or thus am I more like a Bacchanal ?

DIO. In thy right hand, and with thy right foot raise it.
I praise the change of mind now come o'er thee.

PEN. Could I not now bear up upon my shoulders
Cithæron's crag, with all the Bacchanals ?

DIO. Thou couldst if 'twere thy will. In thy right mind
Erewhile thou wast not ; now thou art as thou shouldst be.

PEN. Shall I take levers, pluck it up with my hands,
Or thrust mine arm or shoulder 'neath its base ?

DIO. Destroy thou not the dwellings of the nymphs,
The seats where Pan sits piping in his joy.

PEN. Well hast thou said ; by force we conquer not
These women. I'll go hide in yonder ash.

DIO. Within a fatal ambush wilt thou hide thee,
Stealing, a treacherous spy, upon the Mænads.

PEN. And now I seem to see them there like birds
Couching on their soft beds amid the fern.

DIO. Art thou not therefore set as watchman o'er th' m ?
Thou'lt seize them—if they do not seize thee first.

PEN. Lead me triumphant through the land of Thebes !
I, only I, have dared a deed like this.

DIO. Thou art the city's champion, thou alone.
Therefore a strife thou wot'st not of awaits thee.

Follow me ! thy preserver goes before thee ;
Another takes thee hence.

PEN.

Mean'st thou my mother?

DIO. Aloft shalt thou be borne.

PEN.

O the soft carriage!

DIO. In thy mother's hands.

PEN.

Wilt make me thus luxurious?

DIO. Strange luxury, indeed!

PEN.

'Tis my desert.

DIO. Thou art awful!—awful! Doomed to awful end!

Thy glory shall soar up to the high heavens!

Stretch forth thine hand, Agave!—ye her kin,

Daughters of Cadmus! To a terrible grave

Lead I this youth! Myself shall win the prize—

Bromius and I; the event will show the rest.

CHOR. Ho! fleet dogs and furious, to the mountains, ho!
Where their mystic revels Cadmus' daughters keep.

Rouse them, goad them out,

Gainst him, in woman's mimic garb concealed,

Gazer on the Maenads in their dark rites unrevealed.

First his mother shall behold him on his watch below.

From the tall tree's trunk or from the wild scaur steep;

Fiercely will she shout—

"Who the spy upon the Maenads on the rocks that roan

To the mountain, to the mountain, Bacchanals, has come?"

Who hath borne him?

He is not of woman's blood—

The lioness!

Or the Lybian Gorgon's brood?

Come, vengeance, come, display thee!

With thy bright sword array thee!

The bloody sentence wreak

On the dissevered neck

Of him who god, law, justice hath not known,

Echion's earth-born son.

He, with thought unrighteous and unholy pride,

Gainst Bacchus and his mother, their orgies' mystic mirth

Still holds his frantic strife,

And sets him up against the god, deeming it light

To vanquish the invincible of might.

Hold thou fast the pious mind ; so, only so, shall glide
In peace with gods above, in peace with men on earth,
Thy smooth painless life.

I admire not, envy not, who would be otherwise :
Mine be still the glory, mine be still the prize,

By night and day
To live of the immortal gods in awe ;
Who fears them not
Is but the outcast of all law.

Come, vengeance, come display thee !
With thy bright sword array thee !

The bloody sentence wreak
On the dissevered neck
Of him who god, law, justice has not known,
Echion's earth-born son.

Appear ! appear !
Or as the stately steer !
Or many-headed dragon be !
Or the fire-breathing lion, terrible to see.
Come, Bacchus, come 'gainst the hunter of the Bacchanals,
Even now, now as he falls
Upon the Mænads' fatal herd beneath,
With smiling brow,
Around him throw
The inexorable net of death.

MES. O house most prosperous once throughout all Hellas !
House of the old Sidonian !—in this land
Who sowed the dragon's serpent's earth-born harvest—
How I deplore thee ! I a slave, for still
Grieve for their master's sorrows faithful slaves.

CHOR. What's this ? Aught new about the Bacchanals ?

MES. Pentheus hath perished, old Echion's son.

CHOR. King Bromius, thou art indeed a mighty god !

MES. What sayst thou ? How is this ? Rejoicest thou,
O woman, in my master's awful fate ?

CHOR. Light chants the stranger her barbarous strains ;
I cower not in fear for the menace of chains.

MES. All Thebes thus void of courage deemest thou ?

CHOR. O Dionysus ! Dionysus ! Thebes
Hath o'er me now no power.

MES. 'Tis pardonable, yet it is not well,
Woman, in others' miseries to rejoice.

CHOR. Tell me, then, by what fate died the unjust—
The man, the dark contriver of injustice ?

MES. Therapnæ having left the Theban city,
And passed along Asopus' winding shore,
We 'gan to climb Cithæron's upward steep—
Pentheus and I (I waited on my lord),
And he that led us on our quest, the stranger—
And first we crept along a grassy glade,
With silent footsteps, and with silent tongues,
Slow moving, as to see, not being seen.
There was a rock-walled glen, watered by a streamlet,
And shadowed o'er with pines ; the Mænads there
Sate, all their hands busy with pleasant toil ;
And some the leafy thyrsus, that its ivy
Had dropped away, were garlanding anew ;
Like fillies some, unharnessed from the yoke ;
Chanted alternate all the Bacchic hymn.
Ill-fated Pentheus, as he scarce could see
That womanly troop, spake thus : " Where we stand, stranger,
We see not well the unseemly Mænad dance :
But, mounting on a bank, or a tall tree,
Clearly shall I behold their deeds of shame."

A wonder then I saw that stranger do.
He seized an ash-tree's high heaven-reaching stem,
And dragged it down, dragged, dragged to the low earth ;
And like a bow it bent. As a curved wheel
Becomes a circle in the turner's lathe,
The stranger thus that mountain tree bent down
To the earth, a deed of more than mortal strength.
Then seating Pentheus on those ash-tree boughs,
Upward he let it rise, steadily, gently
Through his hands, careful lest it shake him off ;
And slowly rose it upright to its height,
Bearing my master seated on its ridge.
There was he seen, rather than saw the Mænads,

More visible he could not be, seated aloft.
The stranger from our view had vanished quite.
Then from the heavens a voice, as it should seem
Dionysus, shouted loud, "Behold! I bring,
O maidens, him that you and me, our rites,
Our orgies laughed to scorn; now take your vengeance."
And as he spake, a light of holy fire
Stood up, and blazed from earth straight up to heaven.
Silent the air, silent the verdant grove
Held its still leaves; no sound of living thing.
They, as their ears just caught the half-heard voice,
Stood up erect, and rolled their wondering eyes.
Again he shouted. But when Cadmus' daughters
Heard manifest the god's awakening voice,
Forth rushed they, fleetier than the wingéd dove,
Their nimble feet quick coursing up and down.
Agave first, his mother, then her kin,
The Mænads, down the torrent's bed, in the grove,
From crag to crag they leaped, mad with the god.
And first with heavy stones they hurled at him,
Climbing a rock in front; the branches some
Of the ash-tree darted; some like javelins
Sent their sharp thyrsi through the sounding air,
Pentheus their mark: but yet they struck him not;
His height still baffled all their eager wrath.
There sat the wretch, helpless in his despair.
The oaken boughs, by lightning as struck off,
Roots torn from the earth, but with no iron wedge,
They hurled, but their wild labours all were vain.
Agave spake, "Come all, and stand around,
And grasp the tree, ye Mænads; soon we will seize
The beast that rides thereon. He will ne'er betray
The mysteries of our god." A thousand hands
Were on the ash, and tore it from the earth:
And he that sat aloft, down, headlong, down
Fell to the ground, with thousand pit'ous shrieks,
Pentheus, for well he knew his end was near.
His mother first began the sacrifice,
And fell on him. His bonnet from his hair

He threw, that she might know and so not slay him,
 The sad Agave. And he said, her cheek
 Fondling, "I am thy child, thine own, my mother!
 Pentheus, whom in Echion's house you bare.
 Have mercy on me, mother! For his sins,
 Whatever be his sins, kill not thy son."
 She, foaming at the mouth, her rolling eyeballs
 Whirling around, in her unreasoning reason,
 By Bacchus all possessed, knew, heeded not.
 She caught him in her arms, seized his right hand,
 And, with her feet set on his shrinking side,
 Tore out the shoulder—not with her own strength:
 The god made easy that too cruel deed.
 And Ino laboured on the other side,
 Rending the flesh: Autonoe, all the rest,
 Pressed fiercely on, and there was one wild din—
 He groaning deep, while he had breath to groan,
 They shouting triumph; and one bore an arm,
 One a still-sandalled foot; and both his sides
 Lay open, rent. Each in her bloody hand
 Tossed wildly to and fro lost Pentheus' limbs.
 The trunk lay far aloof, 'neath the rough rocks
 Part, part amid the forest's thick-strewn leaves,
 Not easy to be found. The wretched head,
 Which the mad mother, seizing in her hands,
 Had on a thyrsus fixed, she bore aloft
 All o'er Cithæron, as a mountain lion's,
 Leading her sisters in their Mænad dance.
 And she comes vaunting her ill-fated chase
 Unto these walls, invoking Bacchus still,
 Her fellow-hunter, partner in her prey,
 Her triumph—triumph soon to end in tears!
 I fled the sight of that dark tragedy,
 Hastening, ere yet Agave reached the palace.
 Oh! to be reverent, to adore the gods,
 This is the noblest, wisest course of man,
 Taking dread warning from this dire event.

CHOR. Dance and sing
 In Bacchic ring,

Shout, shout the fate, the fate of gloom,
 Of Pentheus, from the dragon born ;
 He the woman's garb hath worn,
 Following the bull, the harbinger, that led him to his doom.

O ye Theban Bacchanals !

Attune ye now the hymn victorious,

The hymn all glorious,

To the tear, and to the groan !

O game of glory !

To bathe the hands besprent and gory,

In the blood of her own son.

But I behold Agave, Pentheus' mother,

Nearing the palace with distorted eyes.

Hail we the ovation of the Evian god.

AGA. O ye Asian Bacchanals !

CHOR. Who is she on us who calls ?

AGA. From the mountains, lo ! we bear

To the palace gate

Our new-slain quarry fair.

CHOR. I see, I see ! and on thy joy I wait.

AGA. Without a net, without a snare,

The lion's cub, I took him there

CHOR. In the wilderness, or where ?

AGA. Cithæron—

CHOR. Of Cithæron what ?

AGA.

Gave him to slaughter.

CHOR. O blest Agave !

AGA. In thy song extol me,

CHOR. Who struck him first ?

AGA. Mine, mine, the glorious lot.

CHOR. Who else ?

AGA. Of Cadmus—

CHOR. What of Cadmus' daughter ?

AGA. With me, with me, did all the race

Hound the prey.

CHOR. O fortunate chase !

AGA. The banquet share with me !

CHOR. Alas ! what shall our banquet be ?

AGA. How delicate the kid and young !

The thin locks have but newly sprung
Over his forehead fair.

CHOR. Tis beauteous as the tame beasts' cherished hair.

AGA. Bacchus, hunter known to fame!
Did he not our Mænads bring
On the track of this proud game?
A mighty hunter is our king!
Praise me! praise me!

CHOR. Praise I not thee?

AGA. Soon with the Thebans all, the hymn of praise
Pentheus my son will to his mother raise:
For she the lion prey hath won,
A noble deed and nobly done.

CHOR. Dost thou rejoice?

AGA. Ay, with exulting voice
My great, great deed I elevate,
Glorious as great.

CHOR. Sad woman, to the citizens of Thebes
Now show the conquered prey thou bearest hither.

AGA. Ye that within the high-towered Theban city
Dwell, come and gaze ye all upon our prey,
The mighty beast by Cadmus' daughter ta'en;
Nor with Thessalian sharp-pointed javelins,
Nor nets, but with the white and delicate palms
Of our own hands. Go ye, and make your boast,
Trusting to the spear-maker's useless craft:
We with these hands have ta'en our prey, and rent
The mangled limbs of this grim beast asunder.

Where is mine aged sire? Let him draw near!
And where is my son Pentheus? Let him mount
On the broad stairs that rise before our house;
And on the triglyph nail this lion's head,
That I have brought him from our splendid chase.

CAD. Follow me, follow, bearing your sad burthen,
My servants—Pentheus' body—to our house;
The body that with long and weary search
I found at length in lone Cithæron's glens;
Thus torn, not lying in one place, but wide
Scattered amid the dark and tangled thicket.

Already, as I entered in the city
 With old Tiresias, from the Bacchanals,
 I heard the fearful doings of my daughter.
 And back returning to the mountain, bear
 My son, thus by the furious Mænads slain.
 Her who Actæon bore to Aristæus,
 Autonoe, I saw, and Ino with her
 Still in the thicket goaded with wild madness.
 And some one said that on her dancing feet
 Agave had come hither—true he spoke ;
 I see her now—O most unblessed sight !

AGA. Father, 'tis thy peculiar peerless boast
 Of womanhood the noblest t' have begot—
 Me—me the noblest of that noble kin.
 For I the shuttle and the distaff left
 For mightier deeds—wild beasts with mine own hands
 To capture. Lo ! I bear within mine arms
 These glorious trophies, to be hung on high
 Upon thy house : receive them, O my father !
 Call thy friends to the banquet feast ! Blest thou !
 Most blest, through us who have wrought such splendid deeds.

CAD. Measureless grief ! Eye may not gaze on it,
 The slaughter wrought by those most wretched hands.
 Oh ! what a sacrifice before the gods !
 All Thebes, and us, thou callest to the feast.
 Justly—too justly, hath King Bromius
 Destroyed us, fatal kindred to our house.

AGA. Oh ! how morose is man in his old age,
 And sullen in his mien. Oh ! were my son
 More like his mother, mighty in his hunting,
 When he goes forth among the youth of Thebes
 Wild beasts to chase ! But he is great alone,
 In warring on the gods. We two, my sire,
 Must counsel him against his evil wisdom.
 Where is he ? Who will call him here before us
 That he may see me in my happiness ?

CAD. Woe ! woe ! When ye have sense of what ye have
 done,
 With what deep sorrow, sorrow ye ! To th' end,

Oh! could ye be, only as now ye are,
Nor happy were ye deemed, nor miserable.

AGA. What is not well? For sorrow what the cause?

CAD. First lift thine eyes up to the air around.

AGA. Behold! Why thus commandest me to gaze?

CAD. Is all the same? Appears there not a change?

AGA. 'Tis brighter, more translucent than before.

CAD. Is there the same elation in thy soul?

AGA. I know not what thou mean'st; but I become
Conscious—my changing mind is settling down.

CAD. Canst thou attend, and plainly answer me?

AGA. I have forgotten, father, all I said.

CAD. Unto whose bed wert thou in wedlock given?

AGA. Echion's, him they call the Dragon-born.

CAD. Who was the son to thy husband thou didst bear?

AGA. Pentheus, in commerce 'twixt his sire and me.

CAD. And whose the head thou holdest in thy hands?

AGA. A lion's; thus my fellow-hunters said.

CAD. Look at it straight: to look on't is no toil.

AGA. What see I? Ha! what's this within my hands?

CAD. Look on't again, again: thou wilt know too well.

AGA. I see the direst woe that eye may see.

CAD. The semblance of a lion bears it now?

AGA. No: wretch, wretch that I am; 'tis Pentheus' head!

CAD. Even ere yet recognized thou might'st have mourned him.

AGA. Who murdered him? How came he in my hands?

CAD. Sad truth! Untimely dost thou ever come!

AGA. Speak; for my heart leaps with a boding throb.

CAD. 'Twas thou didst slay him, thou and thine own sisters.

AGA. Where died he? In his palace? In what place?

CAD. There where the dogs Actæon tore in pieces.

AGA. Why to Cithæron went the ill-fated man?

CAD. To mock the god, to mock the orgies there.

AGA. But how and wherefore had we thither gone?

CAD. In madness!—the whole city maddened with thee.

AGA. Dionysus hath destroyed us! Late I learn it.

CAD. Mocked with dread mockery; no god ye held him.

AGA. Father! Where's the dear body of my son?

CAD. I bear it here, not found without much toil.

AGA. Are all the limbs together, sound and whole?
And Pentheus, shared he in my desperate fury?

CAD. Like thee he was, he worshipped not the god.
All, therefore, are enwrap't in one dread doom.
You, 'he, in whom hath perished all our house,
And I who, childless of male offspring, see
This single fruit—O miserable!—of thy womb
Thus shamefully, thus lamentably dead—
Thy son, to whom our house looked up, the stay
Of all our palace he, my daughter's son,
The awe of the whole city. None would dare
Insult the old man when thy fearful face
He saw, well knowing he would pay the penalty.
Unhonoured now, I am driven from out mine home;
Cadmus the great, who all the race of Thebes
Sowed in the earth, and reaped that harvest fair.
O best beloved of men, thou art now no more,
Yet still art dearest of my children thou!
No more, this grey beard fondling with thine hand,
Wilt call me thine own grandsire, thou sweet child,
And fold me round and say, "Who doth not honour thee?
Old man, who troubles or afflicts thine heart?
Tell me, that I may 'venge thy wrong, my father!"
Now wretchedest of men am I. Thou pitiable—
More pitiable thy mother—sad thy kin.
O if there be who scorneth the great gods,
Gaze on this death, and know that there are gods.

CHOR. Cadmus, I grieve for thee. Thy daughter's son
Hath his just doom—just, but most piteous.

AGA. Father, thou seest how all is changed with me:
*I am no more the Mænad dancing blithe,
I am but the feeble, fond, and desolate mother.
I know, I see—ah, knowledge best unknown!
Sight best unseen!—I see, I know my son,
Mine only son!—alas! no more my son.
O beauteous limbs, that in my womb I bare!
O head, that on my lap wast wont to sleep!
O lips, that from my bosom's swelling fount
Drained the delicious and soft-oozing milk!*

*O hands, whose first use was to fondle me !
 O feet, that were so light to run to me !
 O gracious form, that men wondering beheld !
 O haughty brow, before which Thebes bowed down !
 O majesty ! O strength ! by mine own hands—
 By mine own murderous, sacrilegious hands—
 Torn, rent asunder, scattered, cast abroad !
 O thou hard god ! was there no other way
 To visit us ? Oh ! if the son must die,
 Must it be by the hand of his own mother ?
 If the impious mother must atone her sin,
 Must it be but by murdering her own son ?*

DIO. Now hear ye all, Thebes' founders, what is woven
 By the dread shuttle of the unerring Fates.
 Thou, Cadmus, father of this earth-born race,
 A dragon shalt become ; thy wife shalt take
 A brutish form, and sink into a serpent,
 Harmonia, Ares' daughter, whom thou wedd'st,
 Though mortal, as Jove's oracle declares.
 Thou in a car by heifers drawn shalt ride,
 And with thy wife, at the Barbarians' head :
 And many cities with their countless host
 Shail they destroy, but when they dare destroy
 The shrine of Loxias, back shall they return
 In shameful flight ; but Ares guards Harmonia
 And thee, and bears you to the Isles of the Blest.

This say I, of no mortal father born,
 Dionysus, son of Jove. Had ye but known
 To have been pious when ye might, Jove's son
 Had been your friend ; ye had been happy still.

AGA. Dionysus, we implore thee ! We have sinned !

DIO. Too late ye say so ; when ye should, ye would not.

AGA. That know we now ; but thou'rt extreme in vengeance.

DIO. Was I not outraged, being a god, by you ?

AGA. The gods should not be like to men in wrath.

DIO. This Jove, my father, long hath granted me.

AGA. Alas, old man ! Our exile is decreed.

DIO. Why then delay ye the inevitable ?

CAD. O child, to what a depth of woe we have fallen !

Most wretched thou, and all thy kin beloved !
 I too to the Barbarians must depart,
 An aged denizen. For there's a prophecy,
 'Gainst Hellas a Barbaric mingled host
 Harmonia leads, my wife, daughter of Ares.
 A dragon I, with dragon nature fierce,
 Shall lead the stranger spearmen 'gainst the altars
 And tombs of Hellas, nor shall cease my woes—
 Sad wretch !—not even when I have ferried o'er
 Dark Acheron, shall I repose in peace.

AGA. Father ! to exile go I without thee ?

CAD. Why dost thou clasp me in thine arms, sad child,
 A drone among the bees, a swan worn out ?

AGA. Where shall I go, an exile from my country ?

CAD. I know not, child ; thy sire is a feeble aid.

AGA. Farewell, mine home ! Farewell, my native Thebes !
 My bridal chamber ! Banished, I go forth.

CAD. To the house of Aristæus go, my child.

AGA. I wait for thee, my father !

CAD. I for thee !

And for thy sisters.

AGA. Fearfully, fearfully, this deep disgrace,
 Hath Dionysus brought upon our race.

DIO. Fearful on me the wrong that ye had done ;
 Unhonoured was my name in Thebes alone.

AGA. Father, farewell !

CAD. Farewell, my wretched daughter !

AGA. So lead me forth—my sisters now to meet,
 Sad fallen exiles.

Let me, let me go,
 Where cursed Cithæron ne'er may see me more,
 Nor I the cursed Cithæron see again.
 Where there's no memory of the thyrsus dance.
 The Bacchic orgies be the care of others.

ION.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

MERCURY.

ION.

CHORUS OF CREUSA'S FEMALE

ATTENDANTS.

CREUSA.

XUTHUS.

OLD MAN.

SERVANT OF CREUSA.

PYTHIAN PRIESTESS.

MINERVA.

SCENE—THE VESTIBULE OF APOLLO'S TEMPLE AT DELPHI.

MERCURY.

By a celestial dame, was he who bears
On brazen shoulders the incumbent load
Of yonder starry heaven, where dwell the gods
From ancient times, illustrious Atlas, sire
To Maia, and from her I, Hermes, spring,
The faithful messenger of mighty Jove.
Now to this land of Delphi am I come,
Where, seated on the centre of the world,
His oracles Apollo to mankind
Discloses, ever chaunting both events
Present and those to come. Of no small note,
In Greece, there is a city which derives
Its name from Pallas, by her golden spear
Distinguished. Phœbus in this realm compressed
With amorous violence Erectheus' daughter,
Creusa, underneath those craggy rocks
North of Minerva's citadel, the kings
Of Athens call them Macra. She endured,
Without the knowledge of her sire (for such
Was the god's will), the burden of her womb :

But at the stated time, when in the palace
She had brought forth a son, she to that cave,
Where she th' embraces of the god hath known,
Conveyed and left the child, to death exposed,
Lodged in the hollow of an orbéd chest,
Observant of the customs handed down
By her progenitors, and Erichonius,
That earth-born monarch of her native land,
Whom Pallas, daughter of imperial Jove,
Placing two watchful dragons for his guard,
To the three damsels from Agrauios sprung
Entrusted. Hence, among Erechtheus' race,
E'en from those times, an usage hath prevailed
Of nurturing, 'midst serpents wrought in gold,
Their tender progeny. Creusa left,
Wrapt round her infant, whom she thus to death
Abandoned, all the ornaments she had.
Then this request, on my fraternal love
Depending, Phœbus urged: "My brother, go
To those blest children of their native soil,
The famed Athenians (for full well thou know'st
Minerva's city), from the hollow rock
Taking this new-born infant, and the chest
In which he lies, with fillets swathed around,
Convey to my oracular abode,
And place him in the entrance of my fane:
What still is left undone my care shall add:
For know he is my son." I, to confer
A kindness on my brother Phœbus, bore
The wicker chest away; and, having oped
Its cover that the infant might be seen,
Just at the threshold of this temple lodged.
But when the fiery coursers of the sun
Rushed from heaven's eastern gate in swift career,
Entering the mansion whence the god deals forth
His oracles, a priestess on the child
Fixed her indignant eyes, and wondered much
What shameless nymph of Delphi could presume
By stealth to introduce her spurious brood

Into Apollo's house. She was inclined
 At first to cast him from the sacred threshold ;
 But, by compassion moved, the cruel deed
 Forbore, and, with paternal love, the god
 Aided the child, nor from his hallowed mansion
 Allowed him to be banished : him she took
 And nurtured, though she knew not from what mother
 He sprung, or that Apollo was his sire.
 To both his parents, too, the boy himself
 Remained a stranger. While he yet was young,
 Around the blazing altars, whence he fed,
 Playful he roamed ; but after he attained
 Maturer years, the Delphic citizens
 As guardian of the treasures of the god
 Employed, and found him faithful to his trust :
 Still in this fane he leads a holy life.
 Meanwhile Creusa, who the infant bore,
 Wedded to Xuthus : fortune this event
 Thus brought to pass ; a storm of war burst forth
 'Twixt the Athenian race and them who dwell
 In Chalcis, on Eubœa's stormy coast.
 In concert with the former having toiled,
 And joined in the destruction of their foes,
 A royal bride, Creusa, he obtained,
 Though not in Athens but Achaia born,
 The son of Æolus, who sprung from Jove.
 He and his consort have been childless long,
 And therefore to these oracles of Phœbus
 Are come in quest of issue. This event
 The god hath caused to happen, nor forgets
 His son, as some suppose ; for he, on Xuthus,
 Will, at his entering this prophetic dome,
 Freely bestow, and call the stripling his ;
 That when he comes to the maternal house,
 Creusa may acknowledge him she bore,
 While her amour with Phœbus rests concealed,
 And this her son obtains th' inheritance
 Of his maternal ancestors : through Greece
 Th' immortal father hath decreed his son

Shall be called Ion, the illustrious founder
 Of Asiatic realms. But I must go
 Among the laurel's shadowy groves, and learn
 From this young prophet what the fates ordain ;
 For I behold Apollo's son come forth,
 To hang the branches of the verdant bay
 Before the portals of the fane. Now first
 Of all the gods I hail him by his name,
 The name of Ion which he soon shall bear.

[*Exit* MERCURY.]

ION. Now the resplendent chariot of the sun
 Shines o'er the earth : from its ethereal fires,
 Beneath the veil of sacred night, the stars
 Conceal themselves. Parnassus' cloven ridge,
 Too steep for human footsteps to ascend,
 Receives the lustre of its orient beams,
 And through the world reflects them ; while the smoke
 Of fragrant myrrh ascends Apollo's roof ;
 The Delphic priestess on the holy tripod
 Now takes her seat, and to the listening sons
 Of Greece, those truths in mystic notes unfolds,
 With which the gods inspire her labouring breast.
 But, O ye Delphic ministers of Phœbus,
 Now to Castalia's silver fount repair,
 And when ye have performed the due ablutions,
 Enter the temple ; let no word escape
 Your lips of evil omen, mildly greet
 Each votary, and expound the oracles
 In your own native language. But the toils
 Which I from childhood to the present hour
 Have exercised, with laureate sprays and wreaths
 Worn at our high solemnities, to cleanse
 The vestibule of Phœbus, I repeat,
 Sprinkling the pavement with these lustral drops,
 And with my shafts will I repel the flocks
 Of birds who taint the offerings of the god.
 For like a friendless orphan, who ne'er knew
 A mother's or a father's fostering care,
 In Phœbus' shrine, which nurtured me, I serve.

ODE.

I.

In recent verdure ever gay,
 Hail, O ye scions of the bay,
 Which sweep Apollo's fane;
 Cropt from the god's adjacent bowers,
 Where rills bedew the vernal flowers,
 And with perpetual streams refresh the plain;
 The sacred myrtle here is found,
 Whose branches o'er the consecrated ground
 I wave, as day by day ascends
 The sun with rapid wing,
 Waking to toil which never ends,
 And zealous in the service of my king.
 O Pæan, Pæan, from Latona sprung,
 Still mayst thou flourish blest and young!

II.

My labours with renown shall meet;
 O Phœbus, the prophetic seat
 Revering, at thy fane
 A joyful minister I stand,
 Serving with an officious hand
 No mortal, but the blest immortal train.
 Nor by these glorious toils opprest
 Am I ignobly covetous of rest;
 For dread Apollo is my sire;
 To him, to him I owe
 My being, nurtured in his choir,
 And in the fostering god a father know.
 O Pæan, Pæan, from Latona sprung,
 Still mayst thou flourish blest and young!
 But from this painful task will I desist,
 And with the laurel cease to sweep the ground:
 Next, from a golden vase, is it my office
 To pour the waters of Castalia's fount,
 Sprinkling its lustral drops: for I am free
 From lust and its pollutions. May I serve

Apollo ever thus, or cease to serve him
 When I some happier fortune shall attain !
 But, ha ! the birds are here, and leave their nests
 Upon Parnassus : wing not to this dome
 Your flight, and on the gilded battlements
 Forbear to perch. My arrows shall transpierce thee,
 Herald of Jove, O thou, whose hookéd beak
 Subdues the might of all the feathered tribes.
 But lo ! another comes ! The swan his course
 Steers to the altar. Wilt thou not retire
 Hence with those purple feet ? Apollo's lyre,
 In concert warbling with thy dulcet strains,
 Shall not redeem thee from my bow : direct
 Thy passage to the Delian lake—obey,
 Or streaming blood shall interrupt thy song.
 But what fresh bird approaches ? Would she build
 Under these pinnacles a nest to hold
 Her callow brood ? Soon shall the whizzing shaft
 Repel thee. Wilt thou not comply ? Where Alpheus
 Winds through the channeled rocks his passage, go,
 And rear thy twittering progeny, or dwell
 Amid the Isthmian groves, that Phœbus' gifts
 And temples no defilement may receive.
 For I am loth to take away your lives,
 Ye wingéd messengers, who to mankind
 Announce the will of the celestial powers.
 But I on Phœbus must attend, performing
 The task assigned me with unwearied zeal,
 And minister to those who give me food.

CHORUS, ION.

CHOR. 'Tis not in Athens only that the fane
 Where duteous homage to the gods is paid,
 Or altar for Agyian Phœbus reared
 With many a stately column is adorned ;
 But in these mansions of Latona's son
 From those twin deities portrayed there beams
 An equal splendour on the dazzled sight.

1st SEMICHOR. See there Jove's son who with his
 golden falchion

Slays the Læruæan Hydra ! O my friend,
Observe him well.

2nd SEMICHOR. I do.

1st SEMICHOR. Another stands
Beside him brandishing a kindled torch.

2nd SEMICHOR. He whose exploits I on my woof described ?

1st SEMICHOR. The noble Iolaus, who sustained
Alcides' shield, and in those glorious toils
Was the sole partner with the son of Jove.
Him also mark who on a wingéd steed
Is seated, how with forceful arm he smites
The triple-formed Chimæra breathing fire.

2nd SEMICHOR. With thee these eyes retrace each varied
scene.

1st SEMICHOR. Look at the giants' conflict with the gods
Depicted on the wall.

2nd SEMICHOR. There, there, my friends.

1st SEMICHOR. Behold'st thou her who 'gainst Enceladus
The dreadful Ægis brandishes ?

2nd SEMICHOR. I see
Pallas, my goddess.

1st SEMICHOR. And the forkéd flames,
With which th' impetuous thunderbolt descends,
Hurled from the skies by Jove's unerring arm ?

2nd SEMICHOR. I see, I see ! Its livid flashes smite
Mimas the foe, and with his pliant thyrsus
Another earth-born monster Bacchus slays.

CHOR. On thee I call, O thou who in this fane
Art stationed : is it lawful to advance
Into the inmost sanctuary's recess
With our feet bare ?

ION. This cannot be allowed,
Ye foreign dames.

CHOR. Wilt thou not answer me ?

ION. What information wish ye to receive ?

CHOR. Say, is it true that Phœbus' temple stands
On the world's centre ?

ION. 'Tis with garlands decked,
And Gorgons are placed round it.

CHOR. So fame tells.

ION. If ye before these portals have with fire
Consumed the salted cates, and wish to know
Aught from Apollo, to this altar come ;
But enter not the temple's dread recess
Till sheep are sacrificed.

CHOR. I comprehend thee ;
Nor will we break the god's established laws,
But with the pictures which are here without
Amuse our eyes.

ION. Ye may survey them all
At leisure.

CHOR. Hither have our rulers sent us,
The sanctuary of Phœbus to behold.

ION. Inform me to what household ye belong.

CHOR. Minerva's city is the place where dwell
Our sovereigns. But lo ! she herself appears
To whom the questions thou hast asked relate.

CREUSA, ION, CHORUS.

ION. Thy countenance, whoe'er thou be, O woman,
Proves thou art noble, and of gentle manners :
For by their looks we fail not to discern
Those of exalted birth. But with amazement,
Closing those eyes, thou strik'st me, and with tears
Largely bedewing those ingenuous cheeks,
Since thou hast seen Apollo's holy fane.
Whence can such wayward grief arise ? The sight
Of this auspicious sanctuary, which gives
Delight to others, causes thee to weep.

CRE. Stranger, you well may wonder at my tears,
For since I viewed these mansions of the god,
I have been thinking of a past event ;
And though myself indeed am here, my soul
Remains at home. O ye unhappy dames !
O most audacious outrages committed
By the immortal gods ! To whom for justice
Can we appeal, if, through the wrongs of those
Who rule the world with a despotic power,
We perish ?

ION. What affliction unrevealed
Makes thee despond ?

CRE. None. I have dropped the subject.
What follows I suppress, nor must you seek
To learn aught farther.

ION. But say, who thou art,
Whence cam'st thou, in what region wert thou born,
And by what name must we distinguish thee ?

CRE. Creusa is my name, my sire Erectheus,
In Athens first I drew my vital breath.

ION. O thou in that famed city who resid'st,
And by illustrious parents hast been nurtured,
How much do I revere thee !

CRE. I thus far,
But in nought else, am blest.

ION. I by the gods
Conjure thee, answer, if the world speak truth.

CRE. What question's this you would propose, O stranger ?
I wish to learn.

ION. Sprung the progenitor
Of thy great father from the teeming earth ?

CRE. Thence Erichonius ; but my noble race
Avails me not.

ION. And did Minerva rear
The warrior from the ground ?

CRE. With virgin arms,
For she was not his mother.

ION. Of the child
Disposing as in pictures 'tis described ?

CRE. To Cecrops' daughters him she gave for nurture,
With strict injunctions never to behold him.

ION. I hear those virgins oped the wicker chest
In which the goddess lodged him.

CRE. Hence their doom
Was death, and with their gore they stained the rock.

ION. Let that too pass. But is this rumour true,
Or groundless ?

CRE. What's your question ? for with leisure
I am not overburdened.

ION. Did Erectheus,
Thy royal father, sacrifice thy sisters ?

CRE. He feared not in his country's cause to slay
Those virgins.

ION. By what means didst thou alone
Of all thy sisters 'scape ?

CRE. A new-born infant,
I still was in my mother's arms.

ION. Did earth
Indeed expand her jaws, and swallow up
Thy father ?

CRE. Neptune with his trident smote
And slew him.

ION. Is the spot on which he died
Called Macra ?

CRE. For what reason do you ask
This question ? To my memory what a scene
Have you recalled !

ION. Doth not the Pythian god
Revere, and with his radiant beams adorn
That blest abode ?

CRE. Revere ! But what have I
To do with that ? Ah, would to heaven I ne'er
Had seen the place !

ION. What then ! Dost thou abhor
What Phœbus holds most dear ?

CRE. Not thus, O stranger ;
Though I know somewhat base that has been done
Under those caverns.

ION. What Athenian lord
Received thy plighted hand ?

CRE. No citizen
Of Athens ; but a sojourner, who came
Out of another country.

ION. Who ? He sure
Was of some noble lineage ?

CRE. Xuthus, son
Of Æolus, who sprung from Jove.

ION. How gained
This foreigner the hand of thee, a native ?

CRE. Eubœa is a region on the confines
Of Athens.

ION. With the briny deep between,
As fame relates.

CRE. Those bulwarks he laid waste,
With Cecrops' race a comrade in the war.

ION. He thither came perhaps as an ally,
And afterwards obtained thee for his bride.

CRE. In me the dower of battle, and the prize
Of his victorious spear, did he receive.

ION. Alone, or with thy husband, art thou come
These oracles to visit ?

CRE. With my lord :
But to Trophonius' cavern he is gone.

ION. As a spectator only, or t' explore
The mystic will of Fate ?

CRE. He hopes to gain
From him and from Apollo one response.

ION. Seek ye the general fruit earth's bosom yields,
Or children ?

CRE. We are childless, though full long
Have we been wedded.

ION. Hast thou never known
The pregnant mother's throes ? Art thou then barren ?

CRE. Phœbus well knows I am without a son

ION. O wretched woman, who in all beside
Art prosperous : Fortune here, alas, deserts thee.

CRE. But who are you ? How happy do I deem
Your mother !

ION. An attendant on the god
They call me ; and, O woman, such I am.

CRE. Sent from your city as a votive gift,
Or by some master sold ?

ION. I know this only,
That I am called Apollo's.

CRE. In return,
I too, O stranger, pity your hard fate.

ION. Because I know not either of my parents.

CRE. Beneath this fane or some more lowly dome
Reside you ?

ION. This whole temple of the god
Is my abode, here sleep I.

CRE. While an infant,
Or since you were a stripling, came you hither?

ION. The persons who appear to know the truth
Assert I was a child.

CRE. What Delphic nurse
Performed a mother's office?

ION. I ne'er clung
To any breast—she reared me.

CRE. Hapless youth,
Who reared you? How have I discovered woes
Which equal those I suffer!

ION. Phœbus' priestess,
Whom as my real mother I esteem.

CRE. But how were you supported till you reached
Maturer years?

ION. I at the altar fed,
And on the bounty of each casual guest.

CRE. Whoe'er she was, your mother sure was wretched.

ION. Perhaps to me some woman owes her shame.

CRE. But say, what wealth you have? For you are drest
In a becoming garb.

ION. I am adorned
With these rich vestments by the god I serve.

CRE. Did you make no researches to discover
Your parents?

ION. I have not the slightest clue
To guide my steps.

CRE. Alas, another dame
Like sufferings with your mother hath endured.

ION. Who? Tell me. Thy assistance wouldst thou give,
I should rejoice indeed.

CRE. She for whose sake
I hither came before my lord arrive.

ION. What are thy wishes in which I can serve thee?

CRE. I would obtain an oracle from Phœbus
In private.

ION. Name it: for of all beside
Will I take charge.

CRE. Now to my words attend—
Yet shame restrains me.

ION. Then wilt thou do nothing :
For Shame's a goddess not for action formed.

CRE. One of my friends informs me that by Phœbus
She was embraced.

ION. A woman by Apollo !
Use not such language, O thou foreign dame.

CRE. And that without the knowledge of her sire,
She bore the god a son.

ION. This cannot be ;
Her modesty forbids her to confess
What mortal wronged her.

CRE. No ; she suffered all
That she complains of, though her tale be wretched.

ION. In what respect, if by the bonds of love
She to the god was joined ?

CRE. The son she bore
She also did cast forth.

ION. Where is the boy
Who was cast forth, doth he behold the light ?

CRE. None knows ; and for this cause would I consult
The oracle.

ION. But if he be no more,
How died he ?

CRE. Much she fears the beasts devoured
Her wretched child.

ION. What proof hath she of this ?

CRE. She came where she exposed, and found him
not.

ION. Did any drops of blood distain the path ?

CRE. None, as she says ; although full long she searched
Around the field.

ION. But since that hapless boy
Perished, how long is it ?

CRE. Were he yet living,
His age would be the same with yours.

ION. The god
Hath wronged her, yet the mother must be wretched.

CRE. Since that hath she produced no other child.

ION. But what if Phœbus bore away by stealth
His son, and nurtured him?

CRE. He acts unjustly,
Alone enjoying what to both belongs.

ION. Ah me! Such fortune bears a close resemblance
To my calamity.

CRE. I make no doubt,
O stranger, but your miserable mother
Wishes for you.

ION. Revive not piteous thoughts
By me forgotten.

CRE. I my question cease;
Now finish your reply.

ION. Art thou aware
In what respect thou hast unwisely spoken?

CRE. Can aught but grief attend that wretched dame?

ION. How is it probable the god should publish.
By an oracular response, the fact
He wishes to conceal?

CRE. If here he sit
Upon his public tripod to which Greece
Hath free access.

ION. He blushes at the deed;
Of him make no inquiries.

CRE. The poor sufferer
Bewails her fortunes.

ION. No presumptuous seer
To thee this mystery will disclose: for Phœbus,
In his own temple with such baseness charged,
Justly would punish him who should expound
To thee the oracle. Depart, O woman;
For of th' immortal powers we must not speak
With disrespect. This were the utmost pitch
Of frenzy should we labour to extort
From the unwilling gods those hidden truths
They mean not to disclose, by slaughtered sheep,
Before their altars, or the flight of birds.
If 'gainst Heaven's will we strive to reach down blessings,
In our possession they become a curse:

But what the gods spontaneously confer
Is beneficial.

CHOR. In a thousand forms,
A thousand various woes o'erwhelm mankind :
But life can scarce afford one happy scene.

CRE. Elsewhere as well as here art thou unjust
To her, O Phœbus, who though absent speaks
By me. For thou hast not preserved thy son
Whom thou wert bound to save ; nor wilt thou answer
His mother's questions, prophet as thou art :
That, if he be no more, there may a tomb
For him be heaped, or haply, if he live,
She may at length behold her dearest child.
But now no more of this, if me the god
Forbid to ask what most I wish to know.
Conceal, O gentle stranger (for I see
My lord the noble Xuthus is at hand,
Who from the cavern of Trophonius comes),
What thou hast heard, lest I incur reproach
For thus divulging secrets, and my words,
Not as I spoke them, should be blazed abroad :
For the condition of our sex is hard,
Subject to man's caprice ; and virtuous dames,
From being mingled with the bad, are hated.
Such, such is woman's miserable doom.

XUTHUS, CREUSA, ION, CHORUS.

XUT. I to the god begin t' address myself :
Him first I hail ; and you my consort next.
Hath my long stay alarmed you ?

CRE. No. thou com'st
To her who is opprest with anxious thoughts.
Say from Trophonius what response thou bring'st ;
Doth hope of issue wait us !

XUT. He refused
T' anticipate the prophecies of Phœbus ;
All that he said was this : nor I, nor thou,
Shall from this temple to our home return
Thus destitute of children.

Phœbus : what means he ? To the ravished maid
 Unfaithful hath he proved : his son, by stealth
 Begotten, left neglected to expire.
 Act thou not thus ; but since thou art supreme
 In majesty, let virtue too be thine.
 For whosoever of the human race
 Transgresses, with severity the gods
 Punish his crimes : then how can it be just
 For you, whose written laws mankind obey,
 Yourselves to break them ? Though 'twill never be,
 This supposition will I make, that thou,
 Neptune, and Jove, who in the heaven bears rule,
 Should make atonement to mankind for those
 Whom ye have forcibly deflow'ed ; your temples
 Must ye exhaust to pay the fines imposed
 On your base deeds : for when ye follow pleasure,
 Heedless of decency, ye act amiss ;
 No longer is it just to speak of men
 As wicked, if the conduct of the gods
 We imitate : our censures rather ought
 To fall on those who such examples give. [Exit ION.]

CHORUS.

ODE.

I.

O thou who aid'st the matron's throes,
 Come Eilithya, for to thee I sue ;
 Minerva next with honours due
 I hail, who by Prometheus' aid arose
 In arms refulgent from the front of Jove,
 Nor knew a mother's fostering love ;
 Victorious queen, armed with resistless might,
 O'er Pythian fanes thy plumage spread,
 Forsake awhile Olympus' golden bed,
 O wing thy rapid flight
 To this blest land where Phœbus reigns,
 This centre of the world his chosen seat,
 Where from his tripod in harmonious strains
 Doth he th' unerring prophecy repeat :

With Latona's daughter join,
 For thou like her art spotless and divine ;
 Sisters of Phœbus, with persuasive grace,
 Ye virgins sue, nor sue in vain,
 That, from his oracles, Erectheus' race
 To the Athenian throne a noble heir may gain.

II.

Object of Heaven's peculiar care
 Is he whose children, vigorous from their birth,
 Nursed on the foodful lap of earth,
 Adorn his mansion and his transports share :
 No patrimonial treasures can exceed
 Theirs who by each heroic deed
 Augment the fame of an illustrious sire,
 And to their children's children leave
 Th' invaluable heritage entire.

 In troubles we receive

 From duteous sons a timely aid,
 And social pleasure in our prosperous hours.
 The daring youth, in brazen arms arrayed
 Guards with protended lance his native towers.
 To lure these eyes, though gold were spread,
 Though Hymen wantoned on a regal bed,
 Such virtuous offspring would my soul prefer.

 The lonely childless life I hate,
 And deem that they who choose it greatly err,
 Blest with a teeming couch, I ask no kingly state.

III.

Ye shadowy groves where sportive Pan is seen,
 Stupendous rocks whose pine-clad summits wave,
 Where oft near Macra's darksome cave,
 Light spectres, o'er the consecrated green,
 Agraulos' daughters lead the dance
 Before the portals of Minerva's fane
 To the shrill flute's varied strain.
 When from thy caverns, through the vale around,
 O Pan, the cheering notes resound.
 Under those hanging cliffs (abhorred mischance !

Some nymph a son to Phoebus bore,
 Whom she to ravenous birds a bloody feast
 Exposed, and to each savage beast ;
 Her shame, her conscious guilt, deplore.
 Nor at my loom, nor by the voice of Fame
 Have I e'er heard it said,
 The base-born issue of some human maid,
 Begotten by a god, to bliss have any claim.

ION, CHORUS.

ION. O ye attendants on your noble mistress,
 Who watch around the basis of this fane,
 Say, whether Xuthus have already left
 The tripod and oracular recess,
 Or in the temple doth he stay to ask
 More questions yet about his childless state ?

CHOR. He is within, nor yet hath passed the threshold
 Of these abodes, O stranger : but we hear
 The sounding hinges of yon gates announce
 His coming forth : and see, my lord advances !

XUTHUS, ION, CHORUS.

XUT. On thee, my son, may every bliss attend :
 For such an introduction suits my speech.

ION. With me all's well : but learn to think aright,
 And we shall both be happy.

XUT. Give thy hand,
 And suffer me t' embrace thee.

ION. Are your senses
 Yet unimpaired, or hath the secret curse
 Some god inflicts, O stranger, made you frantic ?

XUT. In my right mind am I, if having found
 Him whom I hold most dear, I wish t' embrace him.

ION. Desist, nor touch me, lest your rude hand tear
 The garlands of the god.

XUT. Now in these arms
 Thee I have caught, no pledge will I receive ;
 For I've discovered my beloved son.

ION. Wilt thou not leave me, ere these shafts transpierce
 Your vitals ?

XUT. But why shun me, now thou know'st
That I to thee by such strong ties am bound?

ION. Because to me it is no welcome office
Foolish and frantic strangers to recall
To their right reason.

XUT. Take my life away,
And burn my corse; but if thou kill me, thou
Wilt be thy father's murderer.

ION. How are you
My father? Is not this ridiculous?

XUT. In a few words to thee would I explain
Our near connection.

ION. What have you to say?

XUT. I am thy sire, and thou art my own son.

ION. Who told you this?

XUT. Apollo, by whose care
Thou, O my son, wert nurtured in this fane.

ION. You for yourself bear witness.

XUT. Having searched
The oracles of this unerring god—

ION. Some phrase of dubious import have you heard,
Which hath misled you.

XUT. Heard I not aright?

ION. What said Apollo?

XUT. That the man who meets me—

ION. Where?

XUT. As I from the temple of the god
Am going forth.

ION. What fortunes him await?

XUT. Those of my son.

ION. By birth or through adoption?

XUT. A gift and my own child.

ION. Am I the first
You light on?

XUT. I have met none else, my son.

ION. Whence springs this strange vicissitude of fortune?

XUT. The same event with wonder strikes us both.

ION. To you, what mother bore me?

XUT. This I know not.

ION. Did not Apollo say?

XUT. I was delighted

With what he had revealed, and searched no farther.

ION. From mother earth I surely sprung.

XUT. The ground

Brings forth no children.

ION. How can I be yours?

XUT. I know not; but refer thee to the god.

ION. Some other subject let us now begin.

XUT. This is a topic, O my son, to me
Most interesting.

ION. The joys of lawless love
Have you experienced?

XUT. Yes, through youthful folly.

ION. Ere you were wedded to Erectheus' daughter?

XUT. Not ever since.

ION. Did you beget me then?

XUT. The time just tallies.

ION. But how came I hither?

XUT. This quite perplexes.

ION. From a distant land?

XUT. In this I also find new cause for doubt.

ION. Did you ascend erewhile the Pythian rock?

XUT. To celebrate the festivals of Bacchus.

ION. But to what host did you repair?

XUT. The same

Who me with Delphic maids—

ION. Initiated?

Or what is it you mean?

XUT. The Mænades

Of Bromius too.

ION. While sober, or o'erpowered

By wine?

XUT. The joys of Bacchus had ensnared me.

ION. Hence it appears I was begotten then.

XUT. Fate hath at length discovered thee, my son.

ION. But to this fane how could I come?

XUT. The nymph

Perhaps exposed thee.

ION. I from servitude
Have made a blest escape.

XUT. Now, O my son,
Embrace thy sire.

ION. I ought not to distrust
The god.

XUT. Thou think'st aright.

ION. And is there aught
That I can wish for more—

XUT. 'Thou now behold'st
As much as it concerns thee to behold.

ION. Than from Jove's son to spring?

XUT. Which is thy lot.

ION. May I embrace the author of my birth?

XUT. To the god yielding credence.

ION. Hail, my father.

XUT. With ecstasy that title I receive.

ION. This day—

XUT. Hath made me happy.

ION. My dear mother,

Shall I e'er see thee? More than ever now
(Be who thou wilt) I for that moment long.
But thou perhaps art dead, and I for thee
Can now do nothing.

CHOR. With our monarch's house
We share the glad event: yet could I wish
My royal mistress and Erectheus' race
With children had been blest.

XUT. The god, my son,
In thy discovery hath done well; to him
I owe this happy union. Thou too find'st
A father, though thou never knew'st till now
By whom thou wert begotten: with thy wishes
Mine, O my son, conspire, that thou mayst find
Thy mother, and that I may learn who bore thee.
By leaving this to time, we may at length
Perhaps discover her: but now forsaking
Apollo's temple and this exiled state,
With dutious zeal accompany thy sire

To Athens, where this heritage awaits thee,
A prosperous sceptre and abundant wealth :
Nor though thou want one parent, can the name,
Or of ignoble, or of poor be thine :
But for thy noble birth shalt thou be famed,
And thy abundant treasures. Art thou silent ?
Why dost thou fix thine eyes upon the ground ?
Thy anxious thoughts return, and thou, thus changed
From thy past cheerfulness, alarm'st my soul.

ION. Things at a distance wear not the same semblance
As when on them we fix a closer view.
I certainly with gratitude embrace
My better fortunes, having found in you
A father. But whence rose my anxious thoughts
Now hear : in Athens, I am told, a native
Is deemed a glorious name, not so the race
Of aliens. I its gates shall enter laden
With these two evils ; from a foreign sire
Descended, and myself a spurious child.
Branded with this reproach, doomed to continue
In base obscurity, I shall be called
A man of no account : but if intruding
Into the highest stations in the city,
I aim at being great, I shall incur
Hate from the vulgar, for superior power
Is to the people odious ; but the friends
Of virtue, they whose elevated souls
With real wisdom are endued, observe
A modest silence, nor with eager haste
Rush into public business ; such as these
Will laugh and brand me with an idiot's name,
For not remaining quiet in a land
Which with tumultuous outrages abounds.
Again, will those of a distinguished rank
Who at the helm preside, when I attempt
To raise myself to honours, be most wary
How on an alien they their votes confer,
For thus, my sire, 'tis ever wont to be ;
They who possess authority and rank

Loathe their competitors. But when I come,
Unwelcome stranger, to a foreign house
And to the childless matron—partner once
In your calamity, of all her hopes
Now reft—with bitter anguish will she feel
In private this misfortune : by what means
Can I escape her hatred, at your footstool
When I am seated, but she, still remaining
A childless consort, with malignant eyes
The object of your tenderness beholds ?
Then or, betraying me, will you regard
Your wife : or by th' esteem for me exprest,
A dire confusion in your palace cause.
For men, by female subtlety, how oft
Have poisons been invented to destroy ;
Yet is my pity to your consort due,
Childless and hastening to the vale of years ;
Sprung from heroic sires she ill deserves
To pine through want of issue. But the face
Of empire whom we foolishly commend
Is fair indeed, though in her mansions Grief
Hath fixed her loathed abode. For who is happy,
Who fortunate, when his whole life is spent
In circumspection and in anxious fears ?
Rather would I in an ignoble state
Live blest, than be a monarch who delights
In evil friends, and hates the good, still fearing
The stroke of death. Perhaps you will reply
That gold can all these obstacles surmount,
And to grow rich is sweet. I would not hear
Tumultuous sounds, or grievous toils endure,
Because these hands my treasures still retain.
May I possess an humbler rank exempt
From sorrow ! O my sire, let me describe
The blessings I have here enjoyed ; first ease,
To man most grateful ; by the busy crowd
I seldom was molested, from my path
No villain drove me : not to be endured
Is this, when we to base competitors

Are forced to yield pre-eminence. I prayed
Fervently to the gods, or ministered
To mortals, and with those who did rejoice
I never grieved. Some strangers I dismissed,
But others came. Hence a new object still
Did I remain, and each new votary please.
What men are bound to wish for, even they
Who with reluctance practise what they ought,
The laws conspired to aid my natural bent,
And in the sight of Phœbus made me just.
These things maturely weighing in my breast,
I deem my situation here exceeds
What Athens can bestow. Allow me then
The privilege of living to myself :
For 'tis an equal blessing, or to taste
The splendid gifts of fortune with delight,
Or in an humbler station rest content.

CHOR. Well hast thou spoken : could thy words conduce
To the felicity of those I love !

XUT. Cease to speak thus, and learn how to be happy :
For on the spot where thee I found, my son,
Will I perform due rites, the social board
Crown with a public banquet, and slay victims
In celebration of thy natal day,
Which with no sacrifice hath yet been graced.
But now conducting thee, as if a guest
Entered my doors, thee with a splendid feast
Will I regale, and to th' Athenian realm
Lead thee as one who comes to view the land,
Not as my son ; because I would not grieve
My consort, who is childless, while myself
In thee am blest : yet will I seize at length
Some happy moment, and on her prevail
To let thee wield my sceptre. By the name
Of Ion, I accost thee, which best suits
Th' event that happened, since, as I came forth
From Phœbus' temple, thou didst meet me first.
Collecting therefore all thy band of friends,
Previous to thy departure from the city

Of Delphi, with the victim ox regale them.
 But I command you, damsels, to conceal
 What I have said : for if ye to my wife
 Disclose it, ye shall die.

[*Exit* NUTHUS.

ION.

Then will I go :

Yet is there one thing wanting to complete
 My better fortunes : for I cannot live
 With comfort, if I find not her who bore me.
 If I might yet presume to wish for aught,
 O may my mother prove to be a dame
 Of Athens, that from her I may inherit
 Freedom of speech ! For if a stranger come
 Into that city pure from foreign mixture,
 Although he be a denizen in name,
 By servile fear his faltering tongue is tied,
 Nor dares he freely utter what he thinks.

[*Exit* ION.

CHORUS.

ODE.

I.

I view the tears which from her eyes shall flow
 The sorrows that shall rend her breast,
 Soon as my queen th' unwelcome truth shall know
 That with an heir her lord is blest,
 While she forlorn and childless pines.
 What priest, O Phœbus, chanted thy decrees ?
 Who bore this stripling nurtured in thy shrines ?
 Suspected frauds my soul displease,
 Unwonted terrors rend my heart,
 While thou to him unfold'st a blest event.
 The boy is versed in every treacherous art,
 To him her choicest gifts hath fortune lent,
 Reared, base-born alien, in a foreign land.
 These obvious truths who fails with me to understand ?

II.

Shall we, my friends, to our queen's wounded ear
 Without the least disguise relate
 How he proves false who to her soul is dear,
 Her partner in each change of fate,

That lord in whom her hopes were placed?
 But he is happy now, while she descends
 Through misery to the vale of years in haste :
 Disdained by all his virtuous friends
 Shall Xuthus droop, through fortune's power,
 To our rich mansions, who a stranger came,
 Nor duly prized her gift, the royal dower :
 Perish the traitor to our honoured dame !
 Ne'er may his incense to the gods ascend !
 Creusa shall know this. I am our sovereign's friend.

III.

With his new son th' exulting sire
 Already to the festive banquet hies,
 Where steep Parnassus' hills aspire,
 Whose rocky summits touch the skies,
 Where Bacchus lifts a blazing pine,
 And the gay Mænades to join
 His midnight dances haste. With footsteps rude
 Ne'er may this boy intrude
 Into my city : rather may he die,
 And quit life's radiant morn :
 For groaning Athens would with scorn
 And jealous eyes the alien view,
 Should Xuthus' fraud such cause for scorn supply.
 Enough for her that o'er her plain
 Erst did Erectheus stretch a wide domain,
 Still be each patriot to his children true.

CREUSA, OLD MAN, CHORUS.

CRE. Thou venerable man, who didst attend
 Erectheus the deceased, my honoured sire,
 Now mount the god's oracular abode,
 That thou my joys, if Phœbus, mighty king,
 The birth of children shall foretell, mayst share.
 For surely to be happy with our friends
 Is most delightful : but (which Heaven forbid !)
 Should any evil happen, to behold
 The face of a benignant man is sweet.

CHOR. Shall we speak out, shall we observe strict silence,
Or how shall we proceed?

CRE. Tell what you know
Of the misfortune which invades your queen.

CHOR. Yes, thou shouldst hear it all, though twofold death
Awaited me. Ne'er shall those arms sustain,
Nor to thy bosom shalt thou ever clasp,
The wished-for progeny.

OLD MAN. Alas, my daughter,
Would I were dead!

CRE. Wretch that I am! The woes
Ye have revealed, my friends, make life a curse.

OLD MAN. We perish, O my daughter!

CRE. Grief, alas!
Pierces my vitals.

OLD MAN. Those untimely groans
Suppress.

CRE. My complaints unbidden force their way.

OLD MAN. Before we learn—

CRE. Alas, what farther tidings
Can I expect?

OLD MAN. Whether our lord endure
The same, and share your woes, or you alone
To adverse fortune are exposed.

CHOR. On him,
Thou aged man, Apollo hath bestowed
A son; this blessing singly he enjoys
Without his consort.

CRE. You to me unfold
The greatest of all evils, an affliction
Which claims my groans.

OLD MAN. But is the son you speak of
To spring hereafter from some dame unknown,
Or did Apollo's oracle declare
That he is born already?

CHOR. To thy lord
Phœbus an offspring gives, already born,
Who hath attained the age of blooming manhood:
For I was present.

CRE. What is this you say?

To me have you related such a tale
As no tongue ought to utter.

OLD MAN.

And to me.

CRE. But by what means, yet undisclosed, the god
This oracle to its completion brings,
Inform me more explicitly, and who
This stripling is.

CHOR.

Apollo to thy husband

Gave for a son him whom he first should meet,
As from the temple of the god he came.

CRE. But as for me, alas ! through my whole life
Accursed and sentenced to a childless state,
In solitary mansions shall I dwell.

What youth was by the oracle designed?

Whom did the husband of unhappy me

Meet in his passage—how, or where behold him?

CHOR. Know'st thou that stripling, O my dearest queen,
Who swept the temple? He is Xuthus' son.

CRE. Ah, would to Heaven that I could wing my flight.
Through the dark air beyond the Grecian land
To the Hesperian stars! How great, how great
Are the afflictions I endure!

OLD MAN.

What name

His father gave him, know you, or is this
Yet undetermined?

CHOR.

Ion was he called,

Because he first his happy father met.

OLD MAN. Who was his mother?

CHOR.

That I cannot tell :

But to acquaint thee, O thou aged man,
With all that's in my power, her husband went,
In privacy to offer up a victim
For the discovery, and the natal day
Of his new son, and in the hallowed tent
With him will celebrate a genial banquet.

OLD MAN. My honoured mistress (for with you I grieve),
We are betrayed by your perfidious lord,
Wronged by premeditated fraud, and cast
Forth from Eretheus' house : I speak not this

Through hatred to your husband, but because
I love you more than him, who wedding you
When to the city he a stranger came,
Your palace too and whole inheritance
With you receiving, on some other dame
Appears to have begotten sons by stealth :
How 'twas by stealth I'll prove ; when he perceived
That you were barren, he was not content
To share the self-same fate, but on a slave,
Whom he embraced in secrecy, begot
And to some Delphic matron gave this son.
That in a foreign realm he might be nurtured :
He, to the temple of Apollo sent,
Is here trained up in secret. But the sire.
Soon as he knew the stripling had attained
The years of manhood, hath on you prevailed
Hither to come, because you had no child.
The god indeed hath spoken truth ; not so
Xuthus, who from his infancy hath reared
The boy, and forged these tales ; that, if detected,
His crimes might be imputed to the god :
But coming hither, and by length of time
Hoping to screen the fraud, he now resolves
He will transfer the sceptre to this stripling,
For whom at length he forges the new name
Of Ion, to denote that he went forth
And met him. Ah, how do I ever hate
Those wicked men who plot unrighteous deeds,
And then adorn them with delusive art !
Rather would I possess a virtuous friend
Of mean abilities, than one more wise
And profligate. Of all disastrous fates
Yours is the worst, who to your house admit
Its future lord, whose mother is unknown,
A youth selected from th' ignoble crowd,
The base-born issue of some female slave.
For this had only been a single ill
Had he persuaded you, since you are childless,
T' adopt, and in your palace lodged the son

Of some illustrious dame : but if to you
 This scheme had been disgustful, from the kindred
 Of Æolus his sire should he have sought
 Another consort. Hence is it incumbent
 On you to execute some great revenge
 Worthy of woman : with the lifted sword,
 Or by some stratagem or deadly poison,
 Your husband and his offspring to dispatch
 Ere you by them are murdered : you will lose
 Your life if you delay, for when two foes
 Meet in one house some mischief must befall,
 Or this or that. I therefore will with you
 Partake the danger, and with you conspire
 To slay that stripling, entering the abode
 Where for the sumptuous banquet he is making
 Th' accustomed preparation. While I view
 The sun, and e'en in death, will I repay
 The bounty of those lords who nurtured me.
 For there is one thing only which confers
 Disgrace on slaves—the name ; in all beside
 No virtuous slave to freeborn spirits yields.

CHOR. I too, O my dear mistress, am resolved
 To be the steadfast partner of your fate,
 And die with glory, or with glory live.

CRE. How, O my tortured soul, shall I be silent?
 But rather how these hidden loves disclose?
 Shall I shake off all shame? for what retards
 • My farther progress? To how dire a struggle
 Doth my beleaguered virtue lie exposed?
 Hath not my lord betrayed me? For of house
 And children too am I deprived. All hopes
 Are vanished now of which I fondly sought
 T' avail myself, but could not, by concealing
 The loss of my virginity, those throes
 Concealing which I ever must bewail.
 But by the starry throne of Jove, the goddess
 Who haunts my rocks, and by the sacred banks
 Of Triton's lake, whose waters never fail,
 I my disgrace no longer will suppress,
 For, having cleansed my soul from that pollution

I shall have shaken off a load of cares.
My eyes drop tears, and sorrow rends my soul—
Assailed with treachery both by men and gods,
Whom I will prove to have been false, devoid
Of gratitude to those they loved. O thou,
Whose skilful hand attunes the sevenfold chords
Of the melodious lyre, from lifeless shells
Eliciting the Muses' sweetest strains,
Son of Latona, I this day will publish
A tale to thee disgraceful : for thou cam'st,
Thou cam'st resplendent with thy golden hair,
As I the crocus gathered, in my robe
Each vivid flower assembling to compose
Garlands of fragrance : thou my snowy wrist
Didst seize and drag me to the cave, with shrieks
While to my mother for her aid I cried :
'Twas impudently done, thou lustful god,
To gain the favour of the Cyprian queen.
In evil hour, to thee I bore a son,
Whom, fearful of my mother's wrath, I cast
Into that cave, where thou with wretched me
Didst join thyself in luckless love. Alas !
Now is our miserable son no more,
On him have vultures feasted. But meanwhile
Thy festive Pæans to the sounding harp
Dost thou repeat. O offspring of Latona,
To thee I speak, who from thy golden tripod
Dost in this centre of the world dispense
Thy oracles. My voice shall reach thy ears,
O thou false paramour, who, from my lord
Though thou no favours ever didst receive,
A son into his mansions hast conveyed :
Meanwhile the offspring whom to thee I bore
Hath died unnoticed, by the vultures torn ;
Lost are the bandages in which his mother
Had wrapped him. Thee thy Delos doth abhor,
The branches of whose laurel rise to meet
The palm, and form that shade, where thee her son
With arms divine Latona first embraced.

CHOR. Ah me ! How inexhaustible a source

Of woes is opened, such as must draw tears
From every eye.

OLD MAN. O daughter, on your face,
Still with unsated rapture do I gaze,
My reason have I lost : for, while I strive
From my o'erburdened spirit to discharge
The waves of woe, fresh torrents at the poop
Rush in and overwhelm me, since the words
Which you have uttered, from your present ills
Digressing to the melancholy track
Of other sufferings. What is it you say?
What charge would you allege against Apollo?
What son is this whom you assert you bore?
And in what quarter of your native city
To beasts did you expose him for a prey?
To me repeat the tale.

CRE. Thou aged man,
Thy presence makes me blush : yet will I speak.

OLD MAN. Full well do I know how to sympathize
With my afflicted friends.

CRE. Then hear my tale.
Thou must remember, on the northern side
Of the Cecropian rock, the cave called Macra.

OLD MAN. I know it ; on that spot Pan's temple stands,
And near it blaze his altars.

CRE. 'Twas the scene
Of my unhappy conflict.

OLD MAN. Say, what conflict?
Your history makes me weep.

CRE. The amorous god
Apollo held me in a forced embrace.

OLD MAN. Was this, my daughter, then, what I perceived?

CRE. I know not ; but will openly declare
The truth, if thy conjectures light on it.

OLD MAN. When you in silence wailed some hidden woe?

CRE. Those evils happened then which I to thee
Without disguise reveal.

OLD MAN. But by what means
Your union with Apollo did you hide?

CRE. I bore a son—with patience hear me speak,
O venerable man.

OLD MAN. Where? Who performed
Th' obstetric part? Did you alone endure
The grievous throes of childbirth?

CRE. All alone
Within that cave where I my honour lost.

OLD MAN. But where's the boy, that in this childless state
Thou mayst remain no longer?

CRE. He is dead,
Old man; to beasts was he exposed.

OLD MAN. How! Dead!
Was Phœbus then so base as not to aid you?

CRE. No aid he gave: but in the dreary house
Of Pluto is our hapless offspring nurtured.

OLD MAN. But who exposed him? Sure it was not you?

CRE. I in the midnight gloom around him wrapped
A mantle.

OLD MAN. To th' exposure of your son
Was no man privy?

CRE. I had no accomplice
But secrecy with evil fortune leagued.

OLD MAN. And how could you endure to leave the child
Within that cavern?

CRE. How? These lips did utter
Full many piteous words.

OLD MAN. The cruelty
Which you here showed was dreadful: but the god
Than you was still more cruel.

CRE. Had you seen
The child stretch forth his suppliant hands to me—

OLD MAN. Sought he the fostering breast, or to recline
In your maternal arms?

CRE. Hence torn he suffered
From me foul wrong.

OLD MAN. But whence could such a thought
Enter your soul as to expose your son?

CRE. Because I hoped Apollo, who begot,
Would save him.

OLD MAN. Ah, what storms have overwhelmed
The fortunes of your house !

CRE. Why, covering up
Thy head, thus weep'st thou, O thou aged man ?

OLD MAN. Because I see you and your father wretched.

CRE. Such is the doom of frail mortality :
Nought rests in the same state.

OLD MAN. But let us dwell
No more, O daughter, on the piteous theme.

CRE. What must I do ? The wretched can devise
No wholesome counsel.

OLD MAN. On the god who wronged you
First wreak your vengeance.

CRE. How can I a mortal
O'ercome the potent deities ?

OLD MAN. Set fire
To Phœbus' awful temple.

CRE. Fear restrains me,
And I endure sufficient woes already.

OLD MAN. Dare then to do what's feasible, to kill
Your husband.

CRE. I revere the nuptial bed,
For when I first espoused the noble Xuthus,
My lord was virtuous.

OLD MAN. Slay at least this boy,
Who is produced your interest to oppose.

CRE. Ah, by what means ? How greatly should I wish
This done, if it were possible.

OLD MAN. By arming
With swords your followers.

CRE. I will go : but where
Shall this be executed ?

OLD MAN. In the tent
Where with a banquet he regales his friends.

CRE. This were a public outrage, and my band
Of followers is but weak.

OLD MAN. Alas ! your courage
Deserts you : forge yourself some better scheme.

CRE. I too have schemes both subtle and effective.

OLD MAN. In both will I assist you.

CRE. Hear me then :

Full well thou know'st the history of that war
Waged by earth's brood.

OLD MAN. Against the gods I know
The giants fought on the Phlægrean plain.

CRE. There earth produced the Gorgon, dreadful monster.

OLD MAN. To aid her sons in battle, and contend
With the immortal powers.

CRE. E'en so, and Pallas,
Daughter of Jove, the virgin goddess, slew
This prodigy.

OLD MAN. But by what horrid form
Was it distinguished ?

CRE. Hissing serpents twined
Around its chest.

OLD MAN. Is this the tale I heard
In days of yore ?

CRE. That Pallas wears its hide
To guard her bosom.

OLD MAN. Which they call the Ægis,
The garment of Minerva.

CRE. It obtained
This name, amidst the combat of the gods
When she advanced.

OLD MAN. But how can this, O daughter,
Destroy your foes ?

CRE. Old man, art thou acquainted
With Ericthonius, or an utter stranger
To his whole history ?

OLD MAN. Him whom earth brought forth,
The founder of your race.

CRE. Minerva gave
To him when newly born—

OLD MAN. Gave what ? You speak
With hesitation.

CRE. Of the Gorgon's blood
Two drops.

OLD MAN. On mortals what effect have these ?

CRE. The one produces death, the other heals
Each malady.

OLD MAN. In what were they contained?
Did Pallas to the body of the child
Affix them?

CRE. To his golden bandages :
He gave them to my sire.

OLD MAN. But when he died,
Did they devolve to you?

CRE. To me they came,
And them e'en now around my wrists I wear.

OLD MAN. But of what wondrous qualities, O say,
Consists this twofold present of the goddess?

CRE. That blood which issued from the monster's vein.

OLD MAN. What is the use of this? and with what virtues
Is it endued?

CRE. Diseases it repels,
And nourishes man's life.

OLD MAN. But what effect
Arises from the second drop you speak of?

CRE. Inevitable death : for 'tis the venom
Of serpents which around the Gorgon twine.

OLD MAN. These drops together mingled, do you bring,
Or separate?

CRE. Separate. For with evil good
Ought not to be confounded.

OLD MAN. You possess,
My dearest daughter, all that you can need.

CRE. By this the boy must die : but to dispatch him
Shall be your office.

OLD MAN. Where and by what means
Can I dispatch him? It is yours to speak,
But mine to execute.

CRE. When at my house
In Athens he arrives.

OLD MAN. In this you speak
Unwisely; for you treat with scorn my counsels.

CRE. What mean'st thou? Hast thou formed the same sus-
Which have just entered my misgiving soul? [picious

OLD MAN. Although this boy you slay not, you will seem
To have contrived his death.

CRE. 'Tis well observed :
For every tongue asserts that stepdames envy
Their husband's children.

OLD MAN. Kill him, therefore, here ;
You then will be enabled to deny
That by your means he perished.

CRE. Ere it comes,
I that blest hour anticipate.

OLD MAN. Your husband
Will you deceive e'en in that very point
In which he strives t' o'erreach you.

CRE. Know'st thou then
How to proceed ? This ancient golden vase
Wrought by Minerva, at my hand receiving,
Go where my lord in secret offers up
His victims ; when the banquet is concluded,
And they prepare to pour forth to the gods
The rich libation, by thy robe concealed
Infuse into the goblet of the youth
Its venomous contents ; for him alone,
Who in my house hereafter hopes to reign,
A separate draught, but not designed for all.
Should he once swallow this, he ne'er will reach
The famed Athenian gates, but here remain
A breathless corse.

OLD MAN. This mansion, for the purpose
Of public hospitality designed,
Now enter : I meanwhile will execute
The business I'm employed in. Aged feet
Grow young again by action, though past time
Can ne'er be measured back. Attend, my queen !
Bear me to him I hate, aid me to slay
And drag him forth from the polluted temple !
For in their prosperous fortunes men are bound
To be religious ; but no law obstructs
His progress who resolves to smite his foes.

[*Exeunt CREUSA and OLD MAN.*]

CHORUS.

ODE.

I. 1.

O Trivia, Ceres' daughter, who presid'st
 O'er the nocturnal passenger,
 And him by day who travels; if thou guid'st
 Th' envenomed cup, it shall not err
 Before it reach the destined lip
 Of him to whom my venerable queen
 Sends the Gorgon's blood to sip,
 Who treacherously intruding would debase
 Her ancestors' imperial race.
 No alien's brood in Athens shall be seen;
 The city where Erectheus filled the throne
 Shall still be ruled by his posterity alone.

I. 2.

But if in vain to slay the foe she tries,
 Should fortune too desert my queen,
 And hope which now promotes the bold emprise;
 The biting falchion's edge I ween,
 Or, twined around her neck, the noose,
 Will finish these accumulated woes.
 Then the flitting spirit, loose
 From earthly gyves, in other forms shall live.
 For she will never tamely give
 Consent, that he, to foreign realms who owes
 His birth, shall seize the palace of her sires:
 Hence from her vivid eyes thick flash indignant fires.

II. 1.

Shame for that injured god I feel
 To whom the muse awakes her varied strain,
 Intruding with officious zeal,
 Around Callichore's famed spring,
 On the moon's twentieth eve, should he profane
 The kindled torches, and his tribute bring,
 A sleepless votary, mingling with his train,

When in the dance the starry sky
 Of Jove, with the resplendent moon, unites,
 And fifty maids, the progeny
 Of Nereus, sport midst ocean's rapid tide,
 Or where exhaustless rivers glide,
 To Proserpine and Ceres' mystic rites
 Yielding due homage: from the Delphic fane,
 Yet there this vagrant hopes to reign,
 And satiate his rapacious soul's desire
 With wealth, which others' toils acquire.

II. 2.

Ye bards who crowd each hostile page
 With tales of wives beguiled by lawless love,
 And war with feeble woman wage,
 View with impartial eye our deeds,
 And listen for a moment while I prove
 How greatly female chastity exceeds
 Man, whom unbridled passions prompt to rove.
 Oft have rude songs profaned our name,
 Now let the muse man's haughty sex assail,
 And publish deeds replete with shame.
 For he who from Jove's sons derives his birth
 Is void of gratitude and worth,
 Nought could the throne his consort gave avail
 To make the nuptial bed his scene of joy:
 He hath obtained this spurious boy,
 By the seducing wiles of Venus led
 To some ignoble damsel's bed.

SERVANT, CHORUS.

SER. Where, O ye noble matrons, shall I find
 My queen, Erectheus' daughter? For in quest
 Of her through the whole city have I ranged,
 But cannot meet with her.

CHOR. O thou who tend'st
 On the same lords with me, what fresh event
 Hath happened—wherefore mov'st thou with such speed?
 And what important tidings dost thou bring?

SER. We are pursued : the rulers of this land
Search after her, resolved that she shall die,
Thrown headlong from the rock.

CHOR. Ah me ! what sayst thou ?
Could we not then conceal our scheme of slaying
The boy ?

SER. We are detected, and her danger
Is now most imminent.

CHOR. But by what means
Were these our hidden stratagems brought forth
To public view ?

SER. The god hath found injustice
Too weak to cope with justice, nor allows
His shrine to be polluted.

CHOR. I entreat thee
Say how this happened : for when we have heard
Whether our doom be death, we shall die gladly,
Or, if we live, with pleasure view the sun.

SER. When from the god's oracular abode
With his new son Creusa's husband went
To hold a feast, and for th' immortal powers
Prepared oblations, Xuthus sought the hill
Whence Bacchus' flames burst forth, that he might sprinkle
Parnassus' cloven summit with the blood
Of slaughtered victims, celebrating thus
The blest discovery of his long-lost son,
Whom thus the sire accosted : " Here remain,
And bid the builders labour to erect
Such tent as shall enclose an ample space
On every side : but when I to those gods
Who bless the natal hour have sacrificed,
If I stay long, before thy friends who here
Are present, place the genial feast." Then taking
The heifers, he departed. But the youth,
Attentive to his pious task, on columns
Erected the light roof, to which no walls
Lent their support ; he guarded it with care,
Both from the flaming sun's meridian rays,
And from the western aspect ; then the sides

An acre each in length did he extend,
 With equal angles ; in the central space
 Was there an area, each of the four sides
 Its length extended to six hundred feet,
 A perfect square, which skilful artists say
 Was calculated well to entertain
 All Delphi at the feast ; the sacred tapestry
 Then taking from the treasures of the god,
 He covered o'er the whole—a wondrous sight
 To all beholders. First he o'er the roof
 Threw robes, which Hercules, the son of Jove,
 To Phœbus at his temple brought, the spoils
 Of vanquished Amazons, a votive gift,
 On which these pictures by the loom were wrought—
 Heaven, in its vast circumference all the stars
 Assembling ; there his coursers, too, the sun
 Impetuous drove, till ceased his waning flame,
 And with him drew in his resplendent train
 Vesper's clear light ; but, clad in sable garb,
 Night hastened onward, with her chariot drawn
 By steeds unyoked ; the stars accompanied
 Their goddess ; through mid-air the Pleiades,
 And, with his falchion, armed Orion moved ;
 But placed on high, around the Northern Pole,
 The Bear, in an averted posture, turned ;
 Then full-orbed Cynthia, who the months divides,
 Darted her splendour from the realms above ;
 Next came the Hyades, a sign well known
 To sailors, and Aurora's dawning light,
 The stars dispelling. But the sides he covered
 With yet more tapestry : the Barbaric fleet
 To that of Greece opposed was there displayed :
 Followed a monstrous brood, half horse, half man,
 The Thracian monarch's furious steeds subdued,
 And lion of Nemæa ; at the gate
 Close to his daughters Cecrops rolled along
 On scaly folds ; this was a votive gift
 From some Athenian citizen unknown.
 He in the centre of the festive board

Placed golden cups. An aged herald went
On tiptoe, and each citizen of Delphi
Invited to attend the sumptuous feast.
They, crowned with garlands, when the tent was filled,
Indulged their genius. After the delight
Of the repast was o'er, an aged man,
Into the midst advancing, took his stand,
And from the guests by his officious zeal
Provoked abundant laughter : from huge urns
He poured the water forth to lave their hands,
And scattered all around from blazing myrrh
A rich perfume, over the golden cups
Presiding, and assuming to himself
That office. But at length, when the shrill pipe
Uttered its notes harmonious, and the wine
Again went round, the jovial veteran cried :
" These smaller cups remove, and in their stead
Large goblets bring, that all may cheer their souls
More expeditiously." Then toiled the servants
Beneath the silver vessels which they bore,
And golden beakers by the sculptor wrought :
But he, selecting one of choicest mould,
As if he only meant to show respect
To his young lord, presented it filled high
Up to the brim, infusing midst the wine
A deadly poison, which 'tis said his queen
Gave him, that the new offspring of her lord
Might perish, but without its being known
To any man what caused the stripling's death.
While he, whom Xuthus has declared his son,
Surrounded by his comrades, in his hands
Held the libation, some reproachful word
Was uttered by a servant, which the youth,
Who had received his nurture in the fane
And midst experienced prophets, thought an omen
Most unpropitious, and another goblet
Commanded to be filled : but, on the ground,
As a libation to the Delphic god,
Poured forth the first, and bade his comrades follow

Th' example which he gave. A general silence
Succeeded : we the holy goblets filled
With water and with Biblian wine. While thus
We were employed, there flew into the tent
A flock of doves (for they beneath the roof
Of Phœbus dwell secure) ; but of the wine
When they had tasted, after they had dipped
Their beaks, which thirsted for the luscious draught,
And the rich beverage down their feathered throats
Quaffed eagerly, innoxious did it prove
To all beside, but she, who on the spot
Had settled where the new-discovered stripling
Poured his libation down, no sooner tasted
The liquor, than she shook her wings, cried out
With a shrill plaintive voice, and, groaning, uttered
Notes unintelligible. Every guest
The struggles of the dove amazed ; she died
Torn with convulsions, and her purple feet
Now loosed their hold. But at the social board,
He whom the oracle declared the son
Of Xuthus, rent his garments, bared his breast,
And cried, " What miscreant strove to slay me. Speak,
Old man, for this officious zeal was thine,
And from thy hand the goblet I received."
Then with impetuous grasp his aged arm
He caught, and questioned him, that in the fact
Of bearing venom'd drugs he might detect him.
Hence was the truth laid open : through constraint,
At length did he reluctantly declare
Creusa's guilt, and how her heart contrived
The scheme of minist'ring th' envenomed draught.
Forth from the banquet with his comrades rushed
The youth, whom Phœbus' oracles pronounced
To be the son of Xuthus. Standing up
Among the Pythian nobles, thus he spoke :
" O sacred land, the daughter of Erectheus,
A foreign dame, would take away my life
By poison." Delphi's rulers have decreed
My queen shall be thrown headlong from the rock,

Nor hath one single voice, but the consent
 Of all, adjudged her death, because she strove,
 E'en in the temple, to have slain the priest.
 Pursued by the whole city, hither bend
 Her inauspicious steps. She through a wish
 For children to Apollo came : but now
 She perishes with all her hoped-for race. [*Exit SERVANT.*]

CHOR. No means are left for wretched me
 The ruthless hand of death to 'scape ;
 For all too plainly see,
 Mixt with the purple juices of the grape,
 The baleful drops of viper's blood :
 'Tis manifest what victims were designed
 To cross the dreary Stygian flood.
 My life is doomed to close in woe,
 At me huge rocky fragments will they throw
 How, O my royal mistress, shall I find
 Pinions to speed my rapid flight ?
 How shall I penetrate earth's inmost womb,
 And in the realms of night
 Avoid this miserable doom ;
 Avoid the stones which vengeance hurls around,
 When at our heads she aims the wound ?
 Shall I the fleetest steed ascend,
 Or the tall prow which cleaves the billowy main ?
 No heart can hide so foul a stain,
 Unless some god his sheltering aid extend.
 How sorely, O my wretched queen,
 Will thy tortured spirit grieve !
 And shall not we, who have been seen
 Striving to work another's bane,
 The woes we would inflict, receive,
 As justice doth ordain ?

CREUSA, CHORUS.

CRE. My faithful followers, they pursue my flight,
 Resolved to slay me ; by the public vote
 Of all the Pythian citizens condemned,
 I shall be yielded up.

CHOR. We are no strangers
To thy calamities; mayst thou escape,
Favoured by fortune!

CRE. Whither shall I fly?
These feet were hardly swift enough t' outstrip,
Impending death: but from my foes escaped,
By stealth I come.

CHOR. What shelter canst thou need
More than these altars furnish?

CRE. How can they
Avail me?

CHOR. 'Tis unlawful to destroy
The suppliant.

CRE. But the law hath sentenced me
To perish.

CHOR. Hadst thou by their hands been caught,

CRE. But the relentless ministers of vengeance,
Armed with drawn swords, haste hither.

CHOR. Take thy seat
Close to the altar, for if there thou die,
Thy blood will on thy murderers fix a stain
That ne'er can be effaced. But we with patience
Are bound to suffer what the Fates inflict.

ION, CREUSA, CHORUS.

ION. Cephisus, O thou awful sire, who bear'st
The semblance of a bull, what viper's this
Thou hast begotten, or what dragon darting
Flames most consuming from her murderous eyes!
She with unbounded boldness is endued,
And pestilent as those envenomed drops
Of Gorgon's blood with which she sought to kill me.
Seize her! Parnassus' rocks shall tear away
The graceful ringlets of her streaming hair,
When headlong from its summit she is thrown.
Me hath propitious fortune here detained,
Else to th' Athenian city had I gone,
And fallen into a cruel step-dame's snares,
But while I yet among my friends remain,

Thy heart have I explored, how great a pest
 And foe thou art to me, for at thy doors
 Hadst thou received me, thou to Pluto's realm
 Wouldst instantly have hurled me down. Behold
 The sorceress, what a complicated scene
 Of treachery hath she framed, yet trembles not
 The altar of Apollo to approach,
 As if Heaven's vengeance could not reach her crimes.
 But neither shall this altar nor the temple
 Of Phœbus save thy life : for the compassion
 Thou wouldst excite is rather due to me
 And to my mother ; for although, in person,
 She be not here, yet is that much-loved name
 Ne'er absent from my thoughts.

CRE. To spare my life
 In my own name I warn you, and in that
 Of the vindictive god before whose altar
 We stand.

ION. But what hast thou to do with Phœbus ?

CRE. Myself I to the Delphic god devote.

ION. Though thou his priest by poison wouldst have slain.

CRE. Phœbus in you had at that time no right,
 Because you were your father's.

ION. I was once
 Apollo's, and still call myself his son.

CRE. To him indeed you formerly belonged,
 But now am I his votary, and no claim
 Have you to such a title.

ION. Thy behaviour
 Is impious, mine was pious erst.

CRE. I sought
 To take away the life of you, a foe
 To me and to my house.

ION. Did I with arms
 Invade thy country ?

CRE. Yes, and you have fired
 The mansions of Erectheus.

ION. With what brands,
 What flames ?

CRE. You in my palace would have dwelt,
Seizing it 'gainst my will.

ION. My sire bestowing
On me the realm his valour had obtained.

CRE. But by what claim rule Æolus' race
Over Minerva's city?

ION. With his sword
He rescued it, and not with empty words.

CRE. He was but an ally, nor was that land
His proper residence.

ION. Through the mere dread
Of what might happen, wouldst thou then have slain me?

CRE. Lest I should perish if your life were spared.

ION. With envy art thou stung, because my sire
Discovered me, while thou remain'st yet childless.

CRE. Would you invade the childless matron's house?

ION. But have not I some title to a share
Of my sire's wealth?

CRE. A shield and spear are all
Your father had, and all that you can claim.

ION. Leave Phœbus' altar and this hallowed seat.

CRE. Where'er she dwell, to your own mother give
Such admonitions.

ION. Shalt thou 'scape unpunished
For thy attempt to slay me?

CRE. If you mean
To take away my life, let it be here
Within this temple.

ION. What delight to thee
Can it afford, amid the votive wreaths
Of Phœbus to expire?

CRE. I shall afflict
One by whom I have greatly been afflicted.

ION. Oh! 'tis most wondrous how, for man t' observe,
The deity such laws as are not good
Or prudent hath enacted. For th' unjust
Before their altars ought to find no seat,
But thence to be expelled; for 'tis not fit
The statues of the gods by impious hands

Should be profaned ; but every virtuous man
 Who is oppressed ought to find shelter there.
 Yet is it most unseemly for the just
 And the unjust, when here they meet together,
 'T' experience the same treatment from the gods.

PYTHIAN PRIESTESS, ION, CREUSA, CHORUS.

PYTHIAN PRIESTESS. Refrain thy rage, my son ; for I the
 priestess
 Of Phœbus, who the tripod's ancient rites
 Maintain, selected from the Delphic maids,
 Leave his oracular abode and pass
 This consecrated threshold.

ION. Hail, dear mother.
 Although you bore me not.

PYTHIAN PR. Yet call me such.
 That name is not ungrateful.

ION. Have you heard
 The stratagems she formed to murder me?

PYTHIAN PR. I heard them ; and thou also hast trans-
 gressed
 Through cruelty.

ION. How ? Can it be unjust,
 Those who would slay me, to reward with death ?

PYTHIAN PR. Wives with inveterate hatred ever view
 Their husbands' sons sprung from another bed.

ION. And we who have by them been greatly wronged,
 Abhor those step-dames.

PYTHIAN PR. Banish from thy soul
 This rancour, now the temple thou art leaving,
 And on thy journey to thy native land.

ION. How then would you advise me to proceed ?

PYTHIAN PR. Go unpolluted to th' Athenian realm
 With prosperous omens.

ION. Sure the man who slays
 His foes is unpolluted.

PYTHIAN PR. Act not thus :
 But with attentive ear receive my counsels.

ION. O speak : for your benevolence to me
Will dictate all you utter.

PYTHIAN PR. Dost thou see
The chest beneath my arm ?

ION. An ancient chest,
With garlands decked, I see.

PYTHIAN PR. In this, thee erst
A new-born infant, I received.

ION. What mean you ?
A fresh discovery opens.

PYTHIAN PR. I have kept
These tokens secret ; but display them now.

ION. How could you hide them such a length of time
As since you took me up ?

PYTHIAN PR. The god required
Thy service in his temple.

ION. Doth he now
No longer need it ? Who this doubt will solve ?

PYTHIAN PR. By pointing out thy sire, he from these
realms

Dismisses thee.

ION. But is it by command,
Or from what motive, that this chest you keep ?

PYTHIAN PR. Apollo's self inspired me with the thought—

ION. Of doing what ? O speak ! Conclude your tale.

PYTHIAN PR. With care preserving to the present time
What I had found.

ION. But how can this to me
Cause either gain or damage ?

PYTHIAN PR. Know'st thou not,
That round thee close these fillets were entwined ?

ION. What you produce may aid me in th' attempt
To find my mother.

PYTHIAN PR. With the god's consent,
Which he did erst withhold.

ION. O day, that bring'st
Blest visions to delight these wondering eyes !

PYTHIAN. PR. Observe these hints, and diligently search
For her who bore thee : traversing all Asia.

In silence. I this votive gift, O Phœbus,
Lodge in thy fane. But what presumptuous deed !
Oppose I the benignant god who saved
These tokens to assist me in discovering
My mother ? I am bound to ope the lid,
And act with courage : for what fate ordains
I ne'er can supersede. Why were ye hidden
From me, O sacred wreaths and bandages
In which I was preserved ? This orbéd chest,
Behold, how by some counsel of the god
It hath been freed from the effects of age ;
Still is its wicker substance undecayed,
Although the time which intervened was long
For such a store to last.

CRE.

Ah me ! What vision

Most unexpected do I see ?

CHOR.

Thou oft

Didst heretofore know when thou shouldst be silent.

CRE. My situation now no more admits
Of silence : cease these counsels ; for I view
The chest in which I, O my son, exposed you,
While yet a tender infant, in the cave
Of Cecrops midst th' encircling rocks of Macra.
I therefore from this altar will depart,
Though death should be the consequence.

ION.

O seize her ;

For she, with frenzy smitten by the god,
Leaps from the hallowed altar : bind her arms.

CRE. The execution of your bloody purpose
Suspend not : for this chest, and you, and all
The hidden relics it contains of yours,
My son, will I hold fast.

ION.

Are not these arts

Most dreadful ? With what specious words e'en now
She claims me for a pledge !

CRE.

Not thus : but you,

Whom they hold dear, are by your friends discovered.

ION. Am I a friend of thine, and yet in secret
Wouldst thou have murdered me ?

- CRE. Yea, and my son :
A name to both thy parents ever dear.
- ION. Cease to contrive these fraudulent stratagems ;
For I will clearly prove that thou art guilty.
- CRE. Ah, would to Heaven that I could reach the mark
At which I aim my shaft !
- ION. Is that chest empty,
Or filled with hidden stores ?
- CRE. Here are the garments
In which I erst exposed you.
- ION. Canst thou tell
What name they bear before thine eyes behold them ?
- CRE. If I aright describe them not, to die
Will I be nothing loth.
- ION. Speak ; for thy boldness
Is somewhat wonderful.
- CRE. Observe the robe
Which erst I wove, when yet a maid.
- ION. What sort
Of garment is it ? for the virgins' loom
Produces various woofs.
- CRE. Not yet complete ;
The sketch bespeaks a learner.
- ION. In what form,
That here thou mayst not take me unawares ?
- CRE. The Gorgon fills the centre of that vest.
- ION. O Jove, what fate pursues me !
- CRE. And the margin
With serpents is encompassed like the Ægis.
- ION. Lo ! this is the same garment. We have made
Such a complete discovery as resembles
The oracles of Heaven.
- CRE. O woof which erst
My virgin-shuttle wrought.
- ION. Canst thou produce
Aught else, or in this evidence alone
Art thou successful ?
- CRE. In a style antique
Dragons with golden cheeks, Minerva's gift,

Who bids us rear our children 'mong such forms,
In imitation of our ancestor
Great Erichthonius.

ION. What is their effect,
Or what can be their use? To me explain
These golden ornaments.

CRI. Them, O my son,
Around his neck the new-born child should wear.

ION. Here are the dragons: but I wish to know
What's the third sign.

CRE. Then round your brow I placed
A garland of that olive which first grew
On Pallas' rock; this, if it still be here,
Hath not yet lost the verdure of its leaves,
But flourishes unwithered like the tree
From which 'twas taken.

ION. O my dearest mother,
With what delight do I behold thy face !
And on those cheeks with what delight imprint
The kiss of filial rapture !

CRE. O my son,
Who in a mother's partial eyes outshine
The splendour of Hyperion (for the god
Will pardon me), I clasp you in these arms
Found unexpectedly, you whom I thought
To have been plunged beneath the silent grave,
And dwelt with Proserpine.

ION. But while thou fling'st,
O my dear mother, thy fond arms around me,
To thee I seem like one who hath been dead
And is restored to life.

CRE. Thou wide expanse
Of radiant ether, in what grateful tone
Shall I express myself? By clamorous shouts?
Whence hath such unexpected pleasure reached me?
To whom am I indebted for this joy?

IX. Sooner could I have looked for aught, O mother,
Happening to me, than the discovery made
In this auspicious hour, that I am thine.

CRE. With fear I tremble yet lest thou shouldst lose—

ION. The son who meets thy fond embrace?

CRE.

Such hopes

I from my soul had banished. Whence, O woman,

Didst thou with fostering arms receive my child?

By whom to Phœbus' temple was he borne?

ION. 'Twas the god's doing. But may prosperous fortune
Be ours through the remainder of our lives,
Which have been wretched hitherto.

CRE.

My son,

Not without tears were you brought forth; your mother

'Midst bitter lamentations from her arms

Cast you to earth: but now, while to your cheeks

I press my lips, again I breathe, I taste

The most ecstatic pleasures.

ION.

What thou sayst

May to us both with justice be applied.

CRE. No longer am I left without an heir,

No longer childless; my paternal house

Acquires new strength, and the Athenian realm

Hath yet its native monarchs. E'en Erectheus

Grows young again, nor shall our earth-born race

Be covered with the shades of night, but view

The sun's resplendent beams.

ION.

But, O my mother,

Since my sire too is present, let him share

The transports I to thee have given.

CRE.

What words

Are these which you have uttered, O my son?

ION. Who proves to be the author of my birth.

CRE. Why speak of this? For from another sire
You spring, and not from Xuthus.

ION.

Me, alas!

In thy unwedded state, a spurious child,

Thou then didst bear.

CRE.

Nor yet had Hymen waved

For me his torch, or led the choral dance,

When, O my dearest son, for you I felt

A mother's throes.

ION. From what ignoble race
Am I descended ?

CRE. Witness she who slew
The Gorgon.

ION. Ha ! What mean'st thou by these words ?

CRE. Who on my rocks, whence with spontaneous shoot
The fragrant olive springs, my native hills,
Fixes her seat.

ION. To me thou speak'st so darkly,
That what thou mean'st I cannot comprehend.

CRE. Beneath the rock where her harmonious lays
The nightingale attunes, I by Apollo—

ION. Why dost thou name Apollo ?

CRE. Was embraced
In secrecy—

ION. Speak on ; for fair renown,
And prosperous fortune, will to me accrue
From the event which thou relat'st.

CRE. To Phœbus.
While in its orbit the tenth moon revolved,
I bore a son, whom I concealed.

ION. Most grateful
Are these strange tidings, if thou utter truth.

CRE. The fillets which I erst, while yet a maid,
Wove with my shuttle I around you twined ;
But you ne'er clung to this maternal breast,
Nor did these hands for you the laver hold,
But in a desert cavern were you thrown
To perish, torn by the remorseless beaks
Of hungry vultures.

ION. What a horrid deed
Was this, in thee, O mother !

CRE. By my fears
Held fast in bondage, O my son, your life
I would have cast away—would then, though loth,
Have murdered you.

ION. Thou too didst scarce escape
From being slain by my unholy rage.

CRE. Such were my wretched fortunes then, and such

ION What motive, then, had he for yielding up
His offspring to another sire, pretending
That I am Xuthus' son?

CRE. The god asserts not
That Nuthus was the author of your birth,
But you, his offspring, doth on him bestow.
For to a friend a friend may give his son
T'inherit his possessions.

ION. O my mother,
An anxious doubt, whether the god speak truth,
Or utter a fallacious oracle,
Is cause sufficient to disturb my soul.

CRE. Hear then, my son, what thoughts to me occur
Your benefactor Phœbus places you
In an illustrious house ; but were you called
The offspring of the god, you would receive
For your inheritance nor wide domains
Nor aught of rank paternal. For from him
With whom my luckless union I concealed,
And secretly attempted to have slain you,
How could you look for aught ? But he, promoting
Your interest, to another sire consigns you.

ION. I cannot rashly credit tales like these.
But I will go into the fane, and ask
Apollo, whether from a mortal sire
I spring, or whether I am Phœbus' son.
Ha! Who is that, who on the pinnacles
Of this high dome ascending, like the sun,
Displays her front celestial? Let us fly,
My mother, lest perchance we view the gods
When we are not permitted to behold them.

MINERVA, ION, CREUSA, CHORUS.

MIN. O stay, for 'tis from me you fly, who bear
To you no hate, but in th' Athenian realm
And here am equally your friend : I, Pallas,
From whom your native land derives its name,
Am hither come with swift career despatched
By Phœbus, in your presence who himself

Deems it not meet t' appear, lest his past conduct
In foul reproach involve him : but the god
Sends me t' inform you that Creusa bore,
And Phœbus was the father who begot you.
But you, the god, as he sees fit, bestows,
Not upon him who is your real sire,
But hath contrived this plot that you may gain
The heritage of an illustrious house.
For when the holy oracle pronounced
This riddle, fearing, by a mother's wiles,
Lest you should bleed, or with vindictive hand
That mother slay, he by a stratagem
Hath extricated both. The royal seer
Meant to have kept this secret, till at Athens
He had proclaimed that you derive your birth
From Phœbus and Creusa. But this matter
That I may finish now, and the contents
Of those important oracles reveal,
Which to explore ye by your harnessed steeds
Were hither drawn, attend. Creusa, take
Thy son, to the Cecropian land repair,
And place him on the throne ; for, from the race
Of great Erectheus sprung, he is entitled
To rule my favoured realm, and shall be famed
Through Greece : for his four sons, sprung from one root,
Shall, on their country, and its tribes who dwell
Upon my sacred rock, their name confer ;
Geleon the first ; then Hoples, Argades,
And, from the shield I bear, a chief called Ægis
Shall rule th' Ægichori. But their descendants,
Born at a period by the Fates assigned,
Amid the Cyclades shall dwell, in towns
Encircled by the billowy deep, and havens
Which to my realm will add new strength : the shores
Of either continent shall they possess,
Asia and Europe, but, from Ion, styled
Ionians, they with glory shall be crowned.
But from thee too and Xuthus shall descend
A noble race ; Dorus, the mighty founder

Of the famed Doric realm ; in the domain
 Of ancient Pelops, shall your second son,
 Achæus, be the monarch of the coast
 Bordering on Rhium's steep ascent—with pride
 That nation shall adopt their leader's name.
 In all things hath Apollo acted right ;
 First, without pain he caused thee to bring forth,
 Lest to thy friends thy shame should be revealed :
 But after thou hadst borne this son, and swathed
 Those fillets round him, he bade Hermes bring
 The infant to this fane, and nurtured him,
 Nor suffered him to die. Now, therefore, keep
 Strict silence, nor declare that he is thine,
 That Xuthus may exult in the idea
 Of being father to the youth, while thou,
 O woman, shalt enjoy the real bliss.
 Farewell, for from this pause in your afflictions
 I to you both announce a happier fate.

ION. O Pallas, daughter of imperial Jove,
 Thy words I disbelieve not : for from Phœbus
 And this illustrious dame am I convinced
 That I derive my birth, which from the first
 Was not improbable.

CRE. To what I speak
 Now give attention : I commend Apollo,
 Though erst I blamed him ; for he now restores
 • To me the son he formerly neglected.
 Now are these portals pleasing to my sight,
 And this oracular abode of Phœbus,
 Which I so lately loathed. I now these rings
 Seize with exulting hands, and at the threshold
 Utter my grateful orisons.

MIN. The praises
 Which thou bestow'st on Phœbus, I applaud,
 And this thy sudden change : for though the aid
 The gods afford be tardy, it at length
 Proves most effectual.

CRE. Let us, O my son,
 Repair to our own Athens.

MIN. Thither go,
And I will follow.

CRE. Deign t' accompany
Our steps, and to our city prove a friend.

MIN. Upon the throne of thy progenitors,
There take thy seat.

ION. To me will such possession
Be honourable.

CHOR. O Phœbus, son of Jove
And of Latona, hail ! Whene'er his house
Is shaken by calamity, the man
Who pays due reverence to the gods hath cause
To trust in their protection : for at length
The virtuous shall obtain their due reward,
Nor shall the wicked prosper in the land.

M E D E A.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

NURSE OF MEDEA.	JASON.
ATTENDANT ON THE CHILDREN.	ÆGEUS.
MEDEA.	MESSENGER.
CHORUS OF CORINTHIAN WOMEN.	THE TWO SONS OF JASON AND
CREON.	MEDEA.

SCENE—BEFORE THE PALACE OF CREON AT CORINTH.

NURSE.

AH ! would to heaven the Argo ne'er had urged
Its rapid voyage to the Colchian strand
'Twixt the Cyanean rocks, nor had the pine
Been fell in Pelion's forests, nor the hands
Of those illustrious chiefs, who that famed bark
Ascended to obtain, the golden fleece
For royal Pelias, plied the stubborn oar ;
So to Iolchos' turrets had my Queen
Medea never sailed, her soul with love
For Jason smitten, nor, as since her arts
Prevailed on Pelias' daughters to destroy
Their father, in this realm of Corinth dwelt
An exile with her husband and her sons ;
Thus to the citizens whose land received her
Had she grown pleasing, and in all his schemes
Assisted Jason : to the wedded pair,
Hence bliss supreme arises, when the bond
Of concord joins them : now their souls are filled
With ruthless hate, and all affection's lost :
For false to his own sons, and her I serve,

With a new consort of imperial birth
Sleeps the perfidious Jason, to the daughter
Of Creon wedded, lord of these domains.
The wretched scorned Medea oft exclaims,
"O by those oaths, by that right hand thou gav'st
The pledge of faith!" She then invokes the gods
To witness what requital she hath found
From Jason. On a couch she lies, no food
Receiving, her whole frame subdued by grief;
And since she marked the treachery of her lord
Melts into tears incessant, from the ground
Her eyes she never raises, never turns
Her face aside, but steadfast as a rock,
Or as the ocean's rising billows, hears
The counsels of her friends, save when she weeps
In silent anguish, with her snowy neck
Averted, for her sire, her native land,
And home, which she forsaking hither came
With him who scorns her now. She from her woes
Too late hath learnt how enviable the lot
Of those who leave not their paternal roof.
She even hates her children, nor with joy
Beholds them : much I dread lest she contrive
Some enterprise unheard of, for her soul
Is vehement, nor will she tamely brook
Injurious treatment ; well, full well I know
Her temper, which alarms me, lest she steal
Into their chamber, where the genial couch
Is spread, and with the sword their vitals pierce,
Or to the slaughter of the bridegroom add
That of the monarch, and in some mischance,
Yet more severe than death, herself involve :
For dreadful is her wrath, nor will the object
Of her aversion gain an easy triumph.
But lo, returning from the race, her sons
Draw near : they think not of their mother's woes,
For youthful souls are strangers to affliction.

ATTENDANT, *with the SONS of JASON and MEDEA*, NURSE.

ATT. O thou, who for a length of time hast dwelt
Beneath the roofs of that illustrious dame
I serve, why stand'st thou at these gates alone
Repeating to thyself a doleful tale :
Or wherefore by Medea from her presence
Art thou dismissed ?

NUR. Old man, O you who tend
On Jason's sons, to faithful servants aught
Of evil fortune that befalls their lords
Is a calamity : but such a pitch
Of grief am I arrived at, that I felt
An impulse which constrained me to come forth
From these abodes, and to the conscious earth
And heaven proclaim the lost Medea's fate.

ATT. Cease not the complaints of that unhappy dame ?

NUR. Your ignorance I envy : for her woes
Are but beginning, nor have yet attained
Their mid career.

ATT. O how devoid of reason,
If we with terms thus harsh may brand our lords,
Of ills more recent nothing yet she knows.

NUR. Old man, what mean you ? Scruple not to speak.

ATT. Nought. What I have already said repents me.

NUR. I by that beard conjure you not to hide
The secret from your faithful fellow-servant.
For I the strictest silence will observe
If it be needful.

ATT. Some one I o'erheard
(Appearing not to listen, as I came
Where aged men sit near Pirene's fount
And hurl their dice) say, that from Corinth's land
Creon, the lord of these domains, will banish
The children with their mother ; but I know not
Whether th' intelligence be true, and wish
It may prove otherwise.

NUR. Will Jason brook

Such an injurious treatment of his sons,
Although he be at variance with their mother ?

ATT. By new connections are all former ties
Dissolved, and he no longer is a friend
To this neglected race.

NUR. We shall be plunged
In utter ruin, if to our old woes,
Yet unexhausted, any fresh we add.

ATT. Be silent, and suppress the dismal tale,
For 'tis unfit our royal mistress know.

NUR. Hear, O ye children, how your father's soul
Is turned against you : still, that he may perish
I do not pray, because he is my lord ;
Yet treacherous to his friends hath he been found.

ATT. Who is not treacherous ? Hast thou lived so long
Without discerning how self-love prevails
O'er social ? Some by glory, some by gain,
Are prompted. Then what wonder, for the sake
Of a new consort, if the father slight
These children ?

NUR. Go, all will be well, go in.
Keep them as far as possible away,
Nor suffer them to come into the presence
Of their afflicted mother ; for her eyes
Have I just seen with wild distraction fired,
As if some horrid purpose against them
She meant to execute ; her wrath I know
Will not be pacified, till on some victim
It like a thunderbolt from Heaven descends ;
May she assail her foes alone, nor aim
The stroke at those she ought to hold most dear.

MED. [*within.*] Ah me ! how grievous are my woes ! What
Can I devise to end this hated life ? [*means*

NUR. 'Tis as I said : strong agitations seize
Your mother's heart, her choler's raised. Dear children,
Beneath these roofs hie instantly, nor come
Into her sight, accost her not, beware
Of these ferocious manners and the rage
Which boils in that ungovernable spirit.

Go with the utmost speed, for I perceive
Too clearly that her plaints, which in thick clouds
Arise at first, will kindle ere 'tis long
With tenfold violence. What deeds of horror
From that high-soaring, that remorseless soul,
May we expect, when goaded by despair !

[*Exit* ATTENDANT and SONS.]

MED. [*within.*] I have endured, alas ! I have endured —
Wretch that I am !—such agonies as call
For loudëst plaints. Ye execrable sons
Of a devoted mother, perish ye
With your false sire, and perish his whole house !

NUR. Why should the sons—ah, wretched me !—partake
Their father's guilt ? Why hat'st thou them ? Ah me !
How greatly, O ye children, do I fear
Lest mischief should befall you : for the souls
Of kings are prone to cruelty, so seldom
Subdued, and over others wont to rule,
That it is difficult for such to change
Their angry purpose. Happier I esteem
The lot of those who still are wont to live
Among their equals. May I thus grow old,
If not in splendour, yet with safety blest !
For first of all, renown attends the name
Of mediocrity, and to mankind
Such station is more useful : but not long
Can the extremes of grandeur ever last ;
And heavier are the curses which it brings
When Fortune visits us in all her wrath.

CHORUS, NURSE.

CHOR. The voice of Colchios' hapless dame I heard—
A clamorous voice, nor yet is she appeased.
Speak, O thou aged matron, for her cries
I from the innermost apartment heard ;
Nor can I triumph in the woes with which
This house is visited ; for to my soul
Dear are its interests.

NUR. This whole house is plunged

In ruin, and its interests are no more.
 While Corinth's palace to our lord affords
 A residence, within her chamber pines
 My mistress, and the counsels of her friends
 Afford no comfort to her tortured soul.

MED. [*within.*] O that a flaming thunderbolt from Heaven
 Would pierce this brain! for what can longer life
 To me avail? Fain would I seek repose
 In death, and cast away this hated being.

CHOR. Heard'st thou, all-righteous Jove, thou fostering earth,
 And thou, O radiant lamp of day, what complaints,
 What clamorous complaints this miserable wife
 Hath uttered? Through insatiable desire,
 Ah why would you precipitate your death?
 O most unwise! These imprecations spare.
 What if your lord's affections are engaged
 By a new bride, reproach him not, for Jove
 Will be the dread avenger of your wrongs;
 Nor melt away with unavailing grief,
 Weeping for the lost partner of your bed.

MED. [*within.*] Great Themis and Diana, awful queen,
 Do ye behold the insults I endure,
 Though by each oath most holy I have bound
 That execrable husband. May I see
 Him and his bride, torn limb from limb, bestrew
 The palace; me have they presumed to wrong,
 Although I ne'er provoked them. O my sire,
 And thou my native land, whence I with shame
 Departed when my brother I had slain.

NUR. Heard ye not all she said, with a loud voice
 Invoking Themis, who fulfils the vow,
 And Jove, to whom the tribes of men look up
 As guardian of their oaths. Medea's rage
 Can by no trivial vengeance be appeased.

CHOR. Could we but draw her hither, and prevail
 On her to hear the counsels we suggest,
 Then haply might she check that bitter wrath,
 That vehemence of temper; for my zeal
 Shall not be spared to aid my friends. But go,

And say, "O hasten, ere to those within
Thou do some mischief, for these sorrows rush
With an impetuous tempest on thy soul."

NUR. This will I do ; though there is cause to fear
That on my mistress I shall ne'er prevail :
Yet I my labour gladly will bestow.
Though such a look she on her servants casts
As the ferocious lioness who guards
Her tender young, when any one draws near
To speak to her. Thou wouldst not judge amiss,
In charging folly and a total want
Of wisdom on the men of ancient days,
Who for their festivals invented hymns,
And to the banquet and the genial board
Confined those accents which o'er human life
Diffuse ecstatic pleasures : but no artist
Hath yet discovered, by the tuneful song,
And varied modulations of the lyre,
How we those piercing sorrows may assuage
Whence slaughters and such horrid mischiefs spring
As many a prosperous mansion have o'erthrown.
Could music interpose her healing aid
In these inveterate maladies, such gift
Had been the first of blessings to mankind :
But, 'midst choice viands and the circling bowl,
Why should those minstrels strain their useless throat ?
To cheer the drooping heart, convivial joys
Are in themselves sufficient. [Exit NURSE.]

CHOR. Mingled groans
And lamentations burst upon mine ear :
She in the bitterness of soul exclaims
Against her impious husband, who betrayed
His plighted faith. By grievous wrongs oppress,
She the vindictive gods invokes, and Themis,
Jove's daughter, guardian of the sacred oath,
Who o'er the waves to Greece benignly steered
Their bark adventurous, launched in midnight gloom,
Through ocean's gates which never can be closed !

MEDEA, CHORUS.

MED. From my apartment, ye Corinthian dames,
Lest ye my conduct censure, I come forth :
For I have known full many who obtained
Fame and high rank ; some to the public gaze
Stood ever forth, while others, in a sphere
More distant, chose their merits to display :
Nor yet a few, who, studious of repose,
Have with malignant obloquy been called
Devoid of spirit : for no human eyes
Can form a just discernment ; at one glance,
Before the inmost secrets of the heart
Are clearly known, a bitter hate 'gainst him
Who never wronged us they too oft inspire.
But 'tis a stranger's duty to adopt
The manners of the land in which he dwells ;
Nor can I praise that native, led astray
By mere perverseness and o'erweening folly.
Who bitter enmity incurs from those
Of his own city. But, alas ! my friends,
This unforeseen calamity hath withered
The vigour of my soul. I am undone,
Bereft of every joy that life can yield,
And therefore wish to die. For as to him,
My husband, whom it did import me most
To have a thorough knowledge of, he proves
The worst of men. But sure among all those
Who have with breath and reason been endued,
We women are the most unhappy race.
First, with abundant gold are we constrained
To buy a husband, and in him receive
A haughty master. Still doth there remain
One mischief than this mischief yet more grievous,
The hazard whether we procure a mate
Worthless or virtuous : for divorces bring
Reproach to woman, nor must she renounce
The man she wedded ; as for her who comes
Where usages and edicts, which at home

She learnt not, are established, she the gift
 Of divination needs to teach her how
 A husband must be chosen : if aright
 These duties we perform, and he the yoke
 Of wedlock with complacency sustains,
 Ours is a happy life ; but if we fail
 In this great object, better 'twere to die.
 For, when afflicted by domestic ills,
 A man goes forth, his choler to appease,
 And to some friend or comrade can reveal
 What he endures ; but we to him alone
 For succour must look up. They still contend
 That we, at home remaining, lead a life
 Exempt from danger, while they launch the spear.
 False are these judgments ; rather would I thrice,
 Armed with a target, in th' embattled field
 Maintain my stand, than suffer once the throes
 Of childbirth. But this language suits not you :
 This is your native city, the abode
 Of your loved parents, every comfort life
 Can furnish is at hand, and with your friends
 You here converse : but I, forlorn, and left
 Without a home, am by that husband scorned
 Who carried me from a Barbarian realm.
 Nor mother, brother, or relation now
 Have I, to whom I 'midst these storms of woe,
 Like an auspicious haven, can repair.
 Thus far I therefore crave ye will espouse
 My interests, as if haply any means
 Or any stratagem can be devised
 For me with justice to avenge these wrongs
 On my peridious husband, on the king
 Who to that husband's arms his daughter gave,
 And the new-wedded princess ; to observe
 Strict silence. For although at other times
 A woman, filled with terror, is unfit
 For battle, or to face the lifted sword,
 She when her soul by marriage wrongs is fired,
 Thirsts with a rage unparalleled for blood.

CHOR. The silence you request I will observe,
 For justly on your lord may you inflict
 Severest vengeance : still I wonder not
 If your disastrous fortunes you bewail :
 But Creon I behold who wields the sceptre
 Of these domains ; the monarch hither comes
 His fresh resolves in person to declare.

CREON, MEDEA, CHORUS.

CRE. Thee, O Medea, who, beneath those looks
 Stern and forbidding, harbour'st 'gainst thy lord
 Resentment, I command to leave these realms
 An exile ; for companions of thy flight
 Take both thy children with thee, nor delay.
 Myself pronounce this edict : I my home
 Will not revisit, from the utmost bounds
 Of this domain, till I have cast thee forth.

MED. Ah, wretched me ! I utterly am ruined :
 For in the swift pursuit, my ruthless foes,
 Each cable loosing, have unfurled their sails,
 Nor can I land on any friendly shore
 To save myself, yet am resolved to speak,
 Though punishment impend. What cause, O Creon
 Have you for banishing me ?

CRE. Thee I dread
 (No longer is it needful to disguise
 My thoughts) lest 'gainst my daughter thou contrive
 Some evil such as medicine cannot reach.
 Full many incidents conspire to raise
 This apprehension : with a deep-laid craft
 Art thou endued, expert in the device
 Of mischiefs numberless, thou also griev'st
 Since thou art severed from thy husband's bed.
 I am informed, too, thou hast menaced vengeance
 'Gainst me, because my daughter I bestowed
 In marriage, and the bridegroom, and his bride.
 Against these threats I therefore ought to guard
 Before they take effect ; and better far
 Is it for me, O woman, to incur

Thy hatred now, than, soothed by thy mild words,
Hereafter my forbearance to bewail.

MED. Not now, alas ! for the first time, but oft
To me, O Creon, hath opinion proved
Most baleful, and the source of grievous woes.
Nor ever ought the man, who is possess
Of a sound judgment, to train up his children
To be too wise : for they who live exempt
From war and all its toils, the odious name
Among their fellow-citizens acquire
Of abject sluggards. If to the unwise
You some fresh doctrine broach, you are esteemed
Not sapient, but a trifler : when to those
Who in their own conceit possess each branch
Of knowledge, you in state affairs obtain
Superior fame, to them you grow obnoxious.
I also feel the grievance I lament ;
Some envy my attainments, others think
My temper uncomplying, though my wisdom
Is not transcendent. But from me it seems
You apprehend some violence ; dismiss
Those fears ; my situation now is such,
O Creon, that to monarchs I can give
No umbrage : and in what respect have you
'Treated me with injustice ? You bestowed
Your daughter where your inclination led.
Though I abhor my husband, I suppose
That you have acted wisely, nor repine
At your prosperity. Conclude the match ;
Be happy : but allow me in this land
Yet to reside ; for I my wrongs will bear
In silence, and to my superiors yield.

CRE. Soft is the sound of thy persuasive words,
But in my soul I feel the strongest dread
Lest thou devise some mischief, and now less
Than ever can I trust thee ; for 'gainst those
Of hasty tempers with more ease we guard,
Or men or women, than the silent foe
Who acts with prudence. Therefore be thou gone

With speed, no answer make : it is decreed,
Nor hast thou art sufficient to avert
Thy doom of banishment ; for well aware
Am I thou hat'st me.

MED. Spare me, by those knees
And your new-wedded daughter, I implore.

CRE. Lavish of words, thou never shalt persuade me.

MED. Will you then drive me hence, and to my prayers
No reverence yield ?

CRE. I do not love thee more
Than those of my own house.

MED. With what regret
Do I remember thee, my native land !

CRE. Except my children, I hold nought so dear.

MED. To mortals what a dreadful scourge is love !

CRE. As fortune dictates, love becomes, I ween,
Either a curse or blessing.

MED. Righteous Jove,
Let not the author of my woes escape thee.

CRE. Away, vain woman, free me from my cares.

MED. No lack of cares have I.

CRE. Thou from this spot
Shalt by my servants' hands ere long be torn.

MED. Not thus, O Creon, I your mercy crave.

CRE. To trouble me, it seems, thou art resolved.

MED. I will depart, nor urge this fond request.

CRE. Why dost thou struggle then, nor from our realm
Withdraw thyself ?

MED. Allow me this one day
Here to remain, till my maturer thoughts
Instruct me to what region I can fly,
Where for my sons find shelter, since their sire
Attends not to the welfare of his race.
Take pity on them, for you also know
What 'tis to be a parent, and must feel
Parental love : as for myself, I heed not
The being doomed to exile, but lament
Their hapless fortunes.

CRE. No tyrannic rage

Within this bosom dwells, but pity oft
 Hath warped my better judgment, and though now
 My error I perceive, shall thy bequest
 Be granted. Yet of this must I forewarn thee :
 If when to-morrow with his orient beams
 Phœbus the world revisits, he shall view
 Thee and thy children still within the bounds
 Of these domains, thou certainly shalt die—
 Th' irrevocable sentence is pronounced.
 But if thou needs must tarry, tarry here
 This single day, for in so short a space
 Thou canst not execute the ills I dread. [*Exit CREON*]

CHOR. Alas ! thou wretched woman, overpowered
 By thy afflictions, whither wilt thou turn ?
 What hospitable board, what mansion, find.
 Or country to protect thee from these ills ?
 Into what storms of misery have the gods
 Caused thee to rush !

MED. On every side distress
 Assails me : who can contradict this truth ?
 Yet think not that my sorrows thus shall end.
 By yon new-wedded pair must be sustained
 Dire conflicts, and no light or trivial woes
 By them who in affinity are joined
 With this devoted house. Can ye suppose
 That I would e'er have soothed him, had no gain
 Or stratagem induced me ? Else to him
 Never would I have spoken, nor once raised
 My suppliant hands. But now is he so lost
 In folly, that, when all my schemes with ease
 He might have baffled, if he from this land
 Had cast me forth, he grants me to remain
 For this one day, and ere the setting sun
 Three of my foes will I destroy—the sire,
 The daughter, and my husband : various means
 Have I of slaying them, and, O my friends,
 Am at a loss to fix on which I first
 Shall undertake, or to consume with flames
 The bridal mansion, or a dagger plunge

Into their bosoms, entering unperceived
The chamber where they sleep But there remains
One danger to obstruct my path : if caught
Stealing into the palace, and intent
On such emprise, in death shall I afford
A subject of derision to my foes.
This obvious method were the best, in which
I am most skilled, to take their lives away
By sorceries. Be it so ; suppose them dead.
What city will receive me for its guest,
What hospitable foreigner afford
A shelter in his land, or to his hearth
Admit, or snatch me from impending fate?
Alas ! I have no friend. I will delay
A little longer therefore ; if perchance,
To screen me from destruction, I can find
Some fortress, then I in this deed of blood
With artifice and silence will engage ;
But, if by woes inextricable urged
Too closely, snatching up the dagger them
Am I resolved to slay, although myself
Must perish too ; for courage unappalled
This bosom animates. By that dread queen,
By her whom first of all th' immortal powers
I worship, and to aid my bold emprise
Have chosen, the thrice awful Hecaté,
Who in my innermost apartment dwells,
Not one of them shall triumph in the pangs
With which they wound my heart ; for I will render
This spousal rite to them a plenteous source
Of bitterness and mourning—they shall rue
Their union, rue my exile from this land.
But now come on, nor, O Medea, spare
Thy utmost science to devise and frame
Deep stratagems, with swift career advance
To deeds of horror. Such a strife demands
Thy utmost courage. Hast thou any sense
Of these indignities? Nor is it fit
That thou, who spring'st from an illustrious sire,

And from that great progenitor the sun,
Shouldst be derided by the impious brood
Of Sisyphus, at Jason's nuptial feast
Exposed to scorn : for thou hast ample skill
To right thyself. Although by Nature formed
Without a genius apt for virtuous deeds,
We women are in mischiefs most expert.

CHORUS.

ODE.

I. 1.

Now upward to their source the rivers flow,
And in a retrograde career
Justice and all the baffled virtues go.
The views of man are insincere,
Nor to the gods though he appeal,
And with an oath each promise seal,
Can he be trusted. Yet doth veering fame
Loudly assert the female claim,
Causing our sex to be renowned,
And our whole lives with glory crowned.
No longer shall we mourn the wrongs
Of slanderous and inhuman tongues.

I. 2.

Nor shall the Muses, as in ancient days,
Make the deceit of womankind
The constant theme of their malignant lays.
For ne'er on our uncultured mind
Hath Phœbus, god of verse, bestowed
Genius to frame the lofty ode ;
Else had we waked the lyre, and in reply
With descants on man's infamy
Oft lengthened out th' opprobrious page.
Yet may we from each distant age
Collect such records as disgrace
Both us and man's imperious race.

II. 1.

By love distracted, from thy native strand,
 Thou 'twixt the ocean's clashing rocks didst sail
 But now, loathed inmate of a foreign land,
 Thy treacherous husband's loss art doomed to wail.
 O hapless matron, overwhelmed with woe,
 From this unpitying realm dishonoured must thou go.

II. 2.

No longer sacred oaths their credit bear,
 And virtuous shame hath left the Grecian plain,
 She mounts to Heaven, and breathes a purer air.
 For thee doth no paternal house remain
 The sheltering haven from affliction's tides ;
 Over these hostile roofs a mightier queen presides.

JASON, MEDEA, CHORUS.

JAS. Not now for the first time, but oft, full oft
 Have I observed that anger is a pest
 The most unruly. For when in this land,
 These mansions, you in peace might have abode,
 By patiently submitting to the will
 Of your superiors, you, for empty words,
 Are doomed to exile. Not that I regard
 Your calling Jason with incessant rage
 The worst of men ; but for those bitter taunts
 With which you have reviled a mighty king,
 Too mild a penalty may you esteem
 Such banishment. I still have soothed the wrath
 Of the offended monarch, still have wished
 That you might here continue ; but no bounds
 Your folly knows, nor can that tongue e'er cease
 To utter menaces against your lords ;
 Hence from these regions justly are you doomed
 To be cast forth. But with unwearied love
 Attentive to your interest am I come,
 Lest with your children you by cruel want
 Should be encompassed ; exile with it brings

Full many evils. Me, though you abhor,
To you I harbour no unfriendly thought.

MED. Thou worst of villains for this bitter charge
Against thy abject cowardice my tongue
May justly urge), com'st thou to me, O wretch,
Who to the gods art odious, and to me
And all the human race? It is no proof
Of courage, or of steadfastness, to face
Thy injured friends, but impudence, the worst
Of all diseases. Yet hast thou done well
In coming: I by uttering the reproaches
Which thou deservest shall ease my burdened soul,
And thou wilt grieve to hear them. With th' events
Which happened first will I begin my charge.
Each Grecian chief who in the Argo sailed
Knows how from death I saved thee, when to yoke
The raging bulls whose nostrils poured forth flames,
And sow the baleful harvest, thou wert sent:
Then having slain the dragon, who preserved
With many a scaly fold the golden fleece,
Nor ever closed in sleep his watchful eyes,
I caused the morn with its auspicious beams
To shine on thy deliverance; but, my sire
And native land betraying, came with thee
To Pelion, and Iolchos' gates: for love
Prevailed o'er reason. Pelias next I slew—
Most wretched death—by his own daughters' hands.
And thus delivered thee from all thy fears.
Yet though to me, O most ungrateful man,
Thus much indebted, hast thou proved a traitor,
And to the arms of this new consort fled.
Although a rising progeny is thine.
Hadst thou been childless, 'twere a venial fault
In thee to court another for thy bride.
But vanished is the faith which oaths erst bore,
Nor can I judge whether thou think'st the gods
Who ruled the world have lost their ancient power
Or that fresh laws at present are in force
Among mankind, because thou to thyself

Art conscious, thou thy plighted faith hast broken.
O my right hand, which thou didst oft embrace,
Oit to these knees a suppliant cling ! How vainly
Did I my virgin purity yield up
To a perfidious husband, led astray
By flattering hopes ! Yet I to thee will speak
As if thou wert a friend, and I expected
From thee some mighty favour to obtain :
Yet thou, if strictly questioned, must appear
More odious. Whither shall I turn me now ?
To those deserted mansions of my father,
Which, with my country, I to thee betrayed,
And hither came ; or to the wretched daughters
Of Pelias ? They forsooth, whose sire I slew,
Beneath their roofs with kindness would receive me.
'Tis even thus : by those of my own house
Am I detested, and, to serve thy cause,
Those very friends, whom least of all I ought
To have unkindly treated, have I made
My enemies. But eager to reay
Such favours, 'mongst unnumbered Grecian dames,
On me superior bliss hast thou bestowed,
And I, unhappy woman, find in thee
A husband who deserves to be admired
For his fidelity. But from this realm
When I am exiled, and by every friend
Deserted, with my children left forlorn,
A glorious triumph, in thy bridal hour,
To thee will it afford, if those thy sons,
And I who saved thee, should like vagrants roam.
Wherefore, O Jove, didst thou instruct mankind
How to distinguish by undoubted marks
Counterfeit gold, yet in the front of vice
Impress no brand to show the tainted heart ?

CHOR. How sharp their wrath, how hard to be appeased,
When friends with friends begin the cruel strife.

JAS. I ought not to be rash, it seems, in speech,
But like the skilful pilot, who, with sails
Scarce half unfurled, his bark more surely guides,

Escape, O woman, your ungoverned tongue.
 Since you the benefits on me conferred
 Exaggerate in so proud a strain, I deem
 That I to Venus only, and no god
 Or man beside, my prosperous voyage owe.
 Although a wondrous subtlety of soul
 To you belong, 'twere an invidious speech
 For me to make should I relate how Love
 By his inevitable shafts constrained you
 To save my life. I will not therefore state
 This argument too nicely, but allow,
 As you did aid me, it was kindly done.
 But by preserving me have you gained more
 Than you bestowed, as I shall prove : and first,
 Transplanted from barbaric shores, you dwell
 In Grecian regions, and have here been taught
 To act as justice and the laws ordain,
 Nôr follow the caprice of brutal strength.
 By all the Greeks your wisdom is perceived,
 And you acquire renown ; but had you still
 Inhabited that distant spot of earth,
 You never had been named. I would not wish
 For mansions heaped with gold, or to exceed
 The sweetest notes of Orpheus' magic lyre,
 Were those unfading wreaths which fame bestows
 From me withheld by fortune. I thus far
 On my own labours only have discoursed.
 For you this odious strife of words began.
 But in espousing Creon's royal daughter,
 With which you have reproached me, I will prove
 That I in acting thus am wise and chaste,
 That I to you have been the best of friends,
 And to our children. But make no reply.
 Since hither from Iolchos' land I came,
 Accompanied by many woes, and such
 As could not be avoided, what device
 More advantageous could an exile frame
 Than wedding the king's daughter ? Not through hate
 To you, which you reproach me with, not smitten

With love for a new consort, or a wish
 The number of my children to augment :
 For those we have already might suffice,
 And I complain not. But to me it seemed
 Of great importance that we both might live
 As suits our rank, nor suffer abject need,
 Well knowing that each friend avoids the poor.
 I also wished to educate our sons
 In such a manner as befits my race
 And with their noble brothers yet unborn,
 Make them one family, that thus, my house
 Cementing, I might prosper. In some measure
 Is it your interest too that by my bride
 I should have sons, and me it much imports,
 By future children, to provide for those
 Who are in being. Have I judged amiss ?
 You would not censure me, unless your soul
 Were by a rival stung. But your whole sex
 Hath these ideas ; if in marriage blest
 Ye deem nought wanting, but if some reverse
 Of fortune e'er betide the nuptial couch,
 All that was good and lovely ye abhor.
 Far better were it for the human race
 Had children been produced by other means,
 No females e'er existing : hence might man
 Exempt from every evil have remained.

CHOR. Thy words hast thou with specious art adorned,
 Yet thou to me (it is against my will
 That I such language hold), O Jason, seem'st
 Not to have acted justly in betraying
 Thy consort.

MED. From the many I dissent
 In many points : for, in my judgment, he
 Who tramples on the laws, but can express
 His thoughts with plausibility, deserves
 Severest punishment : for that injustice
 On which he glories, with his artful tongue.
 That he a fair appearance can bestow,
 He dares to practise, nor is truly wise.

No longer then this specious language hold
To me, who by one word can strike thee dumb.
Hadst thou not acted with a base design,
It was thy duty first to have prevailed
On me to give consent, ere these espousals
Thou hadst contracted, nor kept such design
A secret from thy friends.

JAS. You would have served
My cause most gloriously, had I disclosed
To you my purposed nuptials, when the rage
Of that proud heart still unsubdued remains.

MED. Thy real motive was not what thou sayst,
But a Barbarian wife, in thy old age,
Might have appeared to tarnish thy renown.

JAS. Be well assured, love urged me not to take
The daughter of the monarch to my bed.
But 'twas my wish to save you from distress,
As I already have declared, and raise
Some royal brothers to our former sons,
Strengthening with fresh supports our shattered house.

MED. May that prosperity which brings remorse
Be never mine, nor riches such as sting
The soul with anguish.

JAS. Are you not aware
You soon will change your mind and grow more wise?
Forbear to spurn the blessings you possess,
Nor droop beneath imaginary woes,
When you are happy.

MED. Scoff at my distress,
For thou hast an asylum to receive thee :
But from this land am I constrained to roam
A lonely exile.

JAS. This was your own choice :
Accuse none else.

MED. What have I done—betrayed
My plighted faith and sought a foreign bed?

[AS. You uttered impious curses 'gainst the king.

MED. I also in thy mansions am accursed.

JAS. With you I on these subjects will contend

No longer. But speak freely, what relief,
 Or for the children or your exiled state,
 You from my prosperous fortunes would receive:
 For with a liberal hand am I inclined
 My bounties to confer, and hence despatch
 Such tokens, as to hospitable kindness
 Will recommend you. Woman, to refuse
 These offers were mere folly ; from your soul
 Banish resentment, and no trifling gain
 Will hence ensue.

MED. No use I of thy friends
 Will make, nor aught accept ; thy presents spare,
 For nothing which the wicked man can give
 Proves beneficial.

JAS. I invoke the gods
 To witness that I gladly would supply
 You and your children with whate'er ye need :
 But you these favours loathe, and with disdain
 Repel your friends : hence an increase of woe
 Shall be your lot.

MED. Be gone ; for thou, with love
 For thy young bride inflamed, too long remain'st
 Without the palace. Wed her ; though perhaps
 (Yet with submission to the righteous gods,
 This I announce) such marriage thou mayst rue.

[Exit JASON.]

CHORUS.

ODE.

I. I.

Th' immoderate loves in their career,
 Nor glory nor esteem attends,
 But when the Cyprian queen descends
 Benignant from her starry sphere,
 No goddess can more justly claim
 From man the grateful prayer.
 Thy wrath, O Venus, still forbear,
 Nor at my tender bosom aim
 That venom'd arrow, ever wont t' inspire
 Winged from thy golden bow, the pangs of keen desire.

I. 2.

May I in modesty delight,
 Best present which the gods can give,
 Nor torn by jarring passions live
 A prey to wrath and cankered spite,
 Still envious of a rival's charms,
 Nor rouse the endless strife
 While on my soul another wife
 Impresses vehement alarms:
 On us, dread queen, thy mildest influence shed,
 Thou who discern'st each crime that stains the nuptial bed.

II. I.

My native land, and dearest home !
 May I ne'er know an exiled state,
 Nor be it ever my sad fate
 While from thy well-known bourn I roam,
 My hopeless anguish to bemoan.
 Rather let death, let death
 Take at that hour my forfeit breath,
 For surely never was there known
 On earth a curse so great as to exceed,
 From his loved country torn, the wretched exile's need.

II. 2.

These eyes attest thy piteous tale,
 Which not from fame alone we know ;
 But, O thou royal dame, thy woe
 No generous city doth bewail,
 Nor one among thy former friends.
 Abhorred by Heaven and earth,
 Perish the wretch devoid of worth,
 Engrossed by mean and selfish ends,
 Whose heart expands not those he loved to aid ;
 Never may I lament attachments thus repaid.

ÆGEUS, MEDEA, CHORUS.

ÆG. Medea, hail ! for no man can devise
 Terms more auspicious to accost his friends.

MED. And you, O son of wise Pandion, hail

Illustrious Ægeus. But to these domains
Whence came you?

ÆG. From Apollo's ancient shrine.

MED. But to that centre of the world, whence sounds
Prophetic issue, why did you repair?

ÆG. To question by what means I may obtain
A race of children.

MED. By the gods, inform me,
Are you still doomed to drag a childless life?

ÆG. Such is the influence of some adverse demon.

MED. Have you a wife, or did you never try
The nuptial yoke?

ÆG. With wedlock's sacred bonds
I am not unacquainted.

MED. On the subject
Of children, what did Phœbus say?

ÆG. His words
Were such as mortals cannot comprehend.

MED. Am I allowed to know the god's reply?

ÆG. Thou surely art : such mystery to expound
There needs the help of thy sagacious soul.

MED. Inform me what the oracle pronounced,
If I may hear it.

ÆG. "The projecting foot,
Thou, of the vessel must not dare to loose"—

MED. Till you do what, or to what region come?

ÆG. "Till thou return to thy paternal lares."

MED. But what are you in need of, that you steer
Your bark to Corinth's shores?

ÆG. A king, whose name
Is Pittheus, o'er Trœzene's realm presides.

MED. That most religious man, they say, is son
Of Pelops.

ÆG. I with him would fain discuss
The god's prophetic voice.

MED. For he is wise,
And in this science long hath been expert.

ÆG. Dearest to me of those with whom I formed
A league of friendship in the embattled field.

MED. But, O may you be happy, and obtain
All that you wish for.

ÆG. Why those downcast eyes,
That wasted form?

MED. O Ægeus, he I wedded
To me hath proved of all mankind most base.

ÆG. What mean'st thou? In plain terms thy grief declare.

MED. Jason hath wronged me, though without a cause.

ÆG. Be more explicit, what injurious treatment
Complain'st thou of?

MED. To me hath he preferred
Another wife, the mistress of this house.

ÆG. Dared he to act so basely?

MED. Be assured
That I, whom erst he loved, am now forsaken.

ÆG. What amorous passion triumphs o'er his soul?
Or doth he loathe thy bed?

MED. 'Tis mighty love,
That to his first attachment makes him false.

ÆG. Let him depart then, if he be so void
Of honour as thou sayst.

MED. He sought to form
Alliance with a monarch.

ÆG. Who bestows
On him a royal bride? Conclude thy tale.

MED. Creon, the ruler of this land.

ÆG. Thy sorrows
Are then excusable.

MED. I am undone,
And banished hence.

ÆG. By whom? There's not a word
Thou utter'st but unfolds fresh scenes of woe.

MED. Me from this realm to exile Creon drives.

ÆG. Doth Jason suffer this? I cannot praise
Such conduct.

MED. Not in words: though he submits
Without reluctance. But I by that beard,
And by those knees, a wretched suppliant, crave
Your pity; see me not cast forth forlorn,

ÆG. Various inducements urge me to comply
With this request, O woman ; first an awe
For the immortal gods, and then the hope
That I the promised issue shall obtain.
On what my senses scarce can comprehend
I will rely. O that thy arts may prove
Effectual ! Thee, if haply thou arriv'st
In my domain, with hospitable rites
Shall it be my endeavour to receive,
As justice dictates : but to thee, thus much
It previouly behoves me to announce :
I will not take thee with me from this realm ;
But to my house if of thyself thou come
Thou a secure asylum there shalt find,
Nor will I yield thee up to any foe.
But hence without my aid must thou depart,
For I, from those who in this neighbouring land
Of Corinth entertain me as their guest,
Wish to incur no censure.

ÆG. Believ'st thou not? Whence rise these anxious doubts?

MED. In you I trust; though Pelias' hostile race
And Creon's hate pursue me: but, if bound
By the firm sanction of a solemn oath,
You will not suffer them with brutal force
To drag me from your realm, but having entered

Into such compact, and by every god
Sworn to protect me, still remain a friend,
Nor hearken to their embassies. My fortune
Is in its wane, but wealth to them belongs,
And an imperial mansion.

ÆG. In these words
Hast thou expressed great forethought : but if thus
Thou art disposed to act, I my consent
Will not refuse; for I shall be more safe
If to thy foes some plausible excuse
I can allege, and thee more firmly stablsh.
But say thou first what gods I shall invoke.

MED. Swear by the earth on which we tread, the sun
My grandsire, and by all the race of gods.

ÆG. What action, or to do or to forbear?

MED. That from your land you never will expel,
Nor while you live consent that any foe
Shall tear me thence.

ÆG. By earth, the radiant sun,
And every god I swear, I to the terms
Thou hast proposed will steadfastly adhere.

MED. This may suffice. But what if you infringe
Your oath, what punishment will you endure?

ÆG. Each curse that can befall the impious man.

MED. Depart, and prosper: all things now advance
In their right track, and with the utmost speed
I to your city will direct my course,
When I have executed those designs
I meditate, and compassed what I wish. [Exit ÆGEUS.

CHOR. But thee, O king, may Maia's wingéd son
Lead to thy Athens; there mayst thou attain
All that thy soul desires, for thou to me,
O Ægeus, seem'st most generous.

MED. Awful Jove,
Thou too, O Justice, who art ever joined
With thundering Jove, and bright Hyperion's beams,
You I invoke. Now, O my friends, o'er those
I hate shall we prevail: 'tis the career
Of victory that we tread, and I at length

Have hopes the strictest vengeance on my foes
To execute : for where we most in need
Of a protector stood, appeared this stranger,
The haven of my counsels : we shall fix
Our cables to this poop, soon as we reach
That hallowed city where Minerva reigns.
But now to you the whole of my designs
Will I relate ; look not for such a tale
As yields delight : some servant will I send
An interview with Jason to request,
And on his coming, in the softest words
Address him ; say these matters are well pleasing
To me, and in the strongest terms applaud
That marriage with the daughter of the king,
Which now the traitor celebrates ; then add,
“ ’Tis for our mutual good, ’tis rightly done.”
But the request which I intend to make
Is that he here will let my children stay ;
Not that I mean to leave them thus behind,
Exposed to insults in a hostile realm
From those I hate ; but that my arts may slay
The royal maid : with presents in their hands,
A vesture finely wrought and golden crown,
Will I despatch them ; these they to the bride
Shall bear, that she their exile may reverse :
If these destructive ornaments she take
And put them on, both she, and every one
Who touches her, shall miserably perish—
My presents with such drugs I will anoint.
Far as to this relates, here ends my speech.
But I with anguish think upon a deed
Of more than common horror, which remains
By me to be accomplished : for my sons
Am I resolved to slay, them from this arm
Shall no man rescue. When I thus have filled
With dire confusion Jason’s wretched house,
I, from this land, yet reeking with the gore
Of my dear sons, will fly, and having dared
A deed most impious. For the scornful taunts

Of those we hate are not to be endured,
Happen what may. Can life be any gain
To me who have no country left, no home,
No place of refuge? Greatly did I err
When I forsook the mansions of my sire,
Persuaded by the flattery of that Greek
Whom I will punish, if just Heaven permit.
For he shall not again behold the children
I bore him while yet living. From his bride
Nor shall there issue any second race,
Since that vile woman by my baleful drugs
Vilely to perish have the Fates ordained.
None shall think lightly of me, as if weak,
Of courage void, or with a soul too tame,
But formed by Heaven in a far different mould,
The terror of my foes, and to my friends
Benignant : for most glorious are the lives
Of those who act with such determined zeal.

CHOR. Since thy design thus freely thou to us
Communicat'st, I, through a wish to serve
Thy interests, and a reverence for those laws
Which all mankind hold sacred, from thy purpose
Exhort thee to desist.

MED. This cannot be :
Yet I from you, because ye have not felt
Distress like mine, such language can excuse.

CHOR. Thy guiltless children wilt thou dare to slay?

MED. My husband hence more deeply shall I wound

CHOR. But thou wilt of all women be most wretched.

MED. No matter : all the counsels ye can give
Are now superfluous. But this instant go
And Jason hither bring ; for on your faith,
In all things I depend ; nor these resolves
Will you divulge if you your mistress love,
And feel a woman's interest in my wrongs.

CHORUS.

ODE.

I. 1.

Heroes of Erectheus' race,
To the gods who owe your birth,
And in a long succession trace
Your sacred origin from earth,
Who on wisdom's fruit regale,
Purest breezes still inhale,
And behold skies ever bright,
Wandering through those haunted glades
Where fame relates that the Pierian maids,
Soothing the soul of man with chaste delight,
Taught Harmony to breathe her first enchanting tale.

I. 2.

From Cephissus' amber tide,
At the Cyprian queen's command,
As sing the Muses, are supplied
To refresh the thirsty land,
Fragrant gales of temperate air ;
While around her auburn hair,
In a vivid chaplet twined
Never-fading roses bloom
And scent the champaign with their rich perfume,
Love comes in unison with wisdom joined,
Each virtue thrives if Beauty lend her fostering care.

II. 1.

For its holy streams renowned
Can that city, can that state
Where friendship's generous train are found
Shelter thee from public hate,
When, defiled with horrid guilt,
Thou thy children's blood hast spilt ?
Think on this atrocious deed
Ere thy dagger aim the blow :
Around thy knees our suppliant arms we throw ;
O doom not, doom them not to bleed.

II. 2.

How can thy relentless heart
All humanity disclaim,
Thy lifted arm perform its part?
Lost to a sense of honest shame,
Canst thou take their lives away,
And these guiltless children slay?
Soon as thou thy sons shalt view,
How wilt thou the tear restrain,
Or with their blood thy ruthless hands distain,
When prostrate they for mercy sue?

JASON, MEDEA, CHORUS.

JAS. I at your call am come; for though such hate
To me you bear, you shall not be denied
In this request; but let me hear what else
You would solicit.

MED. Jason, I of thee
Crave pardon for the hasty words I spoke;
Since just it were that thou shouldst bear my wrath,
When by such mutual proofs of love our union
Hath been cemented. For I reasoned thus,
And in these terms reproached myself: "O wretch,
Wretch that I am, what madness fires my breast?
Or why 'gainst those who counsel me aright
Such fierce resentment harbour? What just cause
Have I to hate the rulers of this land,
My husband too, who acts but for my good
In his espousals with the royal maid,
That to my sons he hence may add a race
Of noble brothers? Shall not I appease
The tempest of my soul? Why, when the gods
Confer their choicest blessings, should I grieve?
Have not I helpless children? Well I know
That we are banished from Thessalia's realm
And left without a friend." When I these thoughts
Maturely had revolved, I saw how great
My folly and how groundless was my wrath.

Now therefore I commend, now deem thee wise
 In forming this connection for my sake :
 But I was void of wisdom, or had borne
 A part in these designs, the genial bed
 Obsequiously attended, and with joy
 Performed each menial office for the bride.
 I will not speak in too reproachful terms
 Of my own sex ; but we, weak women, are
 What nature formed us ; therefore our defects
 Thou must not imitate, nor yet return
 Folly for folly. I submit and own
 My judgment was erroneous, but at length
 Have I formed better counsels. O my sons,
 Come hither, leave the palace, from those doors
 Advance, and in a soft persuasive strain
 With me unite your father to accost,
 Forget past enmity, and to your friends
 Be reconciled, for 'twixt us is a league
 Of peace established, and my wrath subsides.

[*The SONS of JASON and MEDEA enter.*]

Take hold of his right hand. Ah me, how great
 Are my afflictions oft as I revolve
 A deed of darkness in my labouring soul !
 How long, alas ! my sons, are ye ordained
 To live, how long to stretch forth those dear arms ?
 Wretch that I am ! how much am I disposed
 To weep ! how subject to each fresh alarm !
 For I at length desisting from that strife,
 Which with your sire I rashly did maintain,
 Feel gushing tears bedew my tender cheek.

CHOR. Fresh tears too from these eyes have forced
 their way ;

And may no greater ill than that which now
 We suffer, overtake us !

JAS. I applaud
 Your present conduct, and your former rage
 Condemn not ; for 'tis natural that the race
 Of women should be angry when their lord
 For a new consort trucks them. But your heart
 Is for the better changed, and you, though late,

At length acknowledge the resistless power
Of reason ; this is acting like a dame
Endued with prudence. But for you, my sons,
Abundant safety your considerate sire
Hath with the favour of the gods procured,
For ye, I trust, shall with my future race
Bear the first rank in this Corinthian realm,
Advance to full maturity ; the rest,
Aided by each benignant god, your father
Shall soon accomplish. Virtuously trained up
May I behold you at a riper age
Obtain pre-eminence o'er those I hate.
But, ha ! Why with fresh tears do you thus keep
Those eyelids moist ? From your averted cheeks
Why is the colour fled, or why these words
Receive you not with a complacent ear ?

MED. Nothing : my thoughts were busied for these
children.

JAS. Be of good courage, and for them depend
On my protecting care.

MED. I will obey,
Nor disbelieve the promise thou hast made :
But woman, ever frail, is prone to shed
Involuntary tears.

JAS. But why bewail
With such deep groans these children ?

MED. Them I bore ;
And that our sons might live, while to the gods
Thou didst address thy vows, a pitying thought
Entered my soul ; 'twas whether this could be.
But of th' affairs on which thou com'st to hold
This conference with me, have I told a part
Already, and to thee will now disclose
The sequel : since the rulers of this land
Resolve to banish me, as well I know
That it were best for me to give no umbrage,
Or to the king of Corinth, or to thee,
By dwelling here : because I to this house
Seem to bear enmity, from these domains
Will I depart : but urge thy suit to Creon,

That under thy paternal care our sons
May be trained up, nor from this realm expelled.

JAS. Though doubtful of success, I yet am bound
To make th' attempt.

MED. Thou rather shouldst enjoin
Thy bride her royal father to entreat,
That he these children's exile may reverse.

JAS. With pleasure ; and I doubt not but on her,
If like her sex humane, I shall prevail.

MED. To aid thee in this difficult emprise
Shall be my care, for I to her will send
Gifts that I know in beauty far exceed
The gorgeous works of man ; a tissued vest
And golden crown the children shall present,
But with the utmost speed these ornaments
One of thy menial train must hither bring,
For not with one, but with ten thousand blessings
Shall she be gratified ; thee, best of men,
Obtaining for the partner of her bed,
And in possession of those splendid robes
Which erst the sun my grandsire did bestow
On his descendants : take them in your hands,
My children, to the happy royal bride
Instantly bear them, and in dower bestow,
For such a gift as ought not to be scorned
Shall she receive.

JAS. Why rashly part with these ?
Of tissued robes or gold can you suppose
The palace destitute ? These trappings keep,
Nor to another give : for if the dame
On me place real value, well I know
My love she to all treasures will prefer.

MED. Speak not so hastily : the gods themselves
By gifts are swayed, as fame relates ; and gold
Hath a far greater influence o'er the souls
Of mortals than the most persuasive words :
With fortune, the propitious heavens conspire
To add fresh glories to thy youthful bride,
All here submits to her despotic sway.

But I my children's exile would redeem,
 Though at the cost of life, not gold alone.
 But these adjacent mansions of the king
 Soon as ye enter, O ye little ones,
 Your sire's new consort and my queen entreat
 That ye may not be banished from this land :
 At the same time these ornaments present,
 For most important is it that these gifts
 With her own hands the royal dame receive.
 Go forth, delay not, and, if ye succeed,
 Your mother with the welcome tidings greet.

[*Exeunt JASON and SONS.*]

CHORUS.

ODE.

I. 1.

Now from my soul each hope is fled,
 I deem those hapless children dead,
 They rush to meet the wound :
 Mistrustful of no latent pest
 Th' exulting bride will seize the gorgeous vest,
 Her auburn tresses crowned
 By baleful Pluto, shall she stand,
 And take the presents with an eager hand.

I. 2.

The splendid robe of thousand dyes
 Will fascinate her raptured eyes,
 And tempt her till she wear
 The golden diadem, arrayed
 To meet her bridegroom in th' infernal shade
 She thus into the snare
 Of death shall be surprised by fate,
 Nor 'scape remorseless Atë's direful hate.

II. 1.

But as for thee whose nuptials bring
 The proud alliance of a king,

'Midst dangers unespied
 Thou madly rushing, aid'st the blow
 Ordained by Heaven to lay thy children low,
 And thy lamented bride:
 O man, how little dost thou know
 That o'er thy head impends severest woe !

II. 2.

Thy anguish I no less bemoan,
 No less for thee, O mother, groan,
 Bent on a horrid deed,
 Thy children who resolv'st to slay,
 Nor fear'st to take their guiltless lives away.
 Those innocents must bleed,
 Because, disdainful of thy charms,
 The husband flies to a new consort's arms.

ATTENDANT, SONS, MEDEA, CHORUS.

ATT. Your sons, my honoured mistress, are set free
 From banishment ; in her own hands those gifts
 With courtesy the royal bride received ;
 Hence have your sons obtained their peace.

MED.

No matter.

ATT. Why stand you in confusion, when befriended
 By prosperous fortune ?

MED.

Ah !

ATT.

This harsh reception

Accords not with the tidings which I bring.

MED. Alas ! and yet again I say, alas !

ATT. Have I related with unconscious tongue
 Some great calamity, by the fond hope
 Of bearing glad intelligence misled ?

MED. For having told what thou hast told, no blame
 To thee do I impute.

ATT.

But on the ground

Why fix those eyes, and shed abundant tears ?

MED. Necessity constrains me : for the gods
 Of Erebus and I in evil hour
 Our baleful machinations have devised.

ATT. Be of good cheer ; for in your children still
Are you successful.

MED. 'Midst the realms of night
Others I first will plunge. Ah, wretched me !

ATT. Not you alone are from your children torn,
Mortal you are, and therefore must endure
Calamity with patience.

MED. I these counsels
Will practise : but go thou into the palace,
And for the children whatsoe'er to-day
Is requisite, make ready. [Exit ATTENDANT

O my sons !

My sons ! ye have a city and a house
Where, leaving hapless me behind, without
A mother ye for ever shall reside.
But I to other realms an exile go,
Ere any help from you I could derive,
Or see you blest ; the hymeneal pomp,
The bride, the genial couch, for you adorn.
And in these hands the kindled torch sustain.
How wretched am I through my own perverseness ! -
You, O my sons, I then in vain have nurtured,
In vain have toiled, and, wasted with fatigue,
Suffered the pregnant matron's grievous throes.
On you, in my afflictions, many hopes
I founded erst : that ye with pious care
Would foster my old age, and on the bier
Extend me after death—much envied lot
Of mortals ; but these pleasing anxious thoughts
Are vanished now ; for, losing you, a life
Of bitterness and anguish shall I lead.
But as for you, my sons, with those dear eyes
Fated no more your mother to behold,
Hence are ye hastening to a world unknown.
Why do ye gaze on me with such a look
Of tenderness, or wherefore smile ? for these
Are your last smiles. Ah wretched, wretched me !
What shall I do ? My resolution fails.
Sparkling with joy now I their looks have seen,

My friends, I can no more. To those past schemes
 I bid adieu, and with me from this land
 My children will convey. Why should I cause
 A twofold portion of distress to fall
 On my own head, that I may grieve the sire
 By punishing his sons? This shall not be:
 Such counsels I dismiss. But in my purpose
 What means this change? Can I prefer derision,
 And with impunity permit the foe
 To 'scape? My utmost courage I must rouse:
 For the suggestion of these tender thoughts
 Proceeds from an enervate heart. My sons,
 Enter the regal mansion. [*Exeunt* SONS.

As for those

Who deem that to be present were unholy
 While I the destined victims offer up,
 Let them see to it. This uplifted arm
 Shall never shrink. Alas! alas! my soul
 Commit not such a deed. Unhappy woman,
 Desist and spare thy children; we will live
 Together, they in foreign realms shall cheer
 Thy exile. No, by those avenging fiends
 Who dwell with Pluto in the realms beneath,
 This shall not be, nor will I ever leave
 My sons to be insulted by their foes.
 They certainly must die; since then they must,
 I bore and I will slay them: 'tis a deed
 Resolved on, nor my purpose will I change.
 Full well I know that now the royal bride
 Wears on her head the magic diadem,
 And in the variegated robe expires:
 But, hurried on by fate, I tread a path
 Of utter wretchedness, and them will plunge
 Into one yet more wretched. To my sons
 Fain would I say: "O stretch forth your right hands,
 Ye children, for your mother to embrace.
 O dearest hands, ye lips to me most dear,
 Engaging features and ingenuous looks,
 May ye be blest, but in another world;

For by the treacherous conduct of your sire
Are ye bereft of all this earth bestowed.
Farewell, sweet kisses—tender limbs, farewell !
And fragrant breath ! I never more can bear
To look on you, my children.” My afflictions
Have conquered me ; I now am well aware
What crimes I venture on : but rage, the cause
Of woes most grievous to the human race,
Over my better reason hath prevailed.

CHOR. In subtle questions I full many a time
Have heretofore engaged, and this great point
Debated, whether woman should extend
Her search into abstruse and hidden truths.
But we too have a Muse, who with our sex
Associates to expound the mystic lore
Of wisdom, though she dwell not with us all.
Yet haply a small number may be found,
Among the multitude of females, dear
To the celestial Muses. I maintain,
They who in total inexperience live,
Nor ever have been parents, are more happy
Than they to whom much progeny belongs.
Because the childless, having never tried
Whether more pain or pleasure from their offspring
To mortals rises, 'scape unnumbered toils.
But I observe that they, whose fruitful house
Is with a lovely race of infants filled,
Are harassed with perpetual cares ; how first
To train them up in virtue, and whence leave
Fit portions for their sons ; but on the good
Or worthless, whether they these toils bestow
Remains involved in doubt. I yet must name
One evil the most grievous, to which all
The human race is subject ; some there are
Who for their sons have gained sufficient wealth,
Seen them to full maturity advance,
And decked with every virtue, when, by fate
If thus it be ordained, comes death unseen
And hurries them to Pluto's gloomy realm.

Attended them. Our mistress, the new object
 Of homage such as erst to thee was paid,
 Ere she beheld thy sons on Jason cast
 A look of fond desire : but then she veiled
 Her eyes, and turned her pallid cheeks away
 Disgusted at their coming, till his voice
 Appeased her anger with these gentle words :
 " O be not thou inveterate 'gainst thy friends,
 But lay aside disdain, thy beauteous face
 Turn hither, and let amity for those
 Thy husband loves still warm that generous breast.
 Accept these gifts, and to thy father sue,
 That, for my sake, the exile of my sons
 He will remit." Soon as the princess saw
 Thy glittering ornaments, she could resist
 No longer, but to all her lord's requests
 Assented, and before thy sons were gone
 Far from the regal mansion with their sire,
 The vest, resplendent with a thousand dyes,
 Put on, and o'er her loosely floating hair
 Placing the golden crown, before the mirror
 Her tresses braided, and with smiles surveyed
 Th' inanimated semblance of her charms :
 Then rising from her seat across the palace
 Walked with a delicate and graceful step,
 In the rich gifts exulting, and oft turned
 Enraptured eyes on her own stately neck,
 Reflected to her view : but now a scene
 Of horror followed ; her complexion changed,
 And she reeled backward, trembling every limb ;
 Scarce did her chair receive her as she sunk
 In time to save her falling to the ground.
 One of her menial train, an aged dame,
 Possessed with an idea that the wrath
 Either of Pan or of some god unknown
 Her mistress had invaded, in shrill tone
 Poured forth a vow to Heaven, till from her mouth
 She saw foam issue, in their sockets roll
 Her wildly glaring eyeballs, and the blood

Leave her whole frame ; a shriek, that differed far
From her first complaints, then gave she. In an instant
This to her father's house, and that to tell
The bridegroom the mischance which had befallen
His consort, rushed impetuous ; through the dome
The frequent steps of those who to and fro
Ran in confusion did resound. But soon
As the fleet courser at the goal arrives,
She who was silent, and had closed her eyes,
Roused from her swoon, and burst forth into groans
Most dreadful, for 'gainst her two evils warred :
Placed on her head the golden crown poured forth
A wondrous torrent of devouring flames,
And the embroidered robes, thy children's gifts,
Preyed on the hapless virgin's tender flesh ;
Covered with fire she started from her seat
Shaking her hair, and from her head the crown
With violence attempting to remove,
But still more firmly did the heated gold
Adhere, and the fanned blaze with double lustre
Burst forth as she her streaming tresses shook :
Subdued by fate, at length she to the ground
Fell prostrate : scarce could any one have known her
Except her father ; for those radiant eyes
Dropped from their sockets, that majestic face
Its wonted features lost, and blood with fire
Ran down her head in intermingled streams,
While from her bones the flesh, like weeping pitch,
Melted away, through the consuming power
Of those unseen enchantments ; 'twas a sight
Most horrible : all feared to touch the corpse,
For her disastrous end had taught us caution.
Meanwhile her hapless sire, who knew not aught
Of this calamity, as he with haste
Entered the palace, stumbled o'er her body ;
Instantly shrieking out, then with his arms
Infolded, kissed it oft, and, " O my child,
My wretched child," exclaimed ; " what envious god,
Author of thy dishonourable fall,

Of thee bereaves an old decrepit man
Whom the grave claims? With thee I wish to die,
My daughter." Scarcely had the hoary father
These lamentations ended ; to uplift
His feeble body striving, he adhered
(As ivy with its pliant tendrils clings
Around the laurel) to the tissued vest.
Dire was the conflict ; he to raise his knee
From earth attempted, but his daughter's corse
Still held him down, or if with greater force
He dragged it onward, from his bones he tore
The aged flesh : at length he sunk, and breathed
In agonizing pangs his soul away ;
For he against such evil could bear up
No longer. To each other close in death
The daughter and her father lie : their fate
Demands our tears. Warned by my words, with haste
From this domain convey thyself, or vengeance
Will overtake thee for this impious deed.
Not now for the first time do I esteem
Human affairs a shadow. Without fear
Can I pronounce, they who appear endued
With wisdom, and most plausibly trick out
Specious harangues, deserve to be accounted
The worst of fools. The man completely blest
Exists not. Some in overflowing wealth
May be more fortunate, but none are happy.

CHOR. Heaven its collected store of evil seems
This day resolved with justice to pour down
On perjurèd Jàson. Thy untimely fate
How do we pity, O thou wretched daughter
Of Creon, who in Pluto's mansions go'st
To celebrate thy nuptial feast.

MED. My friends,
I am resolved, as soon as I have slain
My children, from these regions to depart,
Nor through inglorious sloth will I abandon
My sons to perish by detested hands ;
They certainly must die ; since then they must,

I bore and I will slay them. O my heart !
 Be armed with tenfold firmness. What avails it
 To loiter, when inevitable ills
 Remain to be accomplished? Take the sword,
 And, O my hand, on to the goal that ends
 Their life, nor let one intervening thought
 Of pity or maternal tenderness
 Suspend thy purpose : for this one short day
 Forget how fondly thou didst love thy sons,
 How bring them forth, and after that lament
 Their cruel fate : although thou art resolved
 To slay, yet hast thou ever held them dear.
 But I am of all women the most wretched.

[*Exit MEDEA.*]

CHORUS.

ODE.

I.

Earth, and thou sun, whose fervid blaze
 From pole to pole illumines each distant land,
 View this abandoned woman, ere she raise
 Against her children's lives a ruthless hand ;
 For from thy race, divinely bright,
 They spring, and should the sons of gods be slain
 By man, 'twere dreadful. O restrain
 Her fury, thou celestial source of light,
 Ere she with blood pollute your regal dome,
 Chased by the demons hence let this Erinys roam.

II.

The pregnant matron's throes in vain
 Hast thou endured, and borne a lovely race,
 O thou, who o'er th' inhospitable main,
 Where the Cyanean rocks scarce leave a space,
 Thy daring voyage didst pursue.
 Why, O thou wretch, thy soul doth anger rend,
 Such as in murder soon must end ?
 They who with kindred gore are stained shall rue
 Their guilt inexpressible : full well I know
 The gods will on this house inflict severest woe.

1st SON [*within.*] Ah me ! what can I do, or whither fly
To 'scape a mother's arm ?

2nd SON [*within.*] I cannot tell :
For, O my dearest brother, we are lost.

CHOR. Heard you the children's shrieks ? I O thou
dame,

Whom woes and evil fortune still attend)
Will rush into the regal dome, from death
Resolved to snatch thy sons.

1st SON [*within.*] We by the gods
Conjure you to protect us in this hour
Of utmost peril, for the treacherous snare
Hath caught us, and we perish by the sword.

CHOR. Art thou a rock, O wretch, or steel, to slay
With thine own hand that generous race of sons
Whom thou didst bear ? I hitherto have heard
But of one woman, who in ancient days
Smote her dear children, Ino, by the gods
With frenzy stung, when Jove's malignant queen
Distracted from her mansion drove her forth.
But she, yet reeking with the impious gore
Of her own progeny, into the waves
Plunged headlong from the ocean's craggy beach,
And shared with her two sons one common fate.
Can there be deeds more horrible than these
Left for succeeding ages to produce ?
Disastrous union with the female sex,
How great a source of woes art thou to man !

JASON, CHORUS.

JAS. Ye dames who near the portals stand, is she
Who hath committed these atrocious crimes,
Medea, in the palace, or by flight
Hath she retreated ? For beneath the ground
Must she conceal herself, or, borne on wings,
Ascend the heights of Ether, to avoid
The vengeance due for Corinth's royal house.
Having destroyed the rulers of the land,
Can she presume she shall escape unhurt
From these abodes ? But less am I concerned

On her account, than for my sons ; since they
 Whom she hath injured will on her inflict
 Due punishment : but hither am I come
 To save my children's lives, lest on their heads
 The noble Creon's kindred should retaliate
 That impious murder by their mother wrought.

CHOR. Thou know'st not yet, O thou unhappy man,
 What ills thou art involved in, or these words
 Had not escaped thee.

JAS. Ha, what ills are these
 Thou speak'st of? Would she also murder me?

CHOR. By their own mother's hand thy sons are slain.

JAS. What can you mean? How utterly, O woman,
 Have you undone me !

CHOR. Be assured thy children
 Are now no more.

JAS. Where was it, or within
 Those mansions or without, that she destroyed
 Our progeny?

CHOR. As soon as thou these doors
 Hast oped, their weltering corpses wilt thou view.

JAS. Loose the firm bars and bolts of yonder gates
 With speed, ye servants, that I may behold
 This scene of twofold misery, the remains
 Of the deceased, and punish her who slew them.

MEDEA, *in a chariot drawn by dragons*, JASON, CHORUS.

MED. With levers wherefore dost thou shake those doors
 In quest of them who are no more, and me
 Who dared to perpetrate the bloody deed?
 Desist from such unprofitable toil :
 But if there yet be aught that thou with me
 Canst want, speak freely whatsoe'er thou wilt :
 For with that hand me never shalt thou reach,
 Such steeds the sun my grandsire gives to whirl
 This chariot and protect me from my foes.

JAS. O most abandoned woman, by the gods,
 By me and all the human race abhorred,
 Who with the sword could pierce the sons you bore,

And ruin me, a childless wretched man,
Yet after you this impious deed have dared
To perpetrate, still view the radiant sun
And fostering earth; may vengeance overtake you.
For I that reason have regained which erst
Forsook me, when to the abodes of Greece
I from your home, from a Barbarian realm,
Conveyed you, to your sire a grievous bane,
And the corrupt betrayer of that land
Which nurtured you. Some envious god first roused
Your evil genius from the shades of hell
For my undoing: after you had slain
Your brother at the altar, you embarked
In the famed Argo. Deeds like these a life
Of guilt commenced; with me in wedlock joined,
You bore those sons, whom you have now destroyed
Because I left your bed. No Grecian dame
Would e'er have ventured on a deed so impious;
Yet I to them preferred you for my bride:
This was a hostile union, and to me
The most destructive; for my arms received
No woman, but a lioness more fell
Than Tuscan Scylla. Vainly should I strive
To wound you with reproaches numberless,
For you are grown insensible of shame!
Vile sorceress, and polluted with the blood
Of your own children, perish—my hard fate
While I lament, for I shall ne'er enjoy
My lovely bride, nor with those sons, who owe
To me their birth and nurture, ever hold
Sweet converse. They, alas! can live no more,
Utterly lost to their desponding sire.

MED. Much could I say in answer to this charge,
Were not the benefits from me received,
And thy abhorred ingratitude, well known
To Jove, dread sire. Yet was it not ordained,
Scorning my bed, that thou shouldst lead a life
Of fond delight, and ridicule my griefs;
Nor that the royal virgin thou didst wed,

Or Creon, who to thee his daughter gave,
Should drive me from these regions unavenged.
A lioness then call me if thou wilt,
Or by the name of Scylla, whose abode
Was in Etrurian caverns. For thy heart,
As justice prompted, in my turn I wounded.

JAS. You grieve, and are the partner of my woes.

MED. Be well assured I am : but what assuages
My grief is this, that thou no more canst scoff.

JAS. How vile a mother, O my sons, was yours !

MED. How did ye perish through your father's lust !

JAS. But my right hand was guiltless of their death.

MED. Not so thy cruel taunts, and that new marriage.

JAS. Was my new marriage a sufficient cause
For thee to murder them ?

MED. Canst thou suppose
Such wrongs sit light upon the female breast ?

JAS. On a chaste woman's ; but your soul abounds
With wickedness.

MED. Thy sons are now no more,
This will afflict thee.

JAS. O'er your head, alas !
They now two evil geniuses impend.

MED. The gods know who these ruthless deeds began.

JAS. They know the hateful temper of your soul.

MED. In detestation thee I hold, and loathe
Thy conversation.

JAS. Yours too I abhor ;
But we with ease may settle on what terms
To part for ever.

MED. Name those terms. Say how
Shall I proceed ? For such my ardent wish.

JAS. Let me inter the dead, and o'er them weep.

MED. Thou shalt not. For their corses with this hand
Am I resolved to bury in the grove
Sacred to awful Juno, who protects
The citadel of Corinth, lest their foes
Insult them, and with impious rage pluck up
The monumental stone. I in this realm

Of Sisyphus moreover will ordain
A solemn festival and mystic rites,
To make a due atonement for my guilt
In having slain them. To Erectheus' land
I now am on my road, where I shall dwell
With Ægeus, great Pandion's son ; but thou
Shalt vilely perish as thy crimes deserve,
Beneath the shattered relics of thy bark,
The Argo, crushed ; such is the bitter end
Of our espousals and thy faith betrayed.

JAS. May the Erinnys of our slaughtered sons,
And justice, who requites each murderous deed,
Destroy you utterly !

MED. Will any god
Or demon hear thy curses, O thou wretch,
False to thy oath, and to the sacred laws
Of hospitality ?

JAS. Most impious woman,
Those hands yet reeking with your children's gore—

MED. Go to the palace, and inter thy bride.

JAS. Bereft of both my sons, I thither go.

MED. Not yet enough lament'st thou : to increase
Thy sorrows, mayst thou live till thou art old !

JAS. Ye dearest children.

MED. To their mother dear,
But not to thee.

JAS. Yet them have you destroyed.

MED. That I might punish thee.

JAS. One more fond kiss
On their loved lips, ah me ! would I imprint.

MED. Now wouldst thou speak to them, and in thine arms
Clasp those whom living thou didst banish hence.

JAS. Allow me, I conjure you by the gods,
My children's tender bodies to embrace.

MED. Thou shalt not : these presumptuous words in vain
By thee were hazarded.

JAS. Jove, hear'st thou this,
How I with scorn am driven away, how wronged
By that detested lioness, whose fangs

Have slain her children? Yet shall my loud plaints,
While here I fix my seat, if 'tis allowed,
And this be possible, call down the gods
To witness that you hinder me from touching
My murdered sons, and paying the deceased
Funereal honours. Would to Heaven I ne'er
Had seen them born to perish by your hand!

CHOR. Throned on Olympus, with his sovereign nod,
Jove unexpectedly performs the schemes
Divine foreknowledge planned; our firmest hopes
Oft fail us: but the god still finds the means
Of compassing what man could ne'er have looked for;
And thus doth this important business end.

THE PHŒNICIAN DAMSELS.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

JOCASTA.

ATTENDANT.

ANTIGONE.

CHORUS OF PHŒNICIAN DAMSELS.

POLYNICES.

ETEOCLES.

CREON.

MENÆCEUS.

TIRESIAS.

MESSENGER.

ANOTHER MESSENGER.

ŒDIPUS.

SCENE—AN OPEN COURT BEFORE THE PALACE AT THEBES.

JOCASTA.

O THOU, who through the starry heavens divid'st
Thy path, and on a golden chariot sitt'st
Exalted, radiant sun, beneath the hoofs
Of whose swift steeds the fiery volumes roll,
How inauspicious, o'er the Theban race
Didst thou dart forth thy beams, the day when Cadmus
Came to this land from the Phœnician coast.
He erst obtained Harmonia for his bride,
Daughter of Venus ; of their loves the fruit
Was Polydorus, and from him, as fame
Relates, descended Labdacus, the sire
Of Laius. From Menæceus I derive
My birth ; my brother Creon and myself
From the same mother spring : but I am called
Jocasta, 'twas the name my father gave ;
Me royal Laius married ; but when long
Our bed had proved unfruitful, he to search
The oracle of Phœbus went, and sued
To the prophetic god, that he our house
Would cheer with an auspicious race of sons :

The god replied, "Beware, O thou who rul'st
The martial Thebans, strive not to obtain
A progeny against the will of Heaven :
If thou beget a son, that son shall slay thee,
And all thy household shall be plunged in blood."
He overcome by lust, and flushed with wine,
In an unguarded moment disobeyed :
But I no sooner had brought forth the child,
Than he, grown conscious of his foul offence
Against Apollo's mandate, to his shepherds
The new-born infant gave, in Juno's meads,
And on Cithæron's hill, to be exposed,
Maiming his feet with pointed steel, whence Greece
Hath called him Œdipus. But they who fed
The steeds of Polypus, soon taking up,
Conveyed him to their home, and in the hands
Of their kind mistress placed, she at her breast
Nurtured my son, and artfully persuaded
Her lord that she was mother to the boy :
Soon as the manly beard his cheek o'erspread,
Aware from his own knowledge, or informed
Of the deceit, solicitous to learn
Who were his parents, to Apollo's shrine
He journeyed ; and at the same time was Laius,
My husband, hastening hither, to inquire
Whether the child he had exposed was dead.
In Phocis, where two severed roads unite,
They met : the charioteer of Laius cried
In an imperious tone, "Give way to kings,
Thou stranger" : yet the silent youth advanced,
With inborn greatness fired, till o'er his feet
Distained with gore the steel-hoofed coursers trod ;
Hence (for what need have I to speak of aught
That's foreign to my woes ?) th' unconscious son
Slew his own father, seized the spoils, and gave
To Polybus, who nurtured him, the car.
But when with ruthless fangs the Sphynx laid waste
The city, and my husband was no more,
My brother Creon by the herald's voice

Proclaimed that whosoever could expound
Th' enigma by that crafty virgin forged
Should win me for his bride: that mystic clue
The luckless *Œdipus*, my son, unravelled;
Hence o'er this land appointed king, he gained
For his reward a sceptre—wretched youth!—
Unwittingly espousing me who bore him;
Nor yet was I his mother then aware
That we committed incest. I produced
To my own son four children; two were males,
Eteocles and *Polynices*, famed
For martial prowess; daughters two, the one
Her father called *Ismene*, but the first
I named *Antigone*. Soon as he learned
That I whom he had wedded was his mother,
The miserable *Œdipus*, o'erwhelmed
With woes accumulated, from their sockets
Tore with a golden clasp his bleeding eyes.
But since the beard o'ershaded my sons' cheeks,
Their sire they in a dungeon have confined,
—The memory of this sad event t' efface,
For which they needed every subtle art.
Within these mansions he still lives, but, sick
With evil fortunes, on his sons pours forth
The most unholy curses, that this house
They by the sword may portion out. Alarmed
Lest Heaven those vows accomplish if they dwell
Together, they by compact have resolved
The younger brother *Polynices* first
A voluntary exile shall depart,
And, with *Eteocles* remaining here
To wield the sceptre of this realm, exchange
His station year by year: but th' elder-born
Since he was seated on the lofty throne
Departs not thence, and from this land expels
The injured *Polynices*, who, to *Argos*
Repairing, with *Adrastus* hath contracted
Most strict affinity, and hither brings
A numerous squadron of heroic youths;

These bulwarks for their sevenfold gates renowned
 E'en now in arms approaching, he demands
 His father's sceptre, and an equal share
 Of the domain. But I to end their strife
 On Polynices have prevailed to come,
 Under the sanction of a warrior's faith
 And parley with his brother, ere the hosts
 In battle join : the messenger I sent
 Informs me he the summons will attend.
 O thou who dwell'st amidst Heaven's lucid folds,
 Save us, dread Jove, and reconcile my children :
 For thou, if thou art wise, wilt ne'er permit
 That one poor mortal should be always wretched.

[*Exit* JOCASTA.]

ANTIGONE, ATTENDANT,

ATT. O fair Antigone, illustrious blossom
 Of your paternal house, since from your chamber
 Your mother hath allowed you to come forth
 At your request, and from these roofs behold
 The Argive hosts, stay here, while I the road
 Explore, lest in our passage, if we meet
 Some citizen, malignant tongues should blame
 Both me, the servant, who obey, and you
 For giving such command. But their whole camp
 Since I have searched, to you will I relate
 All that these eyes have witnessed, and whate'er
 I heard amidst the Argives, when, employed
 By both your brothers, I 'twixt either host
 Bore pledges of their compact. But these mansions
 No citizen approaches : haste, ascend
 Yon ancient stairs of cedar, and o'erlook
 The spacious fields that skirt Ismenos' stream
 And Dirce's fountains. What a host of foes !

ANT. Thy aged arm stretch forth, and, as I climb
 The narrow height, my tottering steps sustain.

ATT. Give me your hand, for at a lucky hour
 You mount the turret : the Pelasgian host
 Is now in motion, and the troops divide.

ANT. Thou venerable daughter of Latona,
Thrice sacred goddess, Hecate, how gleams
With brazen armour the whole field around !

ATT. For Polynices to his native land
Returns not like a man of little note,
But comes in anger, by unnumbered steeds
Attended, and the loudest din of arms.

ANT. Are the gates closed? What barriers guard the walls
Reared by Amphion's skill ?

ATT. Be of good cheer.
The city is made safe within. But look
At him who first advances, if you wish
To know him.

ANT. By those snowy plumes distinguished,
Before the ranks who marches in the van,
With ease sustaining on his nervous arm
That brazen shield ?

ATT. A general, royal maid.

ANT. Who is he? In what country was he born,
Old man, inform me, and what name he bears.

ATT. Mycene glories in the warrior's birth,
But near the marsh of Lerna he resides ;
His name's Hippomedon, a mighty chief.

ANT. Ah, with what pride, how terrible an aspect,
How like an earthborn giant doth he move !
His targe with stars is covered, and that air
Resembles not the feeble race of man.

ATT. Behold you not the chief who Dirce's stream
Is crossing !

ANT. In what different armour clad !
But who is he ?

ATT. Tydeus, the noble son
Of Œneus ; in embattled fields his breast
With true Ætolian courage is inspired.

ANT. Is he, O veteran, husband to the sister
Of Polynices' consort ? How arrayed
In party-coloured mail, a half Barbarian !

ATT. All the Ætolians, O my daughter, armed
With lucklers, can expertly hurl the lance.

ANT. But whence, old man, art thou assured of this ?

ATT. The various figures wrought upon the shields
I noticed at the time I from the walls
Went to your brother with the pledge of truce :
When these I see, their wearers well I know.

ANT. But who is he who moves round Zethus' tomb,
A youth with streaming ringlets, and with eyes
Horribly glaring ?

ATT. He too is a chief.

ANT. What multitudes in burnished armour clad
Follow his steps !

ATT. From Atalanta sprung.
Parthenopæus is the name he bears.

ANT. May Dian, who o'er craggy mountain speeds,
Attended by his mother, with her shafts
Transpierce th' audacious youth who comes to sack
My city !

ATT. These rash vows suppress, O daughter,
For they with justice these domains invade,
And therefore will the gods, I fear, discern
Their better cause.

ANT. But where is he, whom Fate
Decreed in evil hour from the same womb
With me to spring ? Say, O thou dear old man,
Where's Polynices ?

ATT. He beside the tomb
Of Niobe's seven virgin daughters stands
Close to Adrastus. See you him ?

ANT. I see him,
But not distinctly ; I can just discern
A faint resemblance of that kindred form,
The image of that bosom. Would to heaven,
Borne on the skirts of yonder passing cloud,
Through the ethereal paths, I with these feet
Could to my brother urge my swift career !
Then would I fling my arms round the dear neck
Of him who long hath been a wretched exile.
How gracefully, in golden arms arrayed,
Bright as Hyperion's radiant beams, he moves !

ATT. To fill your soul with joy, the chief, these doors,
Secured by an inviolable truce,
Anon will enter.

ANT. O thou aged man ;
But who is he who on yon chariot, drawn
By milk-white coursers, seated, guides the reins ?

ATT. The seer Amphiareus, O royal maid,
He bears the victims that with crimson tides
Must drench the ground.

ANT. Encircled with a zone
Of radiance, O thou daughter of the sun,
Pale moon, who from his beams thy golden orb
Illum'st, behold with what a steady thong
And how discreetly he those coursers guides !
But where is Capaneus, who proudly utters
Against this city the most horrid threats ?

ATT. To these seven turrets each approach he marks,
The walls from their proud summit to their base
Measuring with eager eye.

ANT. Dread Nemesis,
Ye too, O deep-toned thunderbolts of Jove,
And livid flames of lightning ; yours, 'tis yours
To blast such arrogance. Is this the man
Who vowed that he the captive Theban dames,
In slavery plunged, would to Mycene lead,
To Lerna, where the god of ocean fixed
His trident, whence its waters bear the name
Of Amyone ? But, O child of Jove,
Diana, venerable queen, who bind'st
Thy streaming tresses with a golden caul,
Never may I endure the loathsome yoke
Of servitude.

ATT. The royal mansion enter,
O daughter, and beneath its roof remain
In your apartment, since you have indulged
Your wish, and viewed those objects you desired.
A tumult in the city now prevails :
The women to the palace rush in crowds,
For the whole female sex are prone to slander,

And soon as they some slight occasion find,
 On which malignant rumours they can ground,
 Add many more : for on such baneful themes
 To them is it delightful to converse.

[*Exeunt.*]

CHORUS.

ODE.

I. I.

Borne from Phœnician shores I crossed the deep,
 My tender years to Phœbus they consign
 To sprinkle incense on his shrine,
 And dwell beneath Parnassus' steep,
 O'erspread with everlasting snow :
 Our dashing oars were plied in haste
 Through the Ionian wave, whose eddies flow
 Round Sicily's inhospitable waste ;
 Then vernal zephyrs breathed our sails around,
 And Heaven's high-vaulted roof conveyed the murmuring
 sound.

I. 2.

A chosen offering to the Delphic god,
 I from my native city to this land,
 Where aged Cadmus bore command,
 Am come, obedient to the nod
 Of those who from Agenor spring,
 To the proud towers of Laius' race,
 Our kindred governed by a kindred king.
 Here stand I, like an image on its base,
 Though destined to partake refined delights,
 Bathe in Castalia's stream, and tend Apollo's rites.

III.

O mountain, from whose cloven height
 There darts a double stream of light,
 Oft on thy topmost ridge the Menades are seen,
 And thou, each day distilling generous wine,
 O plant of Bacchus, whose ripe clusters shine,
 Blushing through the leaf's faint green ;
 Ye caves, in which the Python lay,

And hills, from whence Apollo twanged his bow,
 Around your heights o'erspread with snow,
 'Midst my loved virgin comrades may I stray,
 Each anxious fear expelling from my breast,
 In the world's centre, that auspicious fane
 The residence of Phœbus blest,
 And bid adieu to Dirce's plain.

II. 1.

But now before these walls doth Mars advance,
 And brandish slaughter's flaming torch around ;
 May Thebes ne'er feel the threatened wound,
 For to a friend his friend's mischance
 Is grievous as his own : each ill
 That lights upon these sevenfold towers
 With equal woe Phœnicia's realm must fill :
 For Thebes I mourn ; since, of one blood with ours
 From Io's loves this nation dates its birth,
 Those sorrows I partake which vex my kindred earth.

II. 2.

Thick as a wintry cloud that phalanx stands,
 Whose gleaming shields portend the bloody fight,
 The god of war with stern delight
 Shall to the siege those hostile bands
 Lead on, and rouse the fiends to snite
 The race of an incestuous bed :
 Much, O Pelasgian Argos, much thy might,
 And more the vengeance of the gods I dread ;
 For, armed with justice, on his native land
 Rushes that banished youth, the sceptre to demand.

POLYNICES, CHORUS.

POL. They who were stationed to observe the gates
 Unbarred them, and with courtesy received me
 As I the fortress entered : hence I fear
 Lest, now they in their wily toils have caught,
 They should detain and slay me ; I with eyes
 Most vigilant must therefore look around
 To guard 'gainst treachery : but the sword which arms

This hand shall give me courage. Ho ! who's there ?
 Doth a mere sound alarm me ? All things seem,
 E'en to the bravest, dreadful, when they march
 O'er hostile ground. I in my mother placed
 Firm confidence, yet hardly can I trust
 Her who on me prevailed t' accept the pledge
 And hither come. But I have near at hand
 A sure asylum, for the blazing altars
 Are not remote, nor yet is yonder house
 Without inhabitants. Be sheathed my sword.
 Those courteous nymphs who at the portals stand
 I'll question. O ye foreign damselfs, say,
 What was the country whence to Greece ye came ?

CHOR. Phœnicia is my native land, I there
 Was nurtured : but Agenor's martial race
 Me, the first fruit of their victorious arms,
 A votive offering to Apollo sent,
 But to the venerable prophetic domes,
 And blazing shrines of Phœbus, when the son
 Of Œdipus prepared to have conveyed me,
 The Argives 'gainst this city led their host.
 Now in return inform me who thou art
 Who com'st to Thebes, o'er whose seven gates are reared
 As many turrets.

POL. Œdipus, the son
 Of Laius, was my sire : Menæceus' daughter
 Jocasta brought me forth ; the name I bear
 Is Polynices.

CHOR. O, illustrious king,
 Thou kinsman to Agenor's race, my lords
 By whom I was sent hither, at thy feet,
 I as the usage of my country bids
 Prostrate myself. 'Thou to thy native land
 After a tedious absence art returned.
 But ho ! come forth, thou venerable dame,
 Open the doors ! O mother of the chief,
 Hear'st thou my voice ? Why yet dost thou delay
 To cross the lofty palace, and with speed
 In those fond arms thy dearest son enfold ?

JOCATA, POLYNICES, CHORUS.

JOC. Within the palace, O Phœnician nymphs,
Hearing your voice, I with a tardy step,
Trembling through age, creep hither. O my son,
At length I, after many days, once more
Behold that face. Fling fling those arms around
The bosom of your mother ; those loved cheeks
Let me embrace, and with your azure tresses,
My neck o'ershadowing, mix my streaming hair.
To these maternal arms you scarce return,
Till hope and expectation both had failed.
O how shall I accost you, how impart
To my whole frame the transports of my soul,
And all around me, wheresoe'er I turn,
Bid pleasures past and distant years revive ?
My son, you left this mansion of your sire
A desert, by your haughty brother wronged
And exiled from your country. By each friend
How greatly hath your absence been bewailed !
How greatly by all Thebes ! My hoary locks
Hence did I sever from this aged head,
Hence weeping utter many piteous notes,
And, O my son, the tissued robes of white
Which erst I wore, exchange for sable weeds,
These loathed habiliments. Within the palace
Your father, of his eyesight reft, bewails
The disunited pillars of his house :
Resolved to slay himself, he sometimes strives
To rush on the drawn sword ; then searches round
For the high beam to fix the gliding noose,
Groaning forth imprecations 'gainst his son ;
Thus, uttering with shrill tone his clamorous plaints.
He lives, encompassed by perpetual night.
But, ah ! my son, by wedlock's strictest bonds
United, I am told that you enjoy
A foreign consort, in a foreign realm,
To vex your mother's soul and the stern ghost
Of Laius ; on such ill-assorted nuptials

Curses attend. The Hymeneal torch
 I kindled not to grace your spousal rites,
 As custom hath ordained, and it behoves
 A happy mother; nor his cooling stream
 To fill the laver did Ismenos yield;
 Nor on th' arrival of thy royal bride
 Through Thebes were festive acclamations heard.
 Perish the cause of this unnatural war,
 Be it or sword, or discord, of your sire,
 Or fate, whose horrors revel in the house
 Of Ædipus: for these disasters sting
 My soul with anguish.

CHOR. Great endearments rise
 From pangs maternal, and all women love
 Their progeny.

POL. Amidst my foes I come,
 O mother, whether wisely or unwisely,
 Great are my doubts: but all men are constrained
 To love their country. He who argues aught
 Against a truth so clear in empty words
 Takes pleasure, while his heart confutes his tongue.
 Yet with such panic terror was I seized,
 Lest by some stratagem my brother slay me,
 That, bearing a drawn falchion in my hand,
 I cast my eyes around on every side
 As I the city traversed: my sole trust
 Is in the truce he swore to, and thy faith,
 Which led me to this mansion of my sire:
 Yet as I came full many a tear I shed,
 After long absence, to behold the palace,
 The sacred altars of the gods, that ring
 Where wrestlers strive, scene of my youthful sports,
 And Dirce's fountain. Hence unjustly driven
 I in a foreign city dwell, and steep
 These eyes in tears incessant. But to add
 Grief to my griefs, thee with thy tresses shorn
 I see, and in a sable vest arrayed.
 Wretch that I am! How dreadful and how hard
 To reconcile, is enmity 'twixt those

Of the same house, O mother ! But how fares
My aged sire within, whose eyes are closed
In total darkness ? how, my sisters twain ?
Bewail they not their exiled brother's fate ?

JOC. Some god hath smitten the devoted house
Of Œdipus. I first 'gainst Heaven's decrees
Brought forth a son, and in an evil hour
Wedded that son, to whom your owe your birth.
But wherefore should I dwell upon these scenes
Of horror ? It behoves us to bear up
Under the woes inflicted by the gods.
How shall I ask the questions which I wish ?—
Fearing to wound your soul—yet to propose them
Is my desire most urgent.

POL. Question me,
Leave nought unsaid : for, O my dearest mother,
Whatever is thy pleasure will to me
Seem grateful.

JOC. With what most I wish to know
Will I begin my questions. Is not exile
A grievous ill ?

POL. Most grievous, and indeed
Worse than in name.

JOC. How happens this ? Whence rises
The misery of the banished man ?

POL. He's subject
To one severe calamity—he wants
Freedom of speech.

JOC. The wretch of whom you talk,
Who utters not his thoughts, is but a slave.

POL. The follies of their rulers they must bear.

JOC. This were a piteous doom, to be constrained
To imitate th' unwise.

POL. If gain ensue,
We must submit, though nature's voice forbid.

JOC. Hopes, it is said, the hungry exile feed.

POL. With smiles they view him, but are slow to aid.

JOC. Doth not time prove their falsehood ?

POL. They possess

An influence equal to the Queen of Love ;
They banish every sorrow from the breast.

JOC. But whence procured you food, ere you obtained
A sustenance by wedlock ?

POL. For the day
At times I had sufficient, but at times
Was wholly destitute.

JOC. Your father's friends,
And they who shared his hospitable board,
Did they not aid you ?

POL. Be thou ever blest !
For he who is unhappy hath no friend.

JOC. But did not your illustrious birth advance you
To some exalted station ?

POL. A great curse
Is poverty : this high descent with food
Supplied me not.

JOC. To all mankind it seems
Their native land's most dear.

POL. Words have not power
T' express what love I for my country feel.

JOC. But why to Argos went you, what design
Had you then formed ?

POL. Apollo to Adrastus
Pronounced a certain oracle.

JOC. What mean you ?
I cannot comprehend.

POL. That he in wedlock
Should join his daughters to the boar and lion.

JOC. How did the names of these ferocious beasts
Relate to you, my son ?

POL. I cannot tell.
To this adventure was I called by fortune.

JOC. That goddess is discreet : but by what means
Did you obtain your consort ?

POL. It was nigh
When to Adrastus' vestibule I came.

JOC. To seek your lodging, like a banished vagrant ?

POL. E'en so : and there I met another exile.

JOC. Who was he ? Him most wretched too I deem,

POL. Tydeus, the son of Eneus, I am told.

JOC. But wherefore did Adrastus to wild beasts
Compare you?

POL. From our fighting for a den.

JOC. Did then the son of Talaus thus expound
The oracles?

POL. And on us two bestowed
His daughters.

JOC. But have these espousals proved
Happy, or inauspicious?

POL. I have found
No reason yet to curse the day I wedded.

JOC. Yet how prevailed you on a foreign host
Hither to follow you?

POL. Adrastus sware
To Tydeus and myself, his sons-in-law
(Who now by strict affinity are joined),
That both of us he in our native realms
Will reinstate, but Polynices first.
Unnumbered Argives and Mycenæ's chiefs
Crowd to my banners, a lamented succour,
But such as stern necessity demands,
Affording: for my country I invade.
Yet witness for me, O ye righteous gods.
'Tis with reluctance that I wield the spear
Against my dearest parents. But to thee,
O mother, it belongs to end this strife,
'To reconcile two brothers, and to cause
My toils, and thine, and those of Thebes, to cease.
Indulge me while I quote an ancient maxim:
"Of human honours riches are the source,
And rule with power supreme the tribes of men."
In quest of wealth I hither come, and lead
Unnumbered squadrons to the dubious field,
For indigent nobility is scorned.

CHOR. But lo! Eteocles himself repairs
To th' appointed conference. In such terms
As may restore peace 'twixt thy sons, be thine,
Jocasta, the maternal task: t' address them.

ETEOCLES, POLYNICES, JOCASTA, CHORUS.

ETE. With your request, O mother, to comply,
Hither I come : but what must now be done ?
Let others speak before me. For the squadrons
I round the walls have marshalled, and restrained
The ardour of the city, till I hear
What terms of peace you would propose, what views
Within these walls induced you to receive
My brother, by the public faith secured,
Extorting my consent.

JOC. Yet pause awhile ;
For haste is incompatible with justice :
But slow deliberations oft effect
Such schemes as wisdom dictates. Lay aside
Those threatening looks, that vehemence of soul ;
For thou behold'st not the terrific head
Lopped from Medusa's shoulders, but behold'st
Thy brother coming. Your benignant eyes,
O Polynices, on your brother turn,
For while you look upon that kindred face
You will speak better, and his words receive
With more advantage. Fain would I suggest
One act of wholesome prudence to you both ;
An angered friend, when with his friend he meets,
Should at such interview attend to nought
But those pacific schemes on which he came,
Their ancient broils forgetting. 'Tis incumbent
On you, O Polynices, to speak first,
Because, complaining of great wrongs, you lead
An Argive army hither. May some god
Judge 'twixt my sons, and reconcile their strife !

POL. Plain are the words of truth, and justice needs
No subtlety t' interpret, for it bears
Enough to recommend it : but injustice,
Devoid of all internal worth, requires
Each specious art. My father's house, my interests,
His also, I consulted : and the curse
Which Œdipus had erst pronounced against us,

Anxious to shun, from these domains retired
 A voluntary exile, and to him
 Surrendered up the sceptre for one year.
 That in my turn I might be king, nor come,
 With enmity and slaughter in my train,
 Those mischiefs which from discord must ensue
 To act or suffer. He, who to these terms
 Assented, and for sanctions of his oath
 Invoked the gods, hath not accomplished aught
 Of his engagements, but still keeps the throne,
 And o'er my portion of our father's realm
 Without a colleague reigns. I, on receiving
 My rights, e'en now am ready from this land
 To send the troops, and in my palace rule
 For an appointed time, then yield again
 The empire to my brother, nor lay waste
 My country, nor the scaling-ladder plant
 Against yon turrets : yet will I attempt
 To do all this, if justice be denied me.
 I call the gods to witness these assertions :
 That though each solemn contract on my part
 Hath been performed, I from my native land
 By lawless force am driven. I have collected
 No specious words, O mother, to adorn
 Truths which with equal force must strike the wise
 And the illiterate, if I judge aright.

CHOR. To me, although I in a Grecian realm
 Have not been nurtured, thou appear'st to speak
 With much discretion.

ETE. If, in their ideas
 Of excellence and wisdom, all concurred,
 No strife had e'er perplexed the human race.
 But now, among the tribes of men, are fit,
 And right, and fair equality mere names,
 In real life no longer to be found.
 To you, O mother, I without concealment
 Will speak my sentiments : I would ascend
 The starry paths whence bursts the orient sun,
 And plunge beneath the central earth, to win

Empire, the greatest of th' immortal powers.
 I therefore will not yield up such a good
 To any other, but for my own use
 Retain it, O my mother : for of manhood
 Devoid is he who tamely bears the loss
 Of what he prizes most, and in its stead
 Accepts some mean exchange. Yet more, it shames me
 That he, who proudly comes with arms to lay
 Our country waste, his wishes should obtain.
 For this would be to Thebes a foul reproach,
 If, trembling at Mycene's spear, I gave
 To him my sceptre. Thus arrayed in mail
 He ought not to negotiate terms of peace.
 For all that by the sword our haughty foes
 Hope to exact might gentle words procure.
 If such his pleasure, he on other terms
 Shall be permitted in this land to dwell ;
 But never can I willingly forego
 That one great object, nor, while sovereign power
 Is yet within my reach, will I e'er stoop
 To be his vassal : rather come, ye flames,
 Ye falchions ; let the warrior steed be harnessed,
 With brazen chariots cover all the field,
 I never will surrender up my throne.
 Since, if we must o'erleap the narrow bounds
 Of justice, for an empire, to transgress
 Were glorious ; we in every point beside
 Are bound to act as virtue's rules enjoin.

CHOR. No ornaments of speech to evil deeds
 Are due, for justice hates such borrowed charms.

JOC. Believe me, O Eteocles my son,
 Old age is not by wretchedness alone
 Attended : more discreetly than rash youth
 Experience speaks. Why dost thou woo ambition,
 That most malignant goddess ? O forbear !
 For she's a foe to justice, and hath entered
 Full many a mansion, many a prosperous city,
 Nor left them till in ruin she involves
 All those who harbour her : yet this is she

On whom thou doat'st. 'Twere better, O my son,
To cultivate equality, who joins
Friends, cities, heroes in one steadfast league;
For by the laws of nature, through the world
Equality was 'stablished : but the wealthy
Finds in the poorer man a constant foe ;
Hence bitter enmity derives its source.
Equality, among the human race,
Measures, and weights, and numbers hath ordained :
Both the dark orb of night and radiant sun
Their annual circuits equally perform ;
Each, free from envy, to the other yields
Alternately ; thus day and night afford
Their services to man. Yet wilt not thou
Be satisfied to keep an equal portion
Of these domains, and to thy brother give
His due. Where then is justice ? Such respect
As sober reason disapproves, why pay'st thou
To empire, to oppression crowned with triumph ?
To be a public spectacle thou deem'st
Were honourable. 'Tis but empty pride.
When thou hast much already, why submit
To toils unnumbered ? What's superfluous wealth
But a mere name ? Sufficient to the wise
Is competence : for man possesses nought
Which he can call his own. Though for a time
What bounty the indulgent gods bestow
We manage, they resume it at their will :
Unstable riches vanish in a day.
Should I to thee th' alternative propose
Either to reign, or save thy native land,
Couldst thou reply that thou hadst rather reign ?
But if he conquer, and the Argive spears
O'erpower the squadrons who from Cadmus spring,
Thou wilt behold Thebes taken, wilt behold
Our captive virgins ravished by the foe :
That empire which thou seek'st will prove the bane
Of thy loved country ; yet thou still persist'st
In mischievous ambition's wild career.

Thus far to thee. And now to you I speak,
 O Polynices; favours most unwise
 Are those Adrastus hath on you bestowed,
 And with misjudging fury are you come
 To spread dire havoc o'er your native land.
 If you (which may the righteous gods avert !)
 This city take, how will you rear the trophies
 Of such a battle? How, when you have laid
 Your country waste, th' initiatory rites
 Perform, and slay the victims? On the banks
 Of Inachus displayed, with what inscription
 Adorn the spoils—"From blazing Thebes these shields
 Hath Polynices won, and to the gods
 Devoted"? Never, O my son, through Greece
 May you obtain such glory. But if you
 Are vanquished and Eteocles prevail,
 To Argos, leaving the ensanguined field
 Strewn with unnumbered corpses of the slain,
 How can you flee for succour? 'Twill be said
 By some malignant tongue: "A curst alliance
 Is this which, O Adrastus, thou hast formed:
 We to the nuptials of one virgin owe
 Our ruin." You are hastening, O my son,
 Into a twofold mischief: losing ail
 That you attempt, and causing your brave friends
 To perish. O my sons, this wild excess
 Of rage, with joint concurrence, lay aside.
 By equal folly when two chiefs inspired
 To battle rush, dire mischief must ensue.

CHOR. Avert these woes, and reconcile the sons
 Of Œdipus, ye gods.

ETE. No strife of words
 Is ours, O mother; we but waste the time,
 And all your care avails not. For no peace
 Can we conclude on any other terms
 Than those already named—that I, still wielding
 The sceptre, shall be monarch of this land:
 Then leave me to myself, and cease to urge
 These tedious admonitions. As for thee,

O Polynices, from these walls depart,
Or thou shalt die.

POL. By whom? Who can be found
Invulnerable enough, with reeking sword
To strike me dead, yet 'scape the self-same fate?

ETE. Beside thee, and not distant far he stands.
Seest thou this arm?

POL. I see it: but wealth makes
Its owners timid, and too fond of life.

ETE. Art thou come hither with a numerous host
'Gainst him thou count'st a dastard in the field?

POL. A cautious general's better than a bold.

ETE. Thou on that compact, which preserves thy life,
Too haughtily presum'st.

POL. Again I claim
The sceptre and my portion of this realm.

ETE. Ill-founded is thy claim, for I will dwell
In my own house.

POL. Retaining to yourself
More than your share?

ETE. The words which I pronounce
Are these: Depart thou from the Theban land.

POL. Ye altars of my loved paternal gods—

ETE. Which thou art come to plunder—

POL. Hear my voice.

ETE. What deity will hear thee, 'gainst thy country
While thus thou wagest war?

POL. And ye abodes
Of those two gods on milk-white coursers borne.

ETE. Who hate thee.

POL. From the mansions of my sire
Am I expelled.

ETE. Because thou hither cam'st
Those mansions to destroy.

POL. Thence was I driven
With foul injustice. O ye powers divine!

ETE. Go to Mycene; there, and not at Thebes,
Invoke the gods.

POL. You trample on the laws.

ETE. Yet am not I, like thee, my country's foe.

POL. Rest of my portion, while you drive me forth
An exile.

ETE. Thee moreover will I slay.

POL. Hear'st thou what wrongs, my father, I endure?

ETE. Thy actions too have reached his ears.

POL. And you,
My mother.

ETE. Thou thy mother canst not name
Without a profanation.

POL. O thou city!

ETE. To Argos haste, and there invoke the pool
Of Lerna.

POL. I depart: forbear to grieve
For me, O mother, but accept my praise.

ETE. From these domains avaunt!

POL. Before I go,
Permit me to behold our sire.

ETE. Thou shalt not
Obtain this boon.

POL. My virgin sisters then.

ETE. Them, too, thou ne'er shalt see.

POL. Alas! dear sisters!

ETE. Why nam'st thou those to whom thou art most
hateful?

POL. Joy to my mother!

JOC. Have I any cause
For joy, my son?

POL. No longer am I yours.

JOC. Full many and most grievous are my woes.

POL. Because he wrongs me.

ETE. Equal are the wrongs
I suffer.

POL. Where will you your station take
Before yon turrets?

ETE. For what purpose ask
This question?

POL. I in battle am resolved
To meet and slay you.

ETE. The same wish now fires
My inmost soul.

JOC. Alas ! my sons, what mean ye ?

ETE. The fact itself must show.

JOC. Will ye not shun
The curses of your sire ?

ETE. Perdition seize
On our whole house ! Soon shall my sword, embrued
With gore, no longer in its scabbard rest.

[*Exit* JOCASTA.]

POL. Thou soil which nurtured me, and every god,
Bear witness, that with insults and with wrongs
O'erwhelmed I from my country, like a slave,
Not like the son of Œdipus, am driven.
•Whate'er thou suffer, O thou city, blame,
Not me, but him : for I was loth t' invade
This land, and with reluctance now depart.
Thou too, O Phœbus, mighty king, who guard'st
These streets, ye palaces, my youthful comrades,
Farewell ! and, O ye statues of the gods,
Drenched with the blood of victims !—for I know not
Whether I ever shall accost you more.
But hope yet sleeps not, and in her I place
My trust, that with Heaven's aid I shall enjoy
The Theban realm, when I have slain this boaster.

[*Exit* POLYNICES.]

ETE. Leave these domains : a forethought by the gods
Inspired, my father prompted, when on thee
The name of Polynices, to denote
Abundance of contention, he bestowed.

[*Exit* ETEOCLES.]

CHORUS.

ODE.

I.

Erst to this land the Tyrian Cadmus came,
When at his feet a heifer lay,
Who in the meads unyoked was wont to stray,
Fulfilling Heaven's response, well known to fame,
And marked the spot where he should dwell :

The oracle announced this fruitful ground
 For his abode, where, from her limpid well,
 Fair Dirce spreads a cooling stream around,
 And on her banks are vernal blossoms found :

Compressed by amorous Jove
 Here Semele the ruddy Bromius bore,
 Whom ivy with luxuriant tendrils strove
 In infancy to mantle o'er
 And round his happy brows to spread.
 Hence, in bacchanalian dance,
 With light and wanton tread
 The Theban nymphs advance,
 And matrons all their cares resign,
 Gay votaries to the god of wine.

II.

Mars at the fount its ruthless guardian placed,
 On scaly folds a dragon rode,
 Wild glared his eyes, in vain the waters flowed,
 Nor dared the thirsting passenger to taste ;
 Advancing with undaunted tread
 To draw libations for the powers divine,
 A ponderous stone full on the monster's head
 Cadmus discharged, then seized and pierced his chine
 With frequent wounds ; so Pallas did enjoin :

This done, the teeth he sowed,
 And instantly, dire spectacle, a train,
 All clad in mail, on earth's torn surface glowed ;
 Soon was each hardy warrior slain,
 And to the soil which gave him birth
 Joined once more : a crimson flood
 Moistened the lap of earth ;
 By parching winds their blood
 Was visited, and still remain
 Its marks on the discoloured plain.

III.

To thee, O Epaphus, the child of Jove,
 Sprung from our grandame Io's love,
 I cried in a barbaric strain ;

O visit, visit this once favoured plain
 Which thy descendants call their own.
 Two goddesses by countless votaries known,
 Proserpina, dread queen, who from our birth
 Conducts us to the tomb, with Ceres the benign,
 E'en she whose foodful shrine
 Is thronged by every denizen of earth,
 From earliest days this realm possessed ;
 With lambent glories on their front displayed,
 O send them to its aid ;
 Nought can withstand a god's request.

ETEOCLES, CHORUS.

ETE. [*to one of his ATTENDANTS.*] Go thou, and hither
 bring Menæceus' son,
 Creon, the noble brother of Jocasta,
 My mother ; tell him, on my own affairs,
 And on the public interests of the state,
 With him I would consult, ere host opposed
 To host in battle meet and launch the spear.
 But lo ! he is at hand to spare thy feet
 The toil of this their errand : I behold him
 Approach the palace.

CREON, ETEOCLES, CHORUS.

CRE. I to every gate
 And every sentinel, my royal lord,
 Have gone in quest of you.

ETE. Thee, too, I longed,
 O Creon, to behold : for I have found
 Treaties for peace all fruitless since I spoke
 With Polynices.

CRE. He, I hear, looks down
 With scorn on Thebes, trusting in his ally
 Adrastus, and that numerous Argive host.
 But we to the decision of the gods
 Must now refer. Most urgent are th' affairs
 Of which I come to tell.

ETE. What means my friend ?
 Thy words I comprehend not.

CRE. From the camp
Of Argos a deserter came.

ETE. To bring
Some recent tidings of what passes there?

CRE. Their host, he says, arrayed in glittering mail,
Will instantly besiege the Theban towers.

ETE. The valiant race of Cadmus from these gates
Must sally forth, to guard their native land.

CRE. What mean you? Sees not your impetuous youth
Our strength in a false light?

ETE. Without the trenches,
To show that we are ready for the combat.

CRE. Few are the Theban squadrons, but the number
Of theirs is great.

ETE. In words I know them brave.

CRE. The fame of Argos through all Greece resounds.

ETE. Be of good cheer; I with their corse soon
These fields will cover.

CRE. With your wishes mine
Concur: but I foresee that such emprise
Abounds with heaviest dangers.

ETE. Be assured
I will not coop my host within the walls.

CRE. On prudent counsels our success depends.

ETE. Wouldst thou persuade me therefore to attempt
Some other method?

CRE. Ere you risk our fate
On one decisive battle, have recourse
To all expedients.

ETE. What if I rush forth
From ambush, and encounter them by night?

CRE. Could you return, if worsted, and take shelter
Within these walls?

ETE. Night to both hosts affords
The same impediments; but they fare best
Who give th' assault.

CRE. 'Tis terrible to rush
On danger 'midst the thickest clouds of darkness.

ETE. Shall I then launch the javelin, while they sit
Around the genial board?

CRE. This might alarm them :
Our business is to conquer.

ETE. Dirce's channel,
Which they must cross in their retreat, is deep.

CRE. All schemes you can propose are less expedient
Than if you with a prudent caution act.

ETE. But what if we with cavalry attack
The Argive camp?

CRE. On every side the host
With chariots is secured.

ETE. What then remains
For me to do? Must I surrender up
This city to our foes?

CRE. Not thus ; exert
Your wisdom, and deliberate.

ETE. What precaution,
Think'st thou, were most discreet?

CRE. I am informed
They have seven champions.

ETE. What's the task assigned
For them t' effect? Their strength can be but small.

CRE. To head as many bands, and storm each gate.

ETE. How then shall we proceed? For I disdain
To sit inactive.

CRE. On your part select
Seven warriors who the portals may defend.

ETE. O'er squadrons to preside, or take their stand
As single combatants?

CRE. To lead seven squadrons,
Choosing the bravest.

ETE. Well I understand
Thy purpose ; to prevent the foe from scaling
The ramparts.

CRE. Comrades of experience add ;
For one man sees not all.

ETE. Shall I to valour
Or wisdom give the preference

CRE. Join them both ;
For one without the other is a thing
Of no account.

ETE. It shall be done. I'll march
Into the city, place at every gate
A chief, as thou hast counselled, and the troops
Distribute so that we on equal terms
May with the foe engage. It would be tedious
The name of every warrior to recount,
Just at this moment, when beneath our walls
The enemy is posted. But with speed
I go, that I in action may not prove
A loiterer. May it be my lot to meet
My brother hand to hand, that with this spear
I 'midst the lines of battle may transfix
And kill that spoiler, who is come to lay
My country waste. I to thy care entrust
The nuptials of Antigone, my sister,
And thy son Hæmon, if it be my fate
To perish in the combat, and enforce
Our former contract with my dying breath.
Thou art Jocasta's brother: of what use
Are many words? My mother in such rank
Maintain as suits thy honour and the love
Thou bear'st me. As for my unhappy sire,
To his own folly are his sufferings due,
Bereft of eyesight; him I cannot praise,
For by his curses would he slay us both.
One thing have we omitted—of the seer
Tiresias to inquire if he have aught
Of Heaven's obscure responses to disclose.
Thy son, Menæceus from his grandsire named,
To fetch the prophet hither will I send,
O Creon, for he gladly will converse
With thee: but I so scornfully have treated,
E'en in his presence, the whole soothsayer's art,
That he abhors me. But I, on the city
And thee, O Creon, this injunction lay:
If I prove stronger, suffer not the corse
Of Polynices in this Theban realm
To be interred: let death be the reward
Of him who scatters dust o'er his remains,

Although he be the dearest of my friends,
 Thus far to thee—but to my followers this
 I add : bring forth my shield, my helm, my greaves,
 And radiant mail, that by victorious justice
 Accompanied, I instantly may rush
 Amidst the fray which waits me. But to prudence,
 Who best of all th' immortal powers protects
 The interests of her votaries, let us pray
 That she this city would from ruin save.

[Exit ETEOCLES.

CHORUS.

ODE.

I.

How long, stern Mars, shall scenes of death inspire
 Aversion to the feasts gay Bacchus holds ?
 Why join'st thou not the beauteous virgin choir
 Whose heaving bosoms love's first warmth unfolds,
 Thy hair's loose ringlets waving o'er thy face,
 Pleased on some amorous theme the lute t' employ,
 Dear to the Graces, dear to social joy ?
 But thou, a foe to the devoted race
 Of Thebé, lead'st these Argives to their fields,
 Forming dire preludes for a tragic dance ;
 Nor with the god whose hand the thyrsus wields,
 In dappled skins of hinds dost thou advance ;
 Exulting in the thong and harnessed steeds,
 Thou driv'st thy chariot o'er Ismenos' meads,
 And 'gainst th' invaders, in each Theban breast
 Infusing equal rancour, prompt'st that band,
 Seed of the dragon's teeth, to take their stand ;
 These rush to guard the walls, and those t' invest.
 Inhuman goddess, Discord, to the kings
 Of Labdacus' house a train of misery brings.

II.

With sacred foliage ever clad, ye groves
 Of famed Cithæron, whose steep cliffs abound
 With sylvan game, thou mount where Dian loves
 To urge through drifted snows the rapid hound,

Thou ought'st not to have nourished in thy shade
 Jocasta's son ; then better had he died
 When, cast forth from the palace, on thy side
 In glittering vest the royal child was laid :
 Nor ought the Sphynx, the curse of these domains,
 That subtle virgin, to have winged her way
 From thy proud heights with inauspicious strains ;
 Armed with four talons, clenched to rend her prey,
 These walls approaching, high into the air
 The progeny of Cadmus did she bear,
 By Pluto sent from hell, 'gainst Thebes she came.
 New woes the sons of Œdipus await,
 Again this city feels the scourge of fate,
 For virtue springs not from the couch of shame ;
 Fruits of th' incestuous womb, their sire's disgrace,
 Are these devoted youths, accurst and spurious race.

III.

Erst thy teeming soil gave birth
 (As in barbaric accents was made known
 To us by the loud voice of fame),
 O Thebes, to that illustrious brood of earth,
 Sprung from the teeth of that slain dragon sown,
 Thy realm their prowess did adorn.
 In honour of Harmonia's bridal morn,
 To this favoured region came
 All the celestial choir,
 What time the turrets, which this grateful land
 Impregnable by human force esteems,
 Reared by the harp, and not the artist's hand,
 Obedient to Amphion's lyre,
 Arose amidst the fruitful meads
 Where gentle Dirce leads
 Her current, and Ismenos' waters yield
 Abundant verdure to the field
 Encompassed by their streams.
 She, whom a heifer's hornéd front disguised,
 Io, was mother to the Theban kings :
 Successively, each bliss by mortals prized,

Hath to this city given renown,
And hither still fair victory brings
The noblest meed of war, the laurel's deathless crown.

TIRESIAS, MENÆCEUS, CREON, CHORUS.

TIR. [*to his daughter MANTO.*] Lead on ; for thou,
my daughter, to the feet
Of thy blind father, prov'st an eye as sure
As to the mariners the polar star.
Place me where I on level ground may tread,
And go before, lest we both fall : thy sire
Is feeble. In thy virgin hand preserve
Those oracles which I in former days
Received, when from the feathered race I drew
My auguries, and in the sacred chair
Of prophecy was seated. Say, thou youth
Menæceus, son of Creon, through the city
How far must I proceed before I reach
Thy father, for my knees can scarce support me,
And though full oft I raise these aching feet,
I seem to gain no ground.

CRE. Be of good cheer,
Tiresias, for with well-directed step
Already have you reached your friend. My son,
Support him : for the chariot, and the foot
Of an infirm old man, is wont to need
The kind assistance of some guiding hand.

TIR. No matter. I am here. Why with such haste,
O Creon, call'st thou me ?

CRE. I have not yet
Forgotten ; but till your exhausted strength
Can be recovered after the fatigue
Of your long march, take breath.

TIR. With wearied step
I yesterday came hither from the realm
Of Athens, for there also was a war
Against Eumolpus, o'er whose troops I caused
The dauntless race of Cecrops to prevail :
Hence I possess the golden crown thou seest,

Shalt be destroyed, unless my counsels meet
 With one who will obey them. What were most
 To be desired were this : that none who spring
 From Œdipus should here reside, or hold
 The sceptre of this land, for they, impelled
 By the malignant demons, will o'erthrow
 The city. But, since evil thus prevails
 O'er good, one other method yet remains
 To save us. But unsafe were it for me
 Such truths to utter, and, on bitter terms,
 Must they whom Fate selects their country heal.
 I go : farewell ! I, as a private man,
 Shall suffer, if necessity ordain,
 With multitudes, the evils which impend :
 For how can I escape the general doom ?

CRE. Here tarry, O my venerable friend.

TIR. Detain me not.

CRE. Stay ; wherefore would you fly ?

TIR. It is thy fortune which from thee departs,
 And not Tiresias.

CRE. By what means, inform me,
 Can Thebes with its inhabitants be saved ?

TIR. Though such thy wish at present, thou ere long
 Wilt change thy purpose.

CRE. How can I be loth
 To save my country ?

TIR. Art thou anxious then
 To hear the truth ?

CRE. What ought I to pursue
 With greater zeal ?

TIR. Thou instantly shall hear
 The oracles Heaven sends me to unfold :
 But first assure me where Menæceus is,
 Who led me hither.

CRE. At your side he stands.

TIR. Far hence let him retire, while I disclose
 To thee the awful mandate of the gods.

CRE. My son with th' utmost strictness will observe
 The silence you enjoin.

TIR. Is it thy will
That in his presence I to thee should speak?

CRE. Of aught that could preserve his native land
He with delight would hear.

TIR. Then, to the means
Which through my oracles are pointed out,
Yield due attention; for by acting thus
Ye shall preserve this city, where the race
Of Cadmus dwell; thou, in thy country's cause.
Thy son Menæceus art ordained to slay:
Since thou on me importunately call'st
The dread behest of fortune to unfold.

CRE. What say you? How unwelcome are these words,
O aged man!

TIR. I only speak of things
Just as they are; and add, thou must perform
Th' injunction.

CRE. How much evil have you uttered
In one short moment!

TIR. Though to thee unwelcome,
Yet to thy country fame and health.

CRE. Your words
I hear not, nor your purpose comprehend:
The city I abandon to its fate.

TIR. His purpose he retracts, and is no longer
The man he was.

CRE. Depart in peace; I need not
Your oracles.

TIR. Hath truth then lost its merit,
Because thou art unhappy?

CRE. By those knees,
You I implore, and by those hoary locks.

TIR. Why sue to me? The ills 'gainst which thou pray'st
Are not to be avoided.

CRE. Peace! Divulge not
In Thebes these tidings.

TIR. Dost thou bid me act
Unjustly? Them I never will suppress.

CRE. What is your purpose, to destroy my son?

TIR. Let others see to that : I only speak
As Heaven ordains.

CRE. But whence was such a curse
On me and on my progeny derived ?

TIR. Well hast thou asked this question, and a field
For our debate laid open. In yon den,
Where erst the guard of Dirce's fountain lay,
That earth-born dragon, must the youth pour forth
His blood for a libation to the ground,
And expiate by his death the ancient hate
To Cadmus borne by Mars, who thus avenges
The progeny of earth, the dragon, slain :
This done, the god of battles will become
Your champion ; and when earth shall, in the stead
Of her lost fruit the dragon, have received
The fruit of that heroic race who sprung
From its own teeth, and human blood for blood.
Propitious shall ye find the teeming soil,
Which erst, instead of wheat, produced a crop
Of radiant helms. Die then some victim must
Who from the jaws of that slain dragon sprung :
But thou alone in Thebes remain'st who thence
Deriv'st thy birth unmixed, both by thy sire
And by the female line ; thence, too, descend
Thy generous sons : but Hæmon must not bleed,
Because he is espoused, nor in a state
Of pure celibacy doth still remain,
For he possesses an affianced bride,
Although he be a stranger to her bed.
But, for the city, if this tender youth
Shall as a chosen victim be devoted,
He by his death will save his native land,
Will cause Adrastus and his Argive host
With anguish to return, before their eyes
Placing grim death, and add renown to Thebes.
From these two fortunes make thy choice of one,
Whether thy son or city thou wilt save.
Thou hast heard all I had to say in answer
To thy inquiries. Daughter, lead me home.

Unwise is he who practises the art
 Of divination ; for if he announce
 Evils to come, he is abhorred by those
 Who hear him ; but, through pity, if he utter
 Untruths that please, he sins against the gods.
 Phœbus alone, who cannot fear the hate
 Of man, his own responses should pronounce.

[*Exit* TIRESIAS.]

CHOR. What means this silence? Wherefore hast thou
 closed

Thy mouth, O Creon? But I too am smitten
 With equal terror.

CRE. How can a reply
 Be made to such proposal? What I mean
 To say is evident. To such a pitch
 Of woe may I ne'er come as to resign
 My son to bleed for Thebes! In all mankind
 The love they bear their children is as strong
 As that of life; nor is there any father
 Who for a victim will yield up his son.
 May no man praise me on such terms as slaying
 Those I begot! I stand prepared to die,
 For I am ripe in years, and would for Thebes
 Make due atonement with my streaming gore.
 But, O my son, ere the whole city know,
 Regardless of that frantic prophet's voice,
 Fly from this land, fly with your utmost speed;
 He will proclaim the oracle to those
 Who wield the sceptre, or lead forth our troops
 To battle, visiting each chieftain stationed
 At the seven gates: if haply we with him
 Can be beforehand, you may yet be saved;
 But if you loiter, we are both undone.
 And you must die.

MEN. But whither, to what city,
 What hospitable stranger speed my flight?

CRE. As far as possible from these domains.

MEN. You ought to name a place for my retreat,
 And I must execute what you command.

CRE. Passing through Delphi—

MEN.

Whither, O my sire,

Must I proceed?

CRE. To the Ætolian land.

MEN. But whither thence shall I direct my course?

CRE. Next to Thesprotia.

MEN.

Where Dodona rears

Her hallowed grove.

CRE.

Full well you comprehend

My meaning.

MEN. There what safeguard shall I find?

CRE. Its tutelary god your steps will guide.

MEN. But how shall I with treasures be supplied?

CRE. To you will I convey abundant gold.

MEN. Discreetly have you spoken, O my sire.

CRE. Now leave me.

MEN.

To your sister I would go—

I mean Jocasta, who first nurtured me

In infancy, when of my mother reft

An orphan I became; one fond adieu

To her I fain would bid, and of my life

Then take due care.

CRE.

But go, or you will frustrate

All I can do to save you.

[Exit CREON.]

MEN.

With what art,

O virgins, have I soothed my father's fears,

By specious words (my promise to accomplish)

Deceiving him who sends me hence, to rob

The city of those fortunes which await her,

And brand me with a coward's hateful name.

In an old man such weakness claims excuse;

But I should sin beyond all hopes of pardon

If I betrayed the land which gave me birth.

I go, to save this city; be assured,

Such are the terms on which I yield up life,

Content to perish in my country's cause.

If they whom Heaven's oracular response

Leaves at full liberty, by no decrees

Of the resistless destinies impelled,
 Maintain their ground in battle, nothing loth
 To bleed, the champions of their native land,
 Before yon turrents, base were it in me,
 If proving faithless to my sire, my brother,
 And country, like a dastard, I should speed
 My flight from these domains; where'er I live,
 Shame would o'ertake me. From the starry pole
 May Jove forefend, and Mars, in human gore
 Exulting, who the sceptre of this realm
 Erst gave to kings, earth's progeny, the seed
 Of that slain dragon's teeth. But I will go,
 Ascend the topmost pinnacles, and piercing
 My breast, where they o'erhang the dragon's cave,
 The very spot the seer described, redeem
 My country from its foes. I have pronounced
 Th' irrevocable word. But, by my death,
 On Thebes no sordid present to bestow,
 I haste, and from these mischiefs will set free
 The groaning land. Would every man exert
 To their full stretch his talents to promote
 The public interest, every state, exposed
 To fewer ills, hereafter might be blest.

[*Exit* MENÆCEUS.]

CHORUS

ODE.

I.

O winged fiend, who from the earth
 And an infernal viper drew'st thy birth,
 Thou cam'st, thou cam'st, to bear away,
 Amidst incessant groans, thy prey,
 And harass Cadmus' race,
 Thy frantic pinions did resound,
 Thy fangs impressed the ghastly wound,
 Thou ruthless monster with a virgin's face:
 What youths from Dirce's fount were borne aloof,
 While thou didst utter thy discordant song,
 The furies haunted every roof,

And o'er these walls sat slaughter brooding long.
 Sure from some god whose breast no mercy knew
 Their source impure these horrors drew.
 From house to house the cries
 Of matrons did resound,
 And wailing maidens rent the skies
 With frequent shrieks loud as the thunder's burst,
 Oft as the Sphinx accurst,
 Some youth, whom in the Theban streets she found,
 Bore high in air ; all gazed in wild affright,
 Till she vanished from their sight.

II.

At length the Pythian god's command
 Brought Œdipus to this ill-fated land ;
 Each heart did then with transport glow,
 Though now his name renew their woe :
 By angry Heaven beguiled,
 When he th' enigma had explained,
 His mother for a bride he gained ;
 With incest hence the city was defiled.
 Fresh murders soon his curses will inspire,
 Urging his sons to an unnatural strife.
 We that heroic youth admire
 Who in his country's cause resigns his life,
 He, though his father Creon wail his fate,
 With triumph in the fell debate,
 Will crown these sevenfold towers.
 Of Heaven I ask no more
 Than that such children may be ours :
 Thy aid, O Pallas, in th' adventurous deed
 Caused Cadmus to succeed,
 And slay the dragon, whose envenomed gore
 Was sprinkled on these rocks ; by Heaven's command
 Hence some pest still haunts the land.

MESSENGER, CHORUS.

MES. Who at the portals of the regal dome
 Is stationed ? Open, bring Jocasta forth

From her apartment. Ho ! advance at length,
And listen to my voice, illustrious wife
Of *Œdipus*. No longer grieve, nor shed
The piteous tear.

JOCASTA, MESSENGER, CHORUS.

JOC. Come you, my friend, to bring
Sad tidings of *Eteocles* the slain,
Beside whose shield you ever stood to guard
The warrior from the javelins of the foe ?
With what important message are you charged ?
Is my son dead, or lives he ? Tell me all.

MES. He lives, that fear be banished.

JOC. Are our walls
By their seven towers secured ?

MES. They still remain
Unshaken, and the city is not sacked.

JOC. Have they withstood the perilous assault
From th' *Argive* combatants ?

MES. The fate of battle
Is just decided : the intrepid race
Of *Cadmus* o'er *Mycene's* host prevailed.

JOC. Yet one thing more ; I by th' immortal powers
Conjure you, tell me whether you know aught
Of *Polynices*, for I wish to learn
If he yet live.

MES. At present both thy sons
Are living.

JOC. Bliss attend you : but inform me
How ye the troops of *Argos* from the gates,
Beleaguered in the turrets, could repel ?
That to my home with speed I may return,
The blind and aged *Œdipus* to soothe
With the glad tidings that this city's saved.

MES. Since *Creon's* son, who for his country died,
Mounting the topmost pinnacles, transpierced
His bosom with the falchion, and became
The generous saviour of his native land
Eteocles distributed seven cohorts

At the seven gates, and to each band assigned
Its leader, by their vigilance to check
The furious onset of the Argive host :
He stationed a reserve of horse to succour
The horse, and infantry with bucklers armed
Behind the infantry, that where the walls
Were with the greatest violence assailed
Fresh strength might be at hand. As on our turrets
We stood exalted, and o'erlooked the plain,
The Argive host we saw, with silver shields
Conspicuous, from Teumessus' mount descend :
Over their trenches in their rapid march
Soon vaulting, to the city they drew near,
While pæans, mingled with the trumpet's sound,
At the same instant through their ranks were heard,
And on the Theban walls. His squadron, first,
By their raised targets screened, which cast around
A horrid shade, to the Nēitian gate
Parthenopæus led, the daring son
Of Atalanta ; on his central shield,
His mother's trophy, the Ætolian boar,
Pierced by that huntress with unerring shaft,
The chief displayed. Amphiareus the seer
Marched to the gates of Prætus, on his car
Conveying victims : no unseemly pride
In his armorial bearings was expressed,
But on his modest buckler there appeared
A vacant field. At the Ogygian portals
The fierce Hippomedon maintained his stand.
By this achievement was his orbéd targe
Distinguished : Argus, with unnumbered eyes,
A part of which, awakening fresh from sleep,
Oped with the rising stars, meantime the rest
He with the setting constellations closed ;
As more distinctly, when the chief was slain,
Might be discerned. But Tydeus next his post
Before the Homolæan gate maintained :
With a huge lion's bristly hide his shield
Was covered, in his better hand a torch

He, like Prometheus of the Titans' race,
Brandished to fire the city. To the gate
From Dirce's fountain named his marshalled troops
Thy son the furious Polynices led ;
The rapid mares of Potnia (the device
Portrayed upon his target) seemed to leap
With panic terrors smitten, and, grown frantic,
All crowded in a circle to the rim.
Equal in courage to the God of War,
Next with his cohort to Electra's gate
Rushed Capaneus : the ensign wrought in steel
Upon his buckler was an earth-born giant,
Whose shoulders carried a whole city torn
With levers from its basis, to denote
The menaced fate of Thebes. Adrastus' self
At the seventh gate appeared ; on his left arm
The Hydra with a hundred snakes begirt,
Which filled the convex surface of his shield,
That badge of Argive pride, the warrior bore.
From Thebes, surrounded by its lofty walls,
The serpents opening their voracious jaws
Conveyed the sons of Cadmus. Each device
I could observe securely, as I passed
Betwixt the leaders of the adverse hosts,
Distinguished by the pledge of truce. At first
We at a distance fought with bows and shafts,
And slings and stones ; but when our troops obtained
An easy conquest in this missile war,
Tydeus, and Polynices, thy brave son,
Both cried at the same instant, "O ye race
Of Danaus, ere our squadrons are dispersed
By weapons from yon lofty turrets hurled,
Why on the portals scruple ye to make
One resolute assault with all our strength,
The light-armed troops, our horse, and brazen cars ?"
Soon as they heard their leader's cheering voice,
None loitered, but full many a valiant Argive
Was through the brain transpierced, while from the walls,
Like skilful divers, our expiring friends

Oft threw themselves ; the thirsty ground with streams
Of gore they drenched. Fierce Atalanta's son,
Not Argos, but Arcadia gave him birth,
Rushed like a whirlwind to the gates, and called
For flaming brands and axes to destroy ;
But Periclimenus, who from the god
Of ocean sprung, soon quelled his frantic rage :
Torn from the battlement, a stone, whose mass
Had filled a chariot, on his head he threw,
The stripling's auburn hair and crashing skull
It severed, and those rosy cheeks defiled
With gushing blood ; to the maternal arms
Of her who twangs the unerring bow, the nymph
Of Mænalon, he never shall return.
But when thy son Eteocles surveyed
Our triumphs at this gate, the rest with speed
He visited ; I followed, and beheld
Tydeus attended by a phalanx armed
With bucklers hurling their Ætolian spears
Into the loftiest towers, with such success
That they constrained our fugitives to quit
Their station on the ramparts ; but thy son
Rallied them like a hunter, and collected
Each warrior to resume his post ; their fears
Dispelled, we hasted to another gate.
But in what terms shall I describe the madness
Of Capaneus ? He with a ladder came,
And boasted that not e'en the lightning launched
By Jove's own hand should hinder him from scaling
The towers to sack the city. Thus he spoke ;
And 'midst a storm of stones, from step to step
Ascending, still sufficient shelter found
Beneath the huge circumference of his shield ;
But as he reached the summit of the wall
Jove smote him with a thunderbolt, earth gave
A sound so loud that all were seized with terror ;
As from a sling his scattered limbs were thrown,
His blasted tresses mounted to the skies,
On earth his blood was sprinkled, but his hands

And feet were, like Ixion on the wheel,
 Whirled with incessant motion, till at length
 Down to the ground he fell a smouldering corse.
 Soon as Adrastus saw Jove warred against him,
 He with his Argive host in swift retreat
 Again the trenches crossed : but when our troops
 Marked the auspicious sign vouchsafed by Jove,
 They from the gates rushed forth with brazen cars,
 With cavalry in ponderous arms arrayed,
 And 'midst the Argive squadrons hurled their spears :
 Each ill concurred to overwhelm the foe,
 Death raged amongst them, from their chariots thrown
 They perished, wheels flew off, 'gainst axle crashed
 Axle, and corses were on corses heaped.
 The Theban turrets we this day have saved
 From ruin, but to the immortal powers,
 And them alone, belongs it to decide
 Whether auspicious fortune on this land
 Shall smile hereafter.

CHOR. In th' embattled field
 'Tis glorious to prevail : but were the gods
 More favourably disposed, I should enjoy
 A greater share of bliss.

JOC. The gods and fortune
 Have amply done their part : for both my sons
 Are living, and the city hath escaped :
 Unhappy Creon only seems to reap
 The bitter fruits of my accursed nuptials
 With Œdipus, for he hath lost his son,
 And such event, though fortunate for Thebes,
 To him is grievous. In your tale proceed.
 Say on ; what farther have my sons resolved ?

MES. The sequel wave ; for all with thee thus far
 Goes prosperously.

JOC. These words but serve to raise
 Suspicion : nothing must be left untold.

MES. What wouldst thou more than that thy sons are safe ?

JOC. But whether my good fortune will prove lasting
 I wish to know.

MES. Release me : for thy son
Is left without his shield-bearer.

JOC. Some ill
In mystic darkness wrapt you strive to hide.

MES. I to these welcome tidings cannot add
Such as would make thee wretched.

JOC. No way left,
Unless you through the air could wing your flight,
Have you to 'scape me.

MES. After this glad message
Why wilt thou not allow me to depart,
Rather than speak of grievous ills? Thy sons
Are both resolved on a most impious deed :
Apart from either army to engage
In single combat, to the Argive troops
And the assembled citizens of Thebes
Have they addressed such language as ne'er ought
To reach their ears. Eteocles began :
Above the field high on a tower he stood,
Commanding silence first to be proclaimed
Through all the host, and cried : " O peerless chiefs
Of the Achaian land, who, to invade
This city, from the realms of Danaus come,
And ye who spring from Cadmus, in the cause
Of Polynices barter not your lives,
Nor yet on my behalf ; I, from such dangers
To save you, with my brother will engage
In single combat, and if him I slay
Here in this palace shall I reign alone,
But I to him the city will yield up
If I am vanquished : from the bloody strife
Desisting, ye to Argos shall return,
Nor perish in a foreign land : enough
Of Thebans too on this ensanguined plain
Lie breathless corses." With these words his speech
The dauntless chief concluded. From the ranks,
Thy offspring, Polynices, then advanced
And the proposal praised, while, with a shout,
The Argive and the Theban hosts, who deemed

ANTIGONE, JOCASTA, CHORUS.

ANT. Before these gates, my mother, with what sounds
Of recent horror com'st thou to alarm
Thy friends.

JOC. Ere now, my daughter, both thy brothers
Have lost their lives.

ANT. What sayst thou ?

JOC. They went forth
Resolved on single combat.

ANT. Wretched me !
What more hast thou, O mother, to relate ?

JOC. Nought that can give thee joy, but follow me.

ANT. Say whither must I go, and leave behind
My virgin comrades ?

JOC. To the host.

ANT. I blush
To mingle with the crowd.

JOC. These bashful fears
Are such as in thy present situation
Become thee not.

ANT. How can my help avail ?

JOC. Thou haply mayst appease this impious strife
Betwixt thy brothers.

ANT. Mother, by what means ?

JOC. By falling prostrate at their knees with me.

ANT. Lead on betwixt the van of either host,
This crisis will admit of no delay.

JOC. Haste, O my daughter, haste, for if my sons
I haply can prevent ere they begin
Th' accurst encounter, I shall yet behold
The blessed sun ; but if I find them slain
With them will I partake one common grave.

[*Exeunt* JOCASTA and ANTIGONE.]

CHORUS.

ODE.

I.

Ah, what boding horror throws
 Chilling damps into my breast,
 How is this whole frame opprest
 By sympathetic pity for the woes
 Of her who to those valiant youths gave birth :
 But which of her loved children twain
 His sword with kindred gore shall stain
 (Avert it, righteous Jove, and thou, O genial earth !)
 And in the strife a brother slay,
 The stroke descending through his cloven shield ?
 To whom the sad last tribute shall I pay,
 A breathless corse stretcht weltering on the field ?

II.

Woe to thee, thou Theban ground !
 Those twin lions fired with rage
 Couch their lances to engage,
 And stand prepared to aim the deadly wound.
 In evil hour the thought of single fight
 Entered their souls. While many a tear,
 Shuddering with excess of fear,
 For them I vainly shed, their dirge will I recite,
 Though in a harsh barbaric strain ;
 Their destined portion slaughter is at hand,
 Ere Phœbus sinks into the western main
 Their forfeit lives the furies shall demand.
 But I my warbled lamentations cease,
 For, with a brow by clouds of grief o'ercast,
 Creon, approaching these abodes, I view.

CREON, CHORUS.

CRE. Ah me ! shall I bewail my private woes
 Or those of Thebes surrounded by such clouds
 As Acheron exhales ! My valiant son
 Died for his country, an illustrious name

Obtaining, but to me a source of grief.
 That self-devoted victim's mangled corse
 I, from yon rock, the dragon's curst abode,
 Wretch that I am, have in these hands just borne :
 With lamentations my whole house resounds.
 I, a forlorn old man, my aged sister
 Jocasta come to fetch, that she may lave
 And on the decent bier stretch forth the corse
 Of my departed son. For it behoves
 The living, by bestowing on the dead
 Funereal honours, to adore the god
 Who rules in hell beneath.

CHOR. From these abodes,
 O Creon, is your sister just gone forth,
 And on her mother's footsteps did attend
 The nymph Antigone.

CRE. Inform me, whither,
 And to what scene of recent woe ?

CHOR. She heard
 Her sons by single combat were resolved
 Their contest for this palace to decide.

CRE. What sayst thou ? I came hither but to grace
 With due sepulchral rites my breathless son,
 Nor of these fresh disasters thought to hear.

CHOR. 'Tis a long time, O Creon, since your sister
 Went hence ; ere now I deem the fatal strife
 Betwixt the sons of Œdipus is ended.

CRE. Ah me ! an evil omen I behold
 In that deep gloom which overcasts the eyes
 And visage of yon messenger ; he comes,
 No doubt, the whole transaction to relate.

MESSENGER, CREON, CHORUS.

MES. Wretch that I am ! What language can I find ?

CRE. We are undone ; for with a luckless prelude
 Thy speech begins.

MES. I yet again exclaim,
 Ah, wretched me ! Most grievous are the tidings
 I bring.

CRE. Of any farther ills than those
Which have already happened, wouldst thou speak

MES. Your sister's sons, O Creon, are no more.

CRE. Great are the woes, alas ! which thou relat'st,
To me and to this city.

MES. Hast thou heard,
O house of *Ædipus*, how both his sons
Partook one common fate ?

CHOR. These very walls,
Were they endued with sense, would shed a tear.

CRE. Oh, what a load of misery ! wretched me !

MES. Did you but know of your fresh ills—

CRE. Could fate
Have any ills more grievous in reserve ?

MES. With her two sons your wretched sister's dead.

CHOR. In concert wake, my friends, the plaintive strain,
And smite your heads with those uplifted hands.

CRE. Hapless *Jocasta*, what a close of life
And wedlock, through th' enigma of the Sphinx,
Hast thou experienced ! But how both her sons
Were slain in that dire contest, through the curses
Pronounced by *Ædipus* their injured sire,
Inform me.

MES. How *Thebes* triumphed o'er th' assailants,
And her beleaguered turrets saved, you know ;
Nor are the walls so distant, but from thence
Ere now those great events you must have heard.
Soon as in brazen panoply the sons
Of aged *Ædipus* were clad, they stood
In the midway 'twixt either host, kings both,
Of mighty hosts both chieftains, to decide
This strife in single combat. Then his eyes
Towards *Argos* turning, *Polynices* prayed :
“ O *Juno*, awful queen, for I became
Thy votary since the daughter of *Adrastus*
I wedded, and in his dominions found
A habitation, grant that I may slay
My brother, and with kindred gore distain
In the dire conflict this victorious arm ;

For an unseemly wreath, nor to be gained
Unless I take away the life of him
Who springs from the same parents, I to thee
My vows address." Tears burst forth, in a stream
Equal to the calamity they wailed,
From multitudes, who on each other gazed.
Eteocles, then turning to the fane
Of Pallas, goddess of the golden shield,
Exclaimed : " O daughter of imperial Jove,
Grant me with vigorous arm a conquering spear
To hurl against my brother's breast, and smite
The man who comes to lay my country waste."
But when Etruria's trumpet with shrill voice
Had, like the kindled torch, a signal given
The combat to begin, with dreadful rage
Against each other rushing, like two boars
Whetting their ruthless tusks, they fought till foam
O'erspread their cheeks ; with pointed spears they made
A furious onset ; but each warrior stooped
Behind his brazen target, and the weapon
Was aimed in vain ; whene'er above the rim
Of his huge buckler either chief beheld
The face of his antagonist, he strove
To pierce it with his spear ; but through the holes
Bored in the centre of their shields they both
With caution looked, nor could inflict a wound
By the protended javelin. A cold sweat,
Through terror for the safety of their friends,
From every pore of those who viewed the fight,
Far more than from the combatants, arose.
But, stumbling on a stone beneath his feet,
Eteocles had chanced to leave one leg
Unguarded by his shield ; then onward rushed
Fierce Polynices with his lifted spear,
And marking where he at the part exposed
Most surely might direct the stroke, his ankle
Pierced with an Argive weapon, while the race
Of Danaus gave a universal shout.
But in this struggle, when the chief who first

The weight of her afflictions to sustain,
 She from the corpses of her sons snatched up
 A sword, and an atrocious deed performed ;
 For through her neck the pointed steel she drove,
 And lies in death 'twixt those she held most dear,
 E'en now embracing both. A strife of words
 Broke forth in the two armies : we maintained
 The triumph to our king belonged, but they
 To his antagonist. Amid the chiefs
 A vehement contention rose ; some urged
 That Polynices' spear first gave the wound ;
 Others, that since both combatants were slain
 The victory still was dubious. From the lines
 Of battle now Antigone retired ;
 They rushed to arms ; but with auspicious forethought
 The progeny of Cadmus had not thrown
 Their shields aside : we in an instant made
 A fierce assault, invading by surprise
 The host of Argos yet unsheathed in mail ;
 Not one withstood the shock, they o'er the field
 In a tumultuous flight were scattered wide :
 Gore streamed from many a corse of those who fell
 Beneath our spears. No sooner had we gained
 A victory in the combat, than some reared
 The statue of imperial Jove, adorned
 With trophies : others, stripping off the shields
 Of the slain Argives, lodged within the walls
 Our plunder : with Antigone, the rest
 Bring hither the remains of the deceased, *
 That o'er them every friend may shed a tear,
 For to the city hath this conflict proved
 In part the most auspicious, but in part
 The source of grievous ills.

CHOR. By fame alone
 No longer are the miseries which this house
 Have visited made public ; at the gates
 Are the three corpses to be seen of those
 Who, by one common death, have in the shades
 Of everlasting night their portion found.

ANTIGONE, CREON, CHORUS.

ANT. The wavy ringlets o'er my tender cheeks
I cease to spread, regardless of the blush
Which tinges with a crimson hue the face
Of virgins. Onward am I borne with speed
Like the distracted Mænades, not busied
In Bacchus' rites, but Pluto's, from my hair
Rending the golden caul, and casting off
The saffron robe ; o'er the funeral pomp
(Ah me !) presiding. Well hast thou deserved
Thy name, O Polynices (wretched Thebes !),
For thine was not a vulgar strife, but murder
Retaliated by murder hath destroyed
The house of Œdipus ; the source whence streamed
Fraternal gore was parricide. But whom
Shall I invoke to lead the tuneful dirge,
Or in what plaints, taught by the tragic Muse,
Solicit yonder vaulted roofs to join
With me in tears, while hither I conduct
Three kindred corses smeared with gore, to add
Fresh triumphs to that fury who marked out
For total ruin the devoted house
Of thee, O Œdipus, whose luckless skill
That intricate enigma did unfold,
And slay the Sphinx who chanted it ? My sire,
What Grecian, what Barbarian, or what chief
In ancient days illustrious, who that sprung
From human race, hath e'er endured such ills
As thou hast done, such public griefs endured ?
Seated upon the topmost spray of oak,
Of branching pine, the bird, who just lost
Its mother, wakes a sympathetic song
Of plaints and anguish : thus o'er the deceased
Lamenting, I in solitude shall waste
The remnant of my life 'midst gushing tears.
O'er whom shall I first cast the tresses rent
From these disfigured brows, upon the breasts
Of her who with maternal love sustained

My childhood, or my brothers' ghastly wounds?
 Ho ! Œdipus, come forth from thy abode—
 Blind as thou art, my aged sire, display
 Thy wretchedness. O thou who, having veiled
 With thickest darkness those extinguished eyes,
 Beneath yon roof a tedious life prolong'st :
 Hear'st thou my voice, O thou, who through the hall
 Oft mov'st at random, and as oft reliev'st
 Thy wearied feet on the unwelcome couch ?

ŒDIPUS, ANTIGONE, CREON, CHORUS.

ŒD. Why, O my daughter, hast thou called me forth,
 A wretch, who by this faithful staff supply
 The want of sight, to the loathed glare of day,
 From a dark chamber, where I to my bed
 Have been confined, through those incessant tears
 My woes extort, grown grey before my time,
 And wasted by affliction, till I seem
 As unsubstantial as the ambient air,
 A spectre rising from the realms beneath,
 Or wingéd dream ?

ANT. Prepare thyself to hear
 The inauspicious tidings I relate :
 Thy sons, thy consort too, the faithful staff
 Of thy blind footsteps and their constant guide,
 No longer view the sun. Alas, my sire !

ŒD. Ah me ! The woes I suffer call forth groans
 And shrieks abundant : but inform me how
 These three, O daughter, left the realms of light.

ANT. Not to reproach thee, or insult thy woes,
 My father, but in sadness do I speak ;
 Thy evil genius, laden with the sword,
 With blazing torches and with impious war,
 Rushed on thy sons.

ŒD. Ah me !

ANT. Why groan'st thou thus ?

ŒD. For my dear sons.

ANT. 'Twould aggravate thy griefs,
 If thou with eyesight wert again endued,

The chariot of the sun, and these remains
Of the deceased, to view.

ED How both my sons
Have lost their lives is evident: but say,
To what my consort owes her piteous fate?

ANT. Her tears were seen by all; her breasts she bared

A suppliant to her sons, whom, near the gate
Electra, in the mead she found where springs
The lotus ; like two lions for a den
With spears had they been fighting : from their wounds,
Now stiff and cold, scarce oozed the clotted gore,
Which Mars for a libation had bestowed
On ruthless Pluto : snatching from the dead
A brazen sword, she plunged it in her breast :
Slain by the luckiess weapon of her sons,
Close to her sons thus fell she. On this day
The god who wrought such horrors, O my sire,
Hath poured forth his collected stores of wrath
On this devoted house.

CHOR. This day hath proved
A source of many evils to the house
Of Oedipus ; may more auspicious fates
On the remainder of his life attend !

CRE. Your lamentations cease, for it is time
To mention the interment of the dead.
But to my words, O Œdipus, attend :
Eteocles thy son hath to these hands
Consigned the sceptre of the Theban realm,
On Hæmon, at his nuptials with thy daughter
Antigone, to be bestowed in dower :
I for this cause no longer can allow thee
Here to reside : for in the clearest terms
Tiresias has pronounced that, while thou dwell'st
In these domains, Thebes never can be blest.
Therefore depart. Nor through a wanton pride,
Nor any hate I bear thee, do I hold
Such language, but because I justly dread
Thy evil genius will destroy this land.

ÆD. How wretched from the moment of my birth
Me hast thou made, O fate, if ever man
Knew misery : ere I from my mother's womb
Was to the light brought forth, Apollo warned
The royal Laius with prophetic voice,
'That I, his future child, who 'gainst the will
Of Heaven had been begotten, should become
The murderer of my father. Wretched me !
But soon as I was born he who begot
Sought to destroy me, for in me a foe
He deemed would view the sun : but 'twas ordained
That I should slay him. While I yet was loth
To quit the breast, he sent me for a prey
To savage beasts ; I 'scaped : but would to Heaven
Cithæron had, for saving me, been plunged
Into the fathomless and yawning gulf
Of Tartarus ! Fortune gave me for a servant
To Polybus. But having slain my sire,
Wretch that I am, my hapless mother's bed
Ascending, thence did I at once beget
Both sons and brothers : them have I destroyed
By showering down on my devoted race
The curses I inherited from Laius.
Yet was not I by nature made so void
Of understanding as to form a plot
'Gainst my own eyesight or my children's lives,
Unless some god had interfered. No more.
What shall I do ? Ah me ! what faithful guide
My feet, through blindness tottering, will attend ?
Jocasta the deceased ? While yet she lived,
I know she would. Or my two noble sons ?
They are no more. Have not I youth still left
Sufficient to find means to gain me food ?
But where shall I procure it ? Or why thus,
O Creon, do you utterly destroy me ?
For you will take away my poor remains
Of life, if you expel me from this land.
Yet will not I, by twining round your knees
These arms, put on the semblance of a dastard :

For the renown I gained in days of yore,
Though miserable, I never will belie.

CRE. Thou with a manly spirit hast refused
To clasp my knees ; but in the Theban realm
No longer can I suffer thee to dwell.
Of the deceased, the one into the palace
Must be conveyed ; but as for him who came
With foreign troops to lay his country waste,
The corse of Polynices, cast it forth
Unburied from the confines of this land.
This edict, by a herald, to all Thebes
Will I announce ; whoe'er shall be detected
Adorning with a garland his remains,
Or o'er them scattering earth, shall be with death
Requited : for, unwept and uninterred,
He for a prey to vultures must be left.
No longer, O Antigone, lament
O'er these three breathless corses, but with speed
To your apartment go, and there remain
Amidst your virgin comrades till to-morrow,
When Hæmon's bed awaits you.

ANT. O my sire,
Into what hopeless misery art thou plunged !
For thee far more than for the dead I moan ;
Thou hast not aught to make thy weight of woe
Less grievous : the afflictions thou endur'st
Are universal. But, O thou new king,
Of thee I ask, why dost thou treat my father
With scorn, why banish him from Thebes, why frame
Harsh laws against a wretched corse ?

CRE. Such counsels
Were by Eteocles, not me, devised.

ANT. Devoid of sense are they ; thou, too, art frantic,
Who these decrees obey'st.

CRE. Is it not just
To execute th' injunctions we receive ?

ANT. No, not if they are base and ill-advised.

CRE. What mean you ? Can it be unjust to cast
His body to the dogs ?

- ANT. A lawless vengeance
Is this which ye exact.
- CRE. Because he waged
An impious war against his native city.
- ANT. Hath not he yielded up his life to fate?
- CRE. He shall be punished also in the loss
Of sepulture.
- ANT. Wherein, if he required
His portion of the realm, did he transgress?
- CRE. Know then he shall remain without a grave.
- ANT. I will inter him, though the state forbid.
- CRE. You shall be buried with him.
- ANT. For two friends
'Twere glorious in their death to be united.
- CRE. Seize and convey her home.
- ANT. I will not loose
My hold, nor shall ye tear me from his body.
- CRE. O virgin, the decrees of fate are such
As thwart your wayward views.
- ANT. It is decreed,
No insults shall be offered to the dead.
- CRE. Over this corse let none presume to strew
The moistened dust.
- ANT. Thee, Creon, I implore
By my loved mother, by Jocasta's shade.
- CRE. In vain are your entreaties : such request
I cannot grant.
- ANT. But suffer me to lave
The body—
- CRE. I this interdict must add
To those which through the city are proclaimed.
- ANT. And close with bandages his gaping wounds.
- CRE. To his remains no honours shall you pay.
- ANT. Yet, O my dearest brother, on thy lips
This kiss will I imprint.
- CRE. Nor by these plaints
Make your espousals wretched.
- ANT. Dar'st thou think
That I will ever live to wed thy son?

CRE. You by necessity's superior force
Will be constrained. For how can you escape
The nuptial bond ?

ANT. I on that night will act
Like one of Danaus' daughters.

CRE. Marked ye not
How boldly, with what arrogance she spoke ?

ANT. Bear witness, O my dagger, to the oath.

CRE. Why from this wedlock wish you to be freed ?

ANT. My miserable father in his flight
I will attend.

CRE. A generous soul is yours,
Abundant folly too.

ANT. I am resolved
To share his death ; of that, too, be assured.

CRE. Go, leave this realm ; you shall not slay my son.

[Exit CREON.]

ÆD. Thee, for thy zeal, my daughter, I applaud.

ANT. How can I wed, while you my father roam
A solitary exile ?

ÆD. To enjoy
Thy better fortunes, stay thou here : my woes
I will endure with patience.

ANT. Who, my sire,
Shall minister to you deprived of sight ?

ÆD. I, in whatever field the fates ordain
That I shall fall, must lie.

ANT. Where's Œdipus,
And that famed riddle ?

ÆD. Lost, for ever lost :
My prosperous fortunes from one single day,
And from one day my ruin I derive.

ANT. May not I also be allowed to take
A part in your afflictions ?

ÆD. 'Twere unseemly
For thee, my daughter, from this land to roam
With thy blind father.

ANT. To a virtuous maid
Not base, my sire, but noble.

ANT. I am indeed of all the Theban maids
The most unhappy.

ÆD. My decrepit feet
Where shall I place? O daughter, with a staff
Furnish this hand.

ANT. Come hither, O my sire.
Here rest your feet: for, like an empty dream,
Your strength is but mere semblance.

ÆD. Grievous exile.
A weak old man, he from his native land
Drives forth. My sufferings are, alas! most dreadful.

ANT. What is there in the sufferings you complain of
Peculiarly distressful? Doth not justice
Behold the sinner, and with penal strictness
Each foolish action of mankind repay?

ÆD. Still am I he whom the victorious Muse
Exalted to the skies when I explained
The dark enigma by that fiend proposed.

ANT. Why speak of the renown which you obtained
When you o'ercame the Sphinx? Cease to recount
Past happiness. For, O my sire, this curse
Awaited you, an exile from your country
To die we know not where. My virgin comrades
Leaving to wail my absence, I depart,
Far from my native land ordained to roam
Unlike a bashful maid.

ÆD. How is thy soul
With matchless generosity endued!

ANT. Such conduct 'midst my father's woes shall
make

My name illustrious. Yet am I unhappy
Through the foul scorn with which they treat my brother,
Whose weltering corse without these gates is thrown
Unburied. His remains, ill-fated youth,
Though death should be the punishment, with earth
I privately will cover, O my sire.

ÆD. Go join thy comrades.

ANT. With loud complaints enough
Have I assailed the ear of every friend.

ÆD. But at the altars thou must offer up
Thy supplications.

ANT. They with my distress
Are satiated.

ÆD. To Bacchus' temple then
Repair, on that steep mountain where no step
Profane invades his orgies, chosen haunt
Of his own Mænades.

ANT. Erst in the hides
Of Theban stags arrayed, I on these hills
Joined in the dance of Semele, bestowing
A homage they approved not on the gods.

ÆD. Illustrious citizens of Thebes, behold
That Œdipus, who the enigma solved—
The first of men when I had singly quelled
The Sphinx's ruthless power, but now o'erwhelmed
With infamy, I from this land am driven
A miserable exile. But why groan,
Why utter fruitless plaints? For man is bound
To bear the doom which righteous Heaven awards.

CHOR. O venerable victory, take possession
Of my whole life, nor ever cease to twine
Around these brows thy laureate wreath divine.

THE SUPPLIANTS.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

ÆTHRA.	EVADNE.
CHORUS OF ARGIVE MATRONS.	IPHIS.
THESEUS.	A BOY, <i>supposed to be</i> MELOX, <i>the</i>
ADRASTUS.	<i>son of</i> ETEOCLUS.
HERALD.	MINERVA.
MESSENGER.	

SCENE—THE TEMPLE OF CERES, AT ELEUSINE, IN THE
ATHENIAN TERRITORY.

ÆTHRA, CHORUS, ADRASTUS.

ÆT. Thou guardian power of Eleusine's land,
O Ceres, and ye venerable priests
Of that benignant goddess, who attend
This temple, blessings for myself I crave,
For my son Theseus, Athens, and the realm
Of Pitheus, who, when his paternal care
Had reared my childhood in a wealthy house,
Gave me to Ægeus, to Pandion's son ;
So Phœbus' oracles decreed. These prayers
I offered up when I yon aged matrons
Beheld, who their abodes at Argos leave,
And with their suppliant branches at my knees
Fall prostrate, having suffered dreadful woes :
Now are they childless ; for before the gates
Of Thebes were slain their seven illustrious sons,
Whom erst Adrastus, King of Argos, led
To battle, when for exiled Polynices,

His son-in-law, he strove to gain a share
 Of Œdipus' inheritance. The corpses
 Of those who by the hostile spear were slain
 Their mothers would consign to earth ; but, spurning
 The laws which righteous Heaven ordained, the victors
 Will not allow them to remove the dead.
 But needing equally with them my succour
 Adrastus, shedding many a tear, lies stretched
 On earth, bewailing the disastrous fate
 Of those brave troops whom he to battle led.
 Oft he conjures me to implore my son,
 Either by treaty, or his forceful spear,
 Back from those hostile fields to bring the slain
 And lodge them in a tomb: on him alone
 And Athens he this honourable task
 Imposes. Hither were the victims borne,
 That we a prosperous tillage may obtain,
 And for this cause I from my house am come
 Into this temple, where the bearded grain
 First rising from the fruitful soil appeared.
 Holding loose sprays of foliage in my hand,
 I wait before the unpolluted altars
 Of Proserpine and Ceres ; for these mothers,
 Grown hoar with age and of their children reft,
 With pity moved, and to the sacred branches
 Yielding a due respect. I to the city
 Have sent a herald to call Theseus hither,
 That from the Theban land he may remove
 The causes of their sorrow, or the gods
 Appeasing by some pious rites, release me
 From the constraint these suppliant dames impose.
 In all emergencies discretion bids
 Our feeble sex to seek man's needful aid.

CHOR. An aged woman prostrate at thy knees,
 Thee I implore my children to redeem,
 Who welter on a foreign plain, unnerved
 By death and to the savage beasts a prey :
 Thou seest the piteous tears which from these eyes
 Unbidden start, and torn with desperate hands

My wrinkled flesh. What hope remains for me,
 Who neither, at my home, have been allowed
 The corses of my children to stretch forth,
 Nor, heaped with earth, behold their tombs arise?
 Thou, too, illustrious dame, hast borne a son
 Crowning the utmost wishes of thy lord,
 Speak, therefore, what thou think'st of our distress,
 In language suited to the griefs I feel
 For the deceased whom I brought forth; persuade
 Thy son, whose succour we implore, to march
 Across Ismenos' channel, and consign
 To me the bodies of the slaughtered youths,
 That I beneath the monumental stone
 May bury them with every sacred rite.
 Though not by mere necessity constrained,
 We at thy knees fall down and urge our suit
 Before these altars of the gods, where smokes
 The frequent incense: for our cause is just:
 And through the prosperous fortunes of thy son,
 With power sufficient to remove our woes
 Art thou endued: but since the ills I suffer
 Thy pity claim, a miserable suppliant,
 I crave that to these arms thou wouldst restore
 My son, and grant me to embrace his corse.

ODE.

I.

ÆT. Here a fresh group of mourners stands,
 Your followers in succession wring their hands.

CHOR. Attune expressive notes of anguish,
 O ye sympathetic choir,
 And in harmonious accents languish,
 Such as Pluto loves t' inspire.

Tear those cheeks of pallid hue,
 And let gore your bosoms stain,
 For from the living is such honour due
 To the shades of heroes slain,
 Whose corses welter on th' embattled plain.

II.

I feel a pleasing sad relief,
 Unsated as I brood o'er scenes of grief;
 My lamentations, never ending,
 Are like the moisture of the sea
 In drops from some high rock descending,
 Which flows to all eternity.
 For those youths who breathe no more
 Nature bids the mother weep,
 And with incessant tears their loss deplore :
 In oblivion would I steep
 My woes, and welcome death's perpetual sleep.

THESEUS. ÆTHRA, ADRASTUS, CHORUS.

THE. What plaints are these I hear? Who strike their
 breasts

Attuning lamentations for the dead
 In such loud notes as issue from the fane?
 Borne hither by my fears with wingéd speed,
 I come to see if any recent ill
 May have befallen my mother; she from home
 Hath long been absent. Ha! what objects new
 And strange are these which now mine eyes behold?
 Fresh questions hence arise: my aged mother
 Close to the altar seated with a band
 Of foreign matrons, who their woes express
 In various warbled notes, and on the ground,
 Shed from their venerable eyes a stream
 Of tears: their heads are shorn, nor is their garb
 Suited to those who tend the sacred rites?
 What means all this? My mother, say; from you
 I wait for information, and expect
 Some tidings of importance.

ÆT.

O my son,

These are the mothers of those seven famed chiefs
 Who perished at the gates of Thebes: you see
 How they with suppliant branches on all sides
 Encompass me.

THE. But who is he who groans
So piteously, stretched forth before the gate?

ÆT. Adrastus, they inform me, king of Argos.

THE. Are they who stand around those matrons' sons?

ÆT. Not theirs; they are the children of the slain.

THE. Why with those suppliant tokens in their hands
Come they to us?

ÆT. I know; but it behoves
Them, O my son, their errand to unfold.

THE. To thee who in a fleecy cloak art wrapped,
My questions I address: thy head unveil,
Cease to lament, and speak; for while thy tongue
Utters no accent nought canst thou obtain.

ADR. O king of the Athenian land, renowned
For your victorious arms, to you, O Theseus,
And to your city, I a suppliant come.

THE. What's thy pursuit, and what is it thou need'st?

ADR. Know you not how ill-fated was the host
I led?

THE. Thou didst not pass through Greece in silence.

ADR. The noblest youths of Argos there I lost.

THE. Such dire effects from luckless war arise.

ADR. From Thebes I claimed the bodies of the slain.

THE. Didst thou rely on heralds to procure
Leave to inter the dead?

ADR. But they who slew them
Deny this favour.

THE. What can they allege
'Gainst a request which justice must approve?

ADR. Ask not the reason: they are now elate
With a success they know not how to bear.

THE. Art thou come hither to consult me then,
Or on what errand?

ADR. 'Tis my wish, O Theseus,
That you the sons of Argos would redeem.

THE. But where is Argos now? Were all her boasts
Of no effect?

ADR. We by this one defeat
Are ruined, and to you for succour come.

THE. This on thy private judgment, or the voice
Of the whole city ?

ADR. All the race of Danaus
Implore you to inter the slain.

THE. Why led'st thou
'Gainst Thebes seven squadrons ?

ADR. To confer a favour
On my two sons-in-law.

THE. To what brave chiefs
Of Argos didst thou give thy daughters' hands ?

ADR. My family in wedlock I with those
Of our own nation joined not.

THE. Didst thou yield
Those Argive damsels to some foreign bridegrooms ?

ADR. To Tydeus, and to Polynices, sprung
From Theban sires.

THE. What dotage could induce thee
To form alliances like these ?

ADR. Dark riddles
Phœbus propounded, which my judgment swayed.

THE. Such union for the virgins to prescribe,
What said Apollo ?

ADR. That I must bestow
My daughters on the lion and the boar.

THE. But how didst thou interpret this response
Of the prophetic god ?

ADR. By night two exiles
Came to my door.

THE. Say, who and who ; thou speak'st
Of both at once.

ADR. Together Tydeus fought
And Polynices.

THE. Hence didst thou on them
As on ferocious beasts bestow thy daughters ?

ADR. Their combat that of savages I deemed.

THE. Why did they leave their native land ?

ADR. Thence fled
Tydeus polluted with his brother's gore.

THE. But why did Œdipus' son forsake
The Theban realm ?

ADR. The curses of his sire
Thence drove him, lest his brother he should slay.

THE. A prudent cause for this spontaneous exile
Hast thou assigned.

ADR. But they who stayed at home
Oppressed the absent.

THE. Did his brother rob him
Of the inheritance?

ADR. I to decide
This contest went, and hence am I undone.

THE. Didst thou consult the seers, and from the altar
Behold the flames of sacrifice ascend?

ADR. Alas ! you urge me on that very point
Where most I failed.

THE. Thou led'st thy troops, it seems,
Although the gods approved not, to the field.

ADR. Yet more, Amphiareus opposed our march.

THE. Didst thou thus lightly thwart the will of
Heaven?

ADR. I by the clamorous zeal of younger men
Was hurried on.

THE. Regardless of discretion,
Thy courage thou didst follow.

ADR. Many a chief
Hath such misconduct utterly destroyed.
But O most dauntless of the Grecian race,
Monarch of the Athenian realm ; I blush,
Thus prostrate on the ground, to clasp your knees,
Grown grey with age, and once a happy king !
But I to my calamities must yield.

Redeem the dead, in pity to my woes,
And to these mothers of their sons bereft,
To whom the burdens which on hoary age
Attend are added to their childless state.
Yet hither they endured to come, and tread
A foreign soil, though their decrepit feet
Could hardly move : the embassy they bring
Hath no connection with the mystic rites
Of Ceres ; all they crave is to inter
The slain, as they at their mature decease

Would from their sons such honours have obtained.
 'Tis wisdom in the opulent to look
 With pity on the sorrows of the poor,
 And in the poor man to look up to those
 Who have abundant riches, as examples
 For him to imitate, and thence acquire
 A wish his own possessions to improve.
 They too who are with prosperous fortunes blest
 Should feel a prudent dread of future woes ;
 And let the bard who frames the harmonious strain
 Exert his genius in a cheerful hour,
 For if his own sensations are unlike
 Those which he speaks of, never can the wretch
 Who by affliction is at home opprest
 Give joy to others : there's no ground for this.
 But you perhaps will ask me : " Passing o'er
 The land of Pelops, why would you impose
 Such toil on the Athenians ? " This reply
 Have I a right to make : " The Spartan realm
 Is prone to cruelty, and in its manners
 Too variable ; its other states are small
 And destitute of strength ; your city only
 To this emprise is equal, for 'tis wont
 To pity the distressed, and hath in you
 A valiant king ; for want of such a chief
 Have many cities perished."

CHOR. I address thee
 In the same language ; to our woes, O Theseus,
 Extend thy pity.

THE. I with others erst
 Have on this subject held a strong dispute ;
 For some there are who say the ills which wait
 On man exceed his joys ; but I maintain
 The contrary opinion, that our lives
 More bliss than woe experience. For if this
 Were not the fact, we could not still continue
 To view the sun. That god, whoe'er he was,
 I praise, who severed mortals from a life
 Of wild confusion and of brutal force,

Implanting reason first, and then a tongue
That might by sounds articulate proclaim
Our thoughts, bestowing fruit for food, and drops
Of rain descending from the skies, to nourish
Earth's products and refresh the thirst of man,
Yet more, fit coverings, from the wintry cold
To guard us, and Hyperion's scorching rays ;
The art of sailing o'er the briny deep,
That we by commerce may supply the wants
Of distant regions, to these gifts by Heaven
Is added ; things the most obscure, and placed
Beyond our knowledge, can the seer foretell,
By gazing on the flames which from the altar
Ascend the skies, the entrails of the victims,
And flight of birds. Are we not then puffed up
With vanity, if, when the gods bestow
Conveniences like these on life, we deem
Their bounty insufficient ? Our conceit
Is such, we aim to be more strong than Jove :
Though pride of soul be all that we possess,
We in our own opinion are more wise
Than th' immortal powers. To me thou seem'st
One of this number, O thou wretch devoid
Of reason, to Apollo's mystic voice
Yielding blind deference, who thy daughters gav'st
To foreign lords, as if the gods were swayed
By human passions. Thy illustrious blood
With foul pollution mingling, thine own house
Thus hast thou wounded. Never should the wise
In leagues of inauspicious wedlock yoke
Just and unjust : but prosperous friends obtain
Against the hour of danger. Jove, to all
One common fate dispensing, oft involves
In the calamities which guilt draws down
Upon the sinner him who ne'er transgressed.
But thou, by leading forth that Argive host
To battle, though the seers in vain forbade,
Despising each oracular response,
And wilfully regardless of the gods,

Hast caused thy country's ruin, overruled
By those young men who place their sole delight
In glory, and promote unrighteous wars,
Corrupting a whole city; this aspires
To the command of armies, by the pomp
Attending those who hold the reins of power
A second is corrupted; some there are
Studious of filthy lucre, who regard not
What mischief to the public may ensue.
Three ranks there are of citizens: the rich,
Useless, and ever grasping after more;
While they, who have no property, and lack
E'en necessary food, by fierce despair
And envy actuated, send forth their stings
Against the wealthy, by th' insidious tongue
Of some malignant demagogue beguiled;
But of these three the middle rank consists
Of those who save their country, and enforce
Each wholesome usage which the state ordains.
Shall I then be thy champion? What pretence
That would sound honourably can I allege
To gain my countrymen? Depart in peace!
For baleful are the counsels thou hast given
That we should urge prosperity too far.

CHOR. He did amiss: but the great error rests
On those young men, and he deserves thy pardon.

ADR. I have not chosen you to be the judge
Of my afflictions, but to you, O king,
As a physician come: nor, if convicted
Of having done amiss, to an avenger
Or an opprobrious censor, but a friend
Who will afford his help: if you refuse
To act this generous part, to your decision
I must submit: for what resource have I?
But, O ye venerable dames, retire,
Leaving those verdant branches here behind,
And call to witness the celestial powers,
The fruitful earth with Ceres lifting high
Her torch, and that exhaustless source of light,

The sun, that we by all the gods in vain
 Conjured you. (It is pious to relieve
 Those who unjustly suffer, and the tears
 Of these your hapless kindred are you bound
 To reverence, for your mother was the daughter
 Of Pitheus.) Pelops' son, born in that land
 Which bears the name of Pelops, we partake
 One origin with you : will you betray
 These sacred ties, and from your realm cast forth
 Yon hoary suppliants, nor allow the boon
 Which at your hands they merit ? Act not thus ;
 For in the rocks hath the wild beast a place
 Of refuge, in the altars of the gods
 The slave : a city harassed by the storm
 Flies to some neighbouring city : for there's nought
 On earth that meets with everlasting bliss.

CHOR. Rise, hapless woman, from this hallowed fane
 Of Proserpine, to meet him ; clasp his knees,
 Entreat him to bestow funereal rites
 On our slain sons, whom in the bloom of youth
 Beneath the walls of Thebes I lost : my friends
 Lift from the ground, support me, bear along,
 Stretch forth these miserable, these aged hands.
 Thee, O thou most beloved and most renowned
 Of Grecian chiefs, I by that beard conjure,
 While at thy knees, thus prostrate on the ground,
 I for my sons, a wretched suppliant sue,
 Or, like some helpless vagabond, pour forth
 The warbled lamentation. Generous youth,
 Thee I entreat ; let not my sons, whose age
 Was but the same as thine, in Thebes remain
 Unburied, for the sport of savage beasts !
 Behold what tears stream from these swimming eyes,
 As thus I kneel before thee, to procure
 For my slain sons an honourable grave.

THE. Why, O my mother, do you shed the tear,
 Covering your eyes with that transparent veil ?
 Is it because you heard their plaints ? I too
 Am much affected. Raise your hoary head,

Nor weep while seated at the holy altar
Of Ceres.

ÆT. Ah !

THE. You ought not thus to groan
For their afflictions.

ÆT. O ye wretched dames !

THE. You are not one of them.

ÆT. Shall I propose
A scheme, my son, your glory to increase,
And that of Athens ?

THE. Wisdom oft hath flowed
From female lips.

ÆT. I meditated words
Of such importance, that they make me pause.

THE. You speak amiss, we from our friends should hide
Nought that is useful.

ÆT. If I now were mute
Myself hereafter might I justly blame
For keeping a dishonourable silence,
Nor through the fear lest eloquence should prove
Of no effect, when issuing from the mouth
Of a weak woman, will I thus forego
An honourable task. My son, I first
Exhort you to regard the will of Heaven,
Lest through neglect you err, else will you fail
In this one point, though you in all beside
Think rightly. I moreover still had kept
My temper calm, if to redress the wrongs
Which they endure an enterprising soul
Had not been requisite. But now, my son,
A field of glory opens to your view,
Nor these bold counsels scruple I to urge
That by your conquering arm you would compel
Those men of violence, who from the slain
Withhold their just inheritance a tomb,
Such necessary duty to perform,
And quell those impious miscreants who confound
The usages established through all Greece :
For the firm bond which peopled cities holds

THE. He hath deserved,
O mother, the severe reproofs which flowed
From my indignant tongue, and I my thoughts
Of those pernicious counsels whence arose
His ruin have expressed. Yet I perceive
What you suggest, that ill would it become
The character I have maintained to fly
From danger. After many glorious deeds
Achieved among the Greeks, I chose this office,
An exemplary punishment t' inflict
On all the wicked. Therefore from no toils
Can I shrink back, for what would those who hate me
Have to allege, when you who gave me birth,

And tremble for my safety, are the first
 Who bid me enter on the bold emprise?
 I on this errand go, and will redeem
 The dead by words persuasive, or, if words
 Are ineffectual, with protended spear,
 And in an instant, if the envious gods
 Refuse not their assistance. But I wish
 That the whole city may a sanction give:
 They to my pleasure their assent would yield;
 But to the scheme, if I propose it first
 To be debated, I shall find the people
 More favourable: for them I made supreme,
 And on this city, with an equal right
 For all to vote, its freedom have bestowed.
 Taking Adrastus with me for a proof
 Of my assertions, 'midst the crowd I'll go,
 And when I have persuaded them, collecting
 A chosen squadron of Athenian youths,
 Hither return, and, halting under arms,
 To Creon send a message to request
 The bodies of the slain. But from my mother,
 Ye aged dames, those holy boughs remove,
 That I may take her by that much-loved hand,
 And to the royal dome of Ægeus lead.
 Vile is that son who to his parents yields
 No grateful services, for from his children
 He who such glorious tribute pays receives
 Whate'er through filial duty he bestowed.

CHORUS.

ODE.

I. 1.

O Argos, famed for steeds, my native plain,
 Sure thou, with all Pelasgia's wide domain,
 Hast heard the king's benevolent design,
 And wilt in grateful strains revere the powers divine.

I. 2.

May Theseus put an end to all my woes,
 Rescuing those bloody corpses from our foes

Still objects of maternal love ; his aid
Shall by th' Inachian realm's attachment be repaid.

II. 1.

To pious deeds belongs a mighty name,
And cities saved procure eternal fame.
Will he do this—with us in friendship join,
And to the peaceful tomb our slaughtered sons consign ?

II. 2.

Minerva's town, support a mother's cause,
Thou from pollution canst preserve the laws
Which man holds sacred, thou rever'st the right,
Sett'st the afflicted free, and quell'st outrageous might.

THESEUS, ADRASTUS, CHORUS.

THE. [*to a HERALD.*] Thou, always practising this art,
has served

Thy city, and to various regions borne
My embassies : when, therefore, thou hast crossed
Asopus, and Ismenos' stream, address
The Theban monarch in these courteous words :
“ Theseus, who dwells in an adjacent realm,
And hath a right such favour to receive,
Requests you as a friend t' inter the dead,
And gain the love of all Erectheus' race : ”
To this petition if they yield assent,
Come back again in peace : if they refuse,
Thy second message shall be this : “ My band
Of chosen youths in glittering mail arrayed
They must expect : for at the sacred fount
Callichore e'en now the assembled host
Halts under arms, prepared for instant fight.”
For in this arduous enterprise, with zeal
The city of its own accord engaged,
When they perceived my wish. But who intrudes
E'en while I am yet speaking ? He appears
To be a Theban herald, though I doubt it.
Stay ; for thy errand he may supersede,
And by his coming obviate my designs.

THEBAN HERALD, THESEUS, ADRASTUS, CHORUS.

THE. HER. Who is the sovereign ruler of this land ?
To whom must I unfold the message sent
By Creon, who presides o'er the domains
Of Cadmus, since before Thebes' sevenfold gates,
Slain by his brother Polynices' hand,
Eteocles expired ?

THE. With an untruth
Thy speech, O stranger, hast thou oped by asking
For a king here : for Athens, this free city,
By no one man is governed, but the people
Rule in succession year by year ; to wealth
No preference is allowed, but the poor man
An equal share of empire doth possess.

THE. HER. By yielding up this point, to me you
grant

Advantage such as equals the first throw
At dice : the city whence I came is ruled
By one man only, not by multitudes ;
No crafty orator with specious words
For his own interest turns the wavering minds
Of its inhabitants, this moment dear
To all around and lavish of his favours,
The next a public bane, yet he conceals
By some fresh calumny his errors past,
And 'scapes the stroke of justice. How can they
Who no sound judgments form, the people, guide
A city well ? For time instead of haste
Affords the best instructions. But the man
Who tills the ground, by poverty deprest,
If to that poverty he add the want
Of due experience, through the manual toils
He is engaged in, to the public good
Can ne'er look up. Those too of noble birth
Are much disgusted when the worthless hold
Posts of the highest rank, and he who erst
Was nothing with his tongue beguiles the crowd.

THE. This witty herald to his message adds

The flowers of eloquence. But on this strife
Since thou hast entered, hear me ; for 'twas thou
That gav'st the challenge to debate. No curse
Is greater to a city than a king.
For first, where'er no laws exist which bind
The whole community, and one man rules,
Upon his arbitrary will alone
Depend the laws, and all thy rights are lost.
But under written laws the poor and rich
An equal justice find ; and if reproached,
They of low station may with equal scorn
Answer the taunting arrogance of wealth ;
And an inferior, if his cause be just,
Conquers the powerful. This too is a mark
Of freedom, where the man who can propose
Some wholesome counsel for the public weal
Is by the herald called upon to speak :
Then he who with a generous zeal accepts
Such offer gains renown, but he who likes not
His thoughts to utter still continues mute.
How can a city be administered
With more equality ? Where'er the people
Are sovereigns of the land, a rising race
Of heroes gives them joy ; but these a king
Esteems his foes ; the brave, with those who fear
The character of wise, he slays, still trembling
For his ill-gotten power. How can that city
On a firm basis stand where valiant youths,
Like the green sheaf cut from the vernal mead,
Are in their bloom mown down ? Why then acquire
Large fortunes for our children, to augment
The treasures of a king ? Or why train up
Our virgin daughters with an anxious care,
Merely to gratify the loose desires
Of an imperious monarch, and cause tears
To stream from their fond parents ? May I end
My life ere these indignant eyes behold
The violation of my daughter's honour !
Thus far in answer to thy speech. Now say,

What claims hast thou to make on this domain?
Wert thou not hither by thy city sent,
Thou the impertinent harangues thou cam'st
To utter shouldst bewail. A messenger
When he hath spoken what his lords enjoin
Ought to depart with speed. Next time let Creon
A less loquacious messenger despatch
To the Athenian land.

CHOR. Alas! when fortune
Profusely showers her gifts upon the wicked,
How insolent they are, as if they deemed
They should for ever prosper!

THE. HER. I will now
Speak what I have in charge; your thoughts indeed
Differ from mine on these contested points,
But I and all the Theban race pronounce
This interdict: let not Adrastus enter
The land, or if he be already here,
Ere yon bright chariot of the sun descends,
Regardless of these mystic branches borne
By suppliant matrons, drive him from the realm,
Nor furiously attempt to take away
The slain by force, for in the Argive state
You have no interest. If to my advice
You yield due credence, by no boisterous waves
Overtaken in your course, you cross the deep
Shall sail your nation's pilot, else the storm
Of direful war shall burst on us and you,
And your allies. Deliberate well, nor give
A haughty answer, by my words provoked,
And of the freedom of your city vain:
For a reliance on superior might
Is most pernicious, oft hath it embroiled
Contending states, and roused immoderate ire.
For when whole cities by their votes decide
In favour of a war, there's not a man
Expects to perish; all avert the doom
Which threatens their own, upon another's head.
But while they give their suffrages, if death
Were present to their eyes, Greece ne'er had owed

Its ruin to a frantic lust for war.
We all know how to choose the better part,
Distinguish good from ill, and are aware
That peace, the benefactress of mankind,
Is preferable to war ; by every Muse
Held justly dear, and to the fiends of hell
A foe, in population she delights,
And wealth abundant. But, these blessings slighting,
We wickedly embark in needless wars ;
A man to servitude consigns the man
His arms subdued, on city the same doom
City imposes. But you aid our foes
E'en after they are dead, and would inter
With pomp funereal those who owe their fate
To their own arrogance. Forsooth, you deem
That justice was infringed, when smoked the body
Of frantic Capaneus, by thunder smitten,
Upon that ladder, which he at the gates
Erecting, swore he would lay waste our city,
Or with dread Jove's consent or in despite
Of the vindictive god : nor should th' abyss
Have snatched away that Augur, swallowing up
His chariot in the caverns of the earth :
Nor was it fitting that those other chiefs
Should at the gates lie breathless, with their limbs
Disjointed by huge stones ; boast that your wisdom
Transcends e'en that of Jove himself, or own
The gods may punish sinners. It behoves
Those who are wise to love their children first,
Their aged parents next, and native land,
Whose growing fortunes they are bound t' improve,
And not dismember it. In him who leads
A host, or pilot stationed at the helm,
Rashness is dangerous : he who by discretion
His conduct regulates desists in time,
And caution I esteem the truest valour.

ADR. The vengeance Jove inflicted on our crimes
Should have sufficed : but it behoves not thee,
Thou most abandoned miscreant, to insult us
With contumelious words.

THE.

Adrastus, peace !

Restrain thy tongue, and in my speech forbear
To interrupt me : for this herald brings
For thee no embassy, but comes to me,
And I must answer. First will I confute
The bold assertion which thou first didst make.
I own not the authority of Creon,
Nor can he by superior might enforce
From Athens these submissions : to its source
The river shall flow upward ere we yield
To base compulsion. I am not the cause
Of this destructive war ; nor did I enter
The realms of Cadmus with those armed bands,
But to inter the bodies of the slain
(No violence to Thebes, no bloody strife
Commencing) is, I deem, an act of justice,
And authorized by the established laws
Of every Grecian state. In what respect
Have I transgressed ? If from those Argive chiefs
Ye suffered aught, they perished : on your foes
With glory ye avenged yourselves, and shame
To them ensued. No longer any right
Have ye to punish. O'er the dead let dust
Be strewn, and every particle revert
Back to its ancient seat whence into life
It migrated, the soul ascend to Heaven,
The body mix with earth : for we possess
By no sure tenure this decaying frame,
But for a dwelling merely, through the space
Of life's short day, to us doth it belong,
And after our decease the foodful ground
Which nourished should receive it back again.
Think'st thou the wrong thou dost, when thou deniest
Interment to the dead, confined to Argos ?
No ; 'tis a common insult to all Greece,
When of due obsequies bereft the slain
Are left without a tomb : the brave would lose
Their courage should such usages prevail.
Com'st thou to threaten me in haughty strain,
Yet meanly fear'st to let the scattered mould

Cover the dead? What mischiefs can ensue?
 Will they, when buried, undermine your walls,
 Or in earth's hollow caves beget a race
 Of children able to avenge their wrongs?
 Absurdly hast thou lavished many words
 In base and groundless terrors. O ye fools,
 Go make yourselves acquainted with the woes
 To which mankind are subject. Human life
 Is but a conflict : some there are whose bliss
 Approaches them, while that of others waits
 Till a long future season, others taste
 Of present joys : capricious Fortune sports
 With all her anxious votaries ; through a hope
 Of better times to her the wretched pay
 Their homage ; he who is already blest
 Extols her matchless bounty to the skies,
 And trembles lest the veering gale forsake him.
 But we, who know by what precarious tenure
 We hold her gifts, should bear a trifling wrong
 With patience, and, if we the narrow bounds
 Of justice overleap, abstain from crimes
 Which harm our country. If thou ask, what means
 This prelude? I reply : To us who wish
 To see them laid in earth with holy rites,
 Consign the weltering corpses of the slain,
 Else is it clear what mischiefs must ensue,
 I will go forth, and bury them by force.
 For 'mong the Greeks it never shall be said
 This ancient law, which from the gods received
 Its sanction, though transmitted down to me
 And to the city where Pandion ruled,
 Was disregarded.

CHOR. Courage ! While the light
 Of justice is thy guide, thou shalt escape
 Th' invidious censures of a busy crowd.

THE. HER. May I comprise in a few words the
 whole
 Of our debate?

THE Speak whatsoe'er thou wilt :
 For no discreet restraint thy tongue e'er knew.

THE. HER. The corpses of those Argive youths from Thebes
You never shall remove.

THE. Now to my answer
Attend, if thou art so disposed.

THE. HER. I will:
For in your turn I ought to hear you speak.

THE. On the deceased will I bestow a grave,
When I have borne their relics from the land
Washed by Asopus' stream.

THE. HER. In combat first
Great hazards must you brave.

THE. Unnumbered toils
Have I ere now in other wars endured.

THE. HER. Was there to you transmitted from your sire
Sufficient strength to cope with every foe?

THE. With every villain: for on virtuous deeds
No punishment would I inflict.

THE. HER. Both you
And Athens have been wont in various matters
To interfere.

THE. To many a bold emprise
She owes the prosperous fortunes she enjoys.

THE. HER. Come on, that soon as you attempt to enter
Our gates the Theban lance may lay you low.

THE. Can any valiant champion from the teeth
Of a slain dragon spring?

THE. HER. This to your cost
Shall you experience, though you still retain
The rashness which untutored youth inspires.

THE. By thy presumptuous language thou my soul
To anger canst not rouse: but from this land
Depart, and carry back those empty words
With which thou hither cam'st: for we in vain
Have held this conference. [*Exit THEBAN HERALD.*]

Now must we collect
Our numerous infantry in arms arrayed,
With all who mount the chariot, and the steed
Caparisoned, his mouth distilling foam,
Urge to the Theban realm; for I will march

Up to the sevenfold gates by Cadmus reared
 This arm sustaining a protended spear,
 And be myself the herald. But stay here,
 Adrastus, I command thee ; nor with mine
 Blend thy disastrous fortunes : for the host
 I under happier auspices will lead
 To the embattled field, renowned in war,
 And furnished with the spear to which I owe
 My glories. I need only one thing more,
 Help from the gods, who are the friends of justice :
 For where all these advantages concur
 They to our better cause ensure success.
 But valour's of no service to mankind
 Unless propitious Jove his influence lend.

[Exit THESEUS.]

ADR. Unhappy mothers of those hapless chiefs,
 How doth pale fear disturb this anxious breast !

CHOR. What new alarm is this thou giv'st ?

ADR. The host
 Of Pallas our great contest will decide.

CHOR. By force of arms, or conference, dost thou mean ?

ADR. 'Twere better thus ; but slaughter, the delight
 Of Mars, and battle, through the Theban streets,
 With many a beaten bosom shall resound.

CHOR. Wretch that I am ! What cause shall I assign
 For such calamities ?

ADR. But some reverse
 Of fortune may again lay low the man
 Who, swollen with gay prosperity, exults ;
 This gives me confidence.

CHOR. Th' immortal gods
 Thou represent'st as if those gods were just.

ADR. For who but they o'er each event preside ?

CHOR. Heaven's partial dispensations to mankind
 I oft contemplate.

ADR. Thou thy better judgment
 To thy past fears dost sacrifice. Revenge
 Calls forth revenge, and slaughter is repaid
 By slaughter ; for the gods into the souls

Of evil men pernicious thoughts infuse,
And all things to their destined period guide.

ODE.

I.

CHOR. O could I reach yon field with turrets crowned
And leave thy spring Callichore behind.

ADR. Heaven give thee pinions to outstrip the wind !

CHOR. Waft me to Thebes for its two streams renowned.

ADR. There might'st thou view the spirits of the slain
Whose corpses welter on the hostile plain.
Still dubious are the dread awards of fate.
But the undaunted king of this domain,
In yon embattled field what dangers may await.

II.

CHOR. On you, ye pitying gods, again I call,
In you my trust I place, your might revere,
And with this hope dispel each anxious fear.
O Jove, whom love's soft bandage did enthrall,
When beauteous Io met thy fond embrace,
Erst to a heifer changed, from whom we trace
Our origin, make Argos still thy care.
Thy image rescuing from its loathed disgrace,
To the funereal pyre these heroes will we bear

MESSENGER, ADRASTUS, CHORUS.

MES. With many acceptable tidings fraught
I come, ye dames, and am myself just 'scaped
(For I was taken prisoner in that battle,
When the seven squadrons, led by the deceased,
Upon the banks of Dirce's current fought) ;
It is my joyful errand to relate
The conquest Theseus gained : but your fatigue
Of asking tedious questions will I spare ;
For to that Capaneus, th' ill-fated chief
Whom Jove with flaming thunderbolts transpierced,
Was I a servant.

CHOR. O my friend, you bring
A favourable account of your return,
And Theseus' mighty deeds : but if the host
Of generous Athens too be safe, most welcome
Will be the whole of what you now relate.

MES. 'Tis safe ; and what Adrastus strove t' effect,
When from the stream of Inachus he led
His forces, and against the Theban towers
Waged war, is now accomplished.

CHOR. But relate
How Ægeus' son with his intrepid comrades
Jove's trophies reared, for you th' engagement saw,
And us who were not there can entertain.

MES. In a right line the solar beams began
To strike the earth ; upon a tower I stood
Cominanding a wide prospect o'er the field,
Above the gate Electra. Thence I marked
The warriors of three tribes to the assault
Advancing in three several bands, arrayed
In ponderous armour, to Ismenos' stream
The first division, I am told, its ranks
Extended ; the illustrious son of Ægeus,
Their monarch, was among them ; round their chief
The natives of Cecropia's ancient realm
Were stationed ; the Paralians, armed with spears,
Close to the fount of Mars ; on either flank
Of battle stood the cavalry disposed
In equal numbers, and the brazen cars
Screened by Amphion's venerable tomb.
Meanwhile the Theban forces were drawn forth
Without the bulwarks, placing in their rear
The bodies which they fought for ; fiery steed
To steed ; to chariot, chariot stood opposed.
But Theseus' herald, in a voice so loud
That all might hear, cried out, " Be mute, ye people ;
Attend in strictest silence, O ye troops
Who spring from Cadmus ! We are come to claim
The bodies of the slain, which 'tis our wish
To bury, in compliance with the laws

Established through all Greece : we for their deaths
Require not an atonement." To these words
No answer by his herald Creon gave,
Firm under arms the silent warrior stood.
They who the reins of adverse chariots held
Began the battle, hurrying through the ranks
With glowing wheels, nor shunned the lifted spear ;
Some fought with swords, while others urged thir
steeds

Again into the fray, encountering those
Who had repelled them. But when Phorbas, leader
Of the Athenian cavalry, observed
The chariots of the foe in throngs advance,
He and the chieftains of the Theban horse
In the encounter mingled, and by turns
Prevailed and were discomfited. I speak not
From fame alone, but what myself beheld,
For I was present where the chariots fought,
And the brave chiefs who in those chariots rode.
In an assemblage of so many horrors,
I know not which to mention first ; how thick
The clouds of dust which blackened all the sky
Or those who, tangled in the stubborn reins,
Were dragged at random o'er the field, and bathed
In their own gore, their chariots overthrown
Or broken ; others headlong from their seat
Were violently dashed upon the ground,
And breathed their last amid their splintered wheels.
When Creon saw his cavalry prevail,
Hastily snatching up a pointed spear,
Onward he marched impetuous, lest his troops
Should lose their courage ; nor through abject fear
Did Theseus' bands recoil : without delay
On to the combat, sheathed in glittering arms,
The dauntless chief advanced, and now began
In the main body of each adverse host
A universal conflict ; with the slain
The slayer mingled lay ; while clamorous shouts
Were heard from those that to their comrades cried :

“Strike! With your spears oppose Erectheus’ race.”
A legion sprung from the slain dragon’s teeth
With courage fought, and pressed on our left wing
So hard that it gave way, while by our right
Discomfited the Theban squadrons fled.
Thus in an equal balance long remained
The fate of war, but here again our chief
Deserved applause, for he not only gained
All that advantage his victorious troops
Could give him, but proceeded to that wing
Which had been worsted: with so loud a shout
That earth resounded, “Valiant youths,” he cried,
“If ye repel not those protended spears
Of the fierce dragon’s brood, Minerva’s city
Is utterly destroyed.” These words infused
New confidence in all th’ Athenian host.
Then, snatching up the ponderous club he won
Near Epidaurus, with his utmost force
He swang that formidable weapon round,
Severing, like tender poppies from the stalks,
At the same stroke, their necks and helméd heads,
Yet scarcely could he put to flight the troops
Of Argos. With a shout, then vaulting high,
I clapped my hands, while to the gates they ran.
Through every street re-echoed mingled shrieks
Of young and old, who by their fears impelled
Crowded the temples. But when he with ease
The fortress might have entered, Theseus checked
The ardour of his host, and said he came
Not to destroy the city, but redeem
The bodies of those slaughtered chiefs. A man
Like this should be selected for the leader
Of armies, who ’midst dangers perseveres
Undaunted, and abhors the madding pride
Of those who, flushed with triumph, while they seek
To mount the giddy ladder’s topmost round,
Forfeit that bliss they else might have enjoyed.

CHOR. Now I have seen this unexpected day,
I deem that there are gods, and feel my woes

Alleviated since these audacious miscreants
Have suffered their deserts.

ADR. Why do they speak
Of wretched man as wise? On thee, O Jove,
Our all depends, and whatsoe'er thou wilt'st
We execute. The power of Argos seemed
Too great to be resisted; we relied
On our own numbers and superior might.
Hence, when Eteocles began to treat
Of peace, though he demanded moderate terms,
Disdaining to accept it, we rushed headlong
Into perdition: while the foolish race
Of Cadmus, like some beggar who obtains
Immense possessions suddenly, grew proud,
And pride was the forerunner of their ruin.
Mortals, devoid of sense, who strain too hard
Your feeble bow, and after ye have suffered
Unnumbered evils justly, to the voice
Of friends still deaf, are guided by events;
And cities, who by treaty might avert
Impending mischief, choose to make the sword,
Rather than reason, umpire of your strife.
But whither do these vain reflections tend?
What I now wish to learn is, by what means
Thou didst escape: I into other matters
Will then make full inquiry.

MES. While the tumult
Of battle in the city still prevailed,
I through that gate came forth by which the troops
Had entered.

ADR. But did ye bear off the bodies
Of those slain chiefs for whom the war arose?

MES. Who o'er seven noble houses did preside.

ADR. What's this thou saidst? But where are all the
rest

Of the deceased, an undistinguished crowd?

MES. Lodged in a tomb amid Cithæron's vale.

ADR. Beyond or on this side the mount? And who
Performed this mournful duty?

Fresh wreaths of laurel with augmented fame;
 Doomed to behold the pale remains
 Of my loved children, bitter, pleasing sight,
 after grief shall feel an unforeseen delight.

II.

O that old Time's paternal care
 Had kept me from the nuptial yoke.
 What need had I of sons? This grievous stroke
 Could never then have been my share:
 But now I see perpetual cause to mourn;
 My children, from these arms for ever are ye torn.
 But lo! the corpses of those breathless youths,
 Are borne in pomp funereal. Would to Heaven
 I with my sons might perish, and descend
 The shades of Pluto!

ADR. Matrons, o'er the dead,
 Pale tenants of the realms beneath, now vent
 Your loudest groans, and to my groans reply.

CHOR. O children, whom in bitterness of soul,
 With a maternal fondness, we accost;
 To thee, my breathless son, to thee I speak.

ADR. Ah me! my woes!

CHOR. We have endured, alas!
 Afflictions the most grievous.

ADR. O ye dames
 Of my loved Argos, view ye not my fate?

CHOR. Me, miserable and childless they behold.

ADR. Bring to their hapless friend each bloody corpse
 Of those famed chiefs, dishonourably slain,
 And by the hands of cowards: when they fell,
 The battle ended.

CHOR. O let me embrace
 My dearest sons, and in these arms sustain!

ADR. Thou from these hands receiv'st them: such a
 weight

Of anguish is too grievous to be borne.

CHOR. By their fond mothers, you forget to add.
 Wretch that I am!

ADR. Ah, listen to my voice.

CHOR. Both to yourself and us these plaints belong.

ADR. Would to the gods that the victorious troops
Of Thebes had slain and laid me low in dust !

CHOR. O that in wedlock I had ne'er been joined
To any lord !

ADR. Ye miserable mothers
Of those brave youths, who for their country died,
An ocean of calamity behold.

CHOR. We, hopeless mourners, with our nails have torn
These bleeding visages, and on our heads
Strewn ashes.

ADR. Ah ! ah me ! Thou opening ground
Swallow me up. O scatter me, ye storms ;
And may Jove's lightning on this head descend !

CHOR. You witnessed in an evil hour the nuptials
Of your two daughters, in an evil hour
Apollo's mystic oracles obeyed.

The wife whom you have taken to your arms
Is that destructive fiend who left the house
Of Œdipus, and chose with you to dwell.

THESEUS, ADRASTUS, CHORUS.

THE. The questions I designed to have proposed
To you, ye noble matrons, when ye uttered
Your loud complaints amidst th' assembled host,
I will omit, and mean to search no farther
Into the moving history of your woes.
But now of thee, Adrastus, I inquire,
Whence sprung these chiefs whose prowess did transcend
That of all other mortals ? Thou art wise,
And these transactions, which full well thou know'st,
Canst to our youthful citizens unfold.
For, of their bold achievements, which exceed
The power of language to express, myself
Have been a witness, when they strove to storm
The Theban walls. But lest I should provoke
Thy laughter, this one question will I spare ;
With what brave champion in th' enbattled field
Each fought, and from the weapon of what foe
Received the deadly wound : for these vain tales

But serve an equal folly to display
In those who either hear them, or relate,
Should he who mingles in the thickest fray,
From either army, while unnumbered spears
Before his eyes are thrown, distinctly strive
To ascertain what dauntless warrior launched
With surest aim the missile death. These questions
I cannot ask, nor credit those who dare
To make such rash assertions. For the man
Who to his foes in combat stands opposed
Can scarce discern enough to act the part
Which his own duty calls for.

ADR.

Now attend,

For no unwelcome task have you imposed
On me, of praising those departed friends,
Of whom with truth and justice I would speak.
Do you behold yon hero's graceful form,
Through which the bolt of Jove hath forced its way?
This youth is Capaneus, who, though the fortune
Which he possessed was ample, ne'er grew vain
Through wealth, nor of himself more highly deemed
Than if he had been poor, but shunned the man
Who proudly glories in a sumptuous board,
And treats a frugal competence with scorn;
For he maintained that life's chief good consists not
In the voracious glutton's full repast,
But that a moderate portion will suffice.
In his attachments still was he sincere,
And zealous for the good of those he loved,
Whether at hand or absent still the same;
Small is the number of such friends as these;
His manners were not counterfeit, his lips
Distilled sweet courtesy, and left not aught
That he had promised, either to the slave,
Or citizen of Argos, unperformed.
Eteoclus I next proceed to name,
For every virtuous practice much renowned,
Small were the fortunes of this noble youth,
But in the Argive region he enjoyed

Abundant honours : though his wealthier friends
Oft sought to have presented him with gold,
His doors were closed against that specious bane,
Lest he might seem to act a servile part,
By riches made a bondsman : he abhorred
The guilt of individuals, not the land
Which nourished them : to cities no reproach
Is due because their rulers are corrupt.
Such also was Hippomedon, the third
Of these illustrious chiefs ; while yet a boy,
To the delights the tuneful Muses yield,
A life of abject softness, he disdained
To turn aside : a tenant of the fields,
His nature he to the severest toils
Inuring, took delight in manly deeds,
With fiery coursers issuing to the chase,
Or twanged with nervous hands the sounding bow,
And showed a generous eagerness to make
His vigour useful to his native land.
There lies the huntress Atalanta's son,
Parthenopæus, by a beauteous form
Distinguished : in Arcadia was he born,
But, journeying thence to Inachus' stream,
In Argos nurtured ; having there received
His education, first, as is the duty
Of strangers in the country where they dwell,
He never made a foe, nor to the state
Became obnoxious, waged no strife of words
(Whence citizens and foreigners offend),
But, stationed in the van of battle, fought
To guard the land as if he had been born
An Argive, and whene'er the city prospered
Rejoiced, but was with deepest anguish stung
If a reverse of fortune it endured :
Though many lovers, many blooming nymphs
To him their hearts devoted, he maintained
A blameless conduct. The great praises due
To Tydeus I concisely will express ;
Though rude of speech, yet terrible in arms,

•

Devising various stratagems, surpassed
 In prudence by his brother Meleager,
 By warlike arts he gained an equal name,
 Finding sweet music in the crash of shields :
 Nature endued him with the strongest thirst
 For glory and for riches ; but his soul
 In actions, not in words, its force displayed.
 From this account, O Theseus, wonder not
 Such generous youths before the Theban towers
 Feared not to meet an honourable death.
 For education is the source whence springs
 Ingenuous shame, and every man whose habits
 Have erst been virtuous, not without a blush,
 Becomes a dastard : courage may be taught ;
 Just as a tender infant learns to speak
 And listen to the words he comprehends not ;
 But he such wholesome lessons treasures up
 Till he is old. From this example train
 Your progeny in honour's arduous paths.

CHOR. I educated thee, my hapless son,
 Thee in this womb sustained, and childbirth pangs
 For thee endured ; but now hath Pluto seized
 The fruit of all my toils, and I, who bore
 An offspring, am abandoned to distress,
 Without a prop to stay my sinking age.

ADR. The gods themselves in louder strains extol
 Oicleus' illustrious son, whom yet alive
 They with his rapid coursers snatched away
 And bore into the caverns of the earth.

THE. Nor shall I utter falsehood while my tongue
 Recounts the praise of Polynices, son
 Of Œdipus ; for as his guest the chief
 Received me, ere, a voluntary exile,
 Abandoning his native city reare
 By Cadmus, to the Argive realm he went.
 But know'st thou how I wish thou shouldst dispose
 Of their remains ?

ADR. All that I know is this,
 Whatever you direct shall be obeyed.

THE. As for that Capaneus, who by the name
Launched from Jove's hand was smitten—

ADR. Would you burn
His corse apart as sacred?

THE. Even so.
But all the rest on one funereal pyre.

ADR. Where mean you to erect his separate tomb?

THE. I near these hapless youths have fixed the spot
For his interment.

ADR. To your menial train
Must this unwelcome office be consigned.

THE. But to those other warriors will I pay
Due honours. Now advance, and hither bring
Their corses.

ADR. To your children, wretched matrons,
Draw near.

THE. Adrastus, sure thou hast proposed
What cannot be expedient.

ADR. Why restrain
The mothers from their breathless sons' embrace?

THE. Should they behold their children thus deformed,
They would expire with grief. The face we loved,
Soon as pale death invades its bloom, becomes
A loathsome object. Why wouldst thou increase
Their sorrows?

ADR. You convince me. Ye must wait
With patience; for expedient are the counsels
Which Theseus gives. But when we have consumed
In blazing pyres their corses, ye their bones
Must take away. Why forge the brazen spear,
Unhappy mortals, why retaliate slaughter
With slaughter? O desist; no more engrossed
By fruitless labours, in your cities dwell,
Peaceful yourselves, and through the nations round
A general peace diffusing. For the term
Of human life is short, and should be passed
With every comfort, not in anxious toils.

[*Exeunt THESEUS and ADRASTUS.*]

CHORUS.

ODE.

I.

No more a mother's happy name
 Shall crown my fortunes or exalt my fame,
 'Midst Argive matrons blest with generous heirs.
 Of all the parent's hopes bereft,
 By Dian, patroness of childbirth left,
 Ordained to lead a life of cares,
 To wandering solitude consigned,
 I like a cloud am driven before the howling wind.

II.

We, seven unhappy dames, deplore
 The seven brave sons we erst exulting bore,
 Illustrious champions who for Argos bled :
 Forlorn and childless, drenched in tears,
 Downward I hasten to the vale of years,
 But am not numbered with the dead
 Or living : a peculiar state
 Is mine, on me attends an unexampled fate.

III.

For me nought now remains except to weep :
 In my son's house are left behind
 Some tokens ; well I know those tresses shorn,
 Which no wreath shall ever bind,
 No auspicious songs adorn,
 And golden-haired Apollo scorn ;
 With horror from a broken sleep
 Roused by grief at early morn
 My crimson vest in gushing tears I steep.

But I the pyre of Capaneus behold
 Already blazing, near his sacred tomb
 Heaped high ; and placed without the fane, those gifts
 Which Theseus' self appropriates to the dead :
 Evadne too, the consort of that chief,
 Who by the thunderbolts of Jove was slain,

Daughter of noble Iphis, is at hand.
 Why doth she stand upon the topmost ridge
 Of yon ærial rock, which overlooks
 This dome, as if she hither bent her way?

EVADNE, CHORUS.

ODE.

I.

EVA. What cheering beams of radiant light
 Hyperion darted from his car,
 And how did Cynthia's lamp shine bright,
 While in the skies each glittering star
 Rode swiftly through the drear abodes of night,
 When Argive youths a festive throng
 T' accompany the nuptial song
 For Capaneus and me awaked the lyre?
 Now frantic hither am I borne
 Resolved to share my lord's funereal pyre,
 With him to enter the same tomb,
 End with him this life forlorn,
 In Pluto's realms, the Stygian gloom.
 If Heaven assent, the most delightful death
 Is when with those we love we mix our parting breath.
 CHOR. Near to its mouth you stand and overlook
 The blazing pyre, Jove's treasure, there is lodged
 Your husband whom his thunderbolts transpierced.

II.

EVA. Life's utmost goal I now behold,
 For I have finished my career:
 With steadfast purpose uncontrolled
 My steps doth fortune hither steer.
 In the pursuit of honest fame grown bold,
 Am I determined from this steep
 Into the flames beneath to leap,
 And mine with my dear husband's ashes blend;
 I to the couch of Proserpine,
 With him in death united, will descend.
 Thee in the grave I'll ne'er betray:

Life and wedlock I resign
 May some happier spousal day
 At Argos for Evadne's race remain,
 And every wedded pair such constant loves maintain.

CHOR. But, lo, 'tis he ! I view your aged sire,
 The venerable Iphis, who approaches
 As a fresh witness of those strange designs
 Which yet he knows not, and will grieve to hear.

IPHIS, CHORUS, EVADNE.

IPH. O most unhappy ! Hither am I come,
 A miserable old man, with twofold griefs
 By Heaven afflicted ; to his native land,
 The body of Eteoclus, my son,
 Slain by a Theban javelin, to convey,
 And seek my daughter, with impetuous step
 Who rushed from her apartment ; in the bond
 Of wedlock she to Capaneus was joined,
 And wishes to accompany in death
 Her husband ; for a time she in my house
 Was guarded, but since I no longer watched her,
 'Midst the confusion of our present ills
 She 'scaped ; but we have reason to suspect
 That she is here ; inform us, if ye know.

EVA. Why do you question them ? Here on this rock
 I, O my father, o'er the blazing pyre
 Of Capaneus stand, hovering like a bird.

IPH. What gale hath borne thee hither ? Or what means
 That robe, my daughter ? Wherefore, from thy home
 Departing, to this region didst thou fly ?

EVA. 'Twould but exasperate you to be informed
 Of my intentions : therefore, O my sire,
 Am I unwilling you should hear.

IPH. What schemes
 Are these which thy own father may not know ?

EVA. In you I should not find an equal judge
 Of my intentions.

IPH. But on what account
 Thy person with that habit hast thou graced ?

EVA. A splendid action, O my sire, the robe
I wear denotes.

IPH. Ill-suited is a garb
So costly to the matron who bewails
Her husband's death.

EVA. For an unheard-of purpose
In gay habiliments am I attired.

IPH. Why stand'st thou near the grave and blazing
pyre?

EVA. Hither I come to gain a mighty conquest.

IPH. O'er whom wouldst thou prevail? I wish to know.

EVA. O'er every woman whom the sun beholds.

IPH. By Pallas in the labours of the loom
Instructed, or with a judicious soul,
That best of gifts endued?

EVA. With dauntless courage :
For in the grave I with my breathless lord
Shall be united.

IPH. What is it thou say'st ?
Or with what views a riddle thus absurd
Hast thou propounded ?

EVA. Hence into the pyre
Of Capaneus will I leap down.

IPH. My daughter,
Before the multitude forbear to hold
This language.

EVA. There is nothing I have said
But what I wish that every Argive knew.

IPH. Yet will I not consent thou shouldst fulfil
Thy desperate purpose.

EVA [*as she is throwing herself from the Rock.*]

It is all the same :
Nor can you now by stretching forth your hand
Stop my career. Already have I taken
The fatal leap, and hence descend, with joy
Though not indeed to you, yet to myself,
And to my lord, with whose remains I blaze.

CHOR. Thou hast committed an atrocious deed,
O woman.

IPH. Wretched me ! I am undone,
Ye dames of Argos.

CHOR. Horrid are these ills
Which thou endur'st, the deed thine eyes behold
Is the most daring.

IPH. No man can ye find
Than me more miserable.

CHOR. O wretch ! A portion
Of Œdipus' fortunes was reserved
For thee in thy old age : thou too, my city,
Art visited by the severest woes.

IPH. Why was this privilege, alas ! denied
To mortals, twice to flourish in the bloom
Of youth, and for a second time grow old ?
For in our houses, we, if aught is found
To have been ill contrived, amend the fault
Which our maturer judgment hath descried ;
While each important error in our life
Admits of no reform : but if with youth
And ripe old age we twice had been indulged,
Each devious step that marked our first career
We in our second might set right. For children,
Seeing that others had them, much I wished,
And pined away with vehement desire :
But if I had already felt these pangs,
And from my own experience learnt how great
Is the calamity to a fond father
To be bereft of all his hopeful race,
I into such distress had never fallen
As now o'erwhelms me, who begot a youth
Distinguished by his courage, and of him
Am now deprived. No more. But what remains
For me—wretch that I am ? Shall I return
To my own home, view many houses left
Without inhabitants, and waste the dregs
Of life in hopeless anguish, or repair
To the abode of Capaneus, with joy
By me frequented while my daughter lived ?
But she is now no more, who loved to kiss

My furrowed cheeks and stroked this hoary head.
 Nought can delight us more than the attention
 Which to her aged sire a daughter pays :
 Though our male progeny have souls endued
 With courage far superior, yet less gently
 Do they these soothing offices perform.
 Will ye not quickly drag me to my home,
 And in some dungeon's gloomy hold confine,
 To wear away these aged limbs by famine?
 Me, what, alas ! can it avail to touch
 My daughter's bones ! What hatred do I bear
 To thee, O irresistible old age !
 Them, too, my soul abhors who vainly strive
 To lengthen out our little span of life ;
 By th' easy vehicle, the downy couch,
 And by the boasted aid of magic song,
 Labouring to turn aside from his career
 Remorseless death : when they who have no longer
 The strength required to serve their native land
 Should vanish, and to younger men give place.

SEMICHOR. Lo, there the bones of my slain sons, whose
 corpses

Already in funereal pyres have blazed,
 Are borne along. Support a weak old woman :
 The pangs which for my children's loss I feel
 Deprive me of all strength. I long have mourned,
 And am enervated by many griefs.
 Can any curse severer be devised
 For mortals than to see their children dead ?

BOY. O my unhappy mother, from the flames
 I bear my father's relics, which my sorrows
 Have made more weighty : this small urn contains
 All my possessions.

SEMICHOR. Why dost thou convey
 The sad and pleasing cause of many tears
 To the afflicted mothers of the slain,
 A little heap of ashes in the stead
 Of those who in Mycenæ were renowned ?

BOY. But I, a wretched orphan, and bereft

Of my unhappy father, shall receive
For my whole portion a deserted house,
Torn from the tutelary arms of him
To whom I owe my birth.

SEMICHOR. Where, where are those
Whom sorrowing I brought forth, whom at my breast
With a maternal tenderness I reared,
Their slumbers watched, and sweetest kisses gave?

BOY. Your children are departed, they exist
No longer, O my mother ; they are gone
For ever, by devouring flames consumed ;
In the mid-air they float, borne on light wing
To Pluto. O my sire, for sure thou hear'st
Thy children's lamentations, shall I bear
The shield hereafter to avenge thy death ?

IPH. May the time come, my son, when the just gods
To me shall for thy valiant father's death
A full atonement grant : that grievous loss
In this torn heart yet rankles unappeased.

BOY. I our hard fortunes have enough bewailed,
My sorrows are sufficient. I will take
My stand where chosen Grecian chiefs, arrayed
In brazen arms, with transport will receive me
Th' avenger of my sire. E'en now these eyes
Behold thee, O my father, on my cheeks
A kiss imprinting, though the winds have borne
Thy noble exhortations far away,
But thou hast left two mourners here behind,
Me and my mother: venerable man,
No time can from thy wounded soul efface
The grief thou for thy children feel'st.

IPH. The load
Of anguish which I suffer is so great
That it hath quite o'ercome me. Hither bring,
And let me clasp those ashes to my breast.

BOY. These bitter lamentations have I heard
With streaming tears ; they rend my inmost soul.

IPH. Thou, O my son, art lost ; and I no more
Thy mother's dear, dear image shall behold.

THESEUS, ADRASTUS, IPHIS, CHORUS.

THE. Behold ye, O Adrastus, and ye dames
Of Argive race, these children, in their hands
Bearing the relics of their valiant sires,
By me redeemed? Athens and I, these gifts
On you bestow : still are ye bound to cherish
A memory of those benefits, obtained
Through my victorious spear. To all I speak
In the same terms. With honour due repay
This city, and the kindness which from us
Ye have experienced to your children's children
Transmit through latest ages. But let Jove
Bear witness, with what tokens of our bounty
Ye from this realm depart.

ADR. Full well we know
What favours you, O Theseus, have conferred
Upon the Argive land, when most it needed
A benefactor ; hence will we retain
Such gratitude as time shall ne'er efface.
For we, the generous treatment which from you
We have received, as largely should requite.

THE. Is there aught else I can bestow ?

ADR. All hail ;
For you and Athens every bliss deserve.
THE. May Heaven this wish accomplish ! and mayst
thou,
My friend, with equal happiness be crowned.

MINERVA, THESEUS, ADRASTUS, IPHIS, CHORUS.

MIN. Attend, O Theseus, to Minerva's words,
And thou shalt learn what thou must do to serve
This country ; give not to the boys these bones
To bear to Argos, on such easy terms
Dismissing them. But to requite the toils
Of thee and of thy city, first exact
A solemn oath, and let Adrastus swear,
For he, its king, for the whole Argive realm
Is qualified to answer, and be this
The form prescribed : " Ne'er will Mycene's sons

Into this land a hostile squadron lead,
But hence, with their protended spears, repel
Each fierce invader." If the sacred oath
They impiously should violate, and march
Against thy city, pray that utter ruin
May light on Argos, and its perjured state.
But where the gods require that thou shalt slay
The victims, I will tell thee; in thy palace
On brazen feet a massive tripod stands
Which erst Alcides, when the walls of Troy
He from their basis had o'erthrown, and rushed
New labours to accomplish, gave command
Close to the Pythian altar should be placed.
When on this tripod thou hast slain three sheep,
The destined victims, in its hollow rim
Inscribe the oath; then to that god consign
Who o'er the Delphic realm presides : such tablet
To Greece shall testify the league ye form.
But in the bowels of the earth conceal
The knife with which the victims thou hast slain,
For this, when shown, should they hereafter come,
With arméd bands, this city to assail,
Will strike Mycene's warriors with dismay,
And their return embitter. When these rites
Thou hast performed, the ashes of the dead
Send from this region, and to them assign
That grove in which their corpses have by fire
Been purified, the spot where meet three roads
Sacred to th' Isthmian goddess. This to thee,
O Theseus, have I spoken : to the boys
Who spring from those slain Argive chiefs I add :
Ismenos' city, soon as ye attain
Maturer years, shall ye in ruin lay,
Retaliating the slaughter of your sires;
Thou too, Ægialeus, a youthful chief,
Shalt in thy father's stead command the host,
And marching from Ætolia's realm, the son
Of Tydeus, Diomedé by name ; the down
No sooner shall o'erspread your blooming cheeks,

Than with a band of Argive warriors clad
In glittering armour, with impetuous rage,
Ye the seven Theban turrets shall assail ;
Them, in your wrath, shall ye, in manhood's prime,
Like whelps of lions visit, and lay waste
The city. What have I foretold, ere long
Will be accomplished. By applauding Greece
Called the Epigoni, ye shall become.
A theme for your descendants' choral songs,
Such squadrons ye to battle shall lead forth
Favoured by righteous Jove.

THE. Thy dread injunctions,
Minerva, awful queen, will I obey :
For I, while thou direct'st me, cannot err.
I from Adrastus will exact that oath,
Deign only thou to guide my steps aright,
For to our city if thou prov'st a friend
We shall enjoy blest safety.

CHOR. Let us go,
Adrastus, and eternal friendship swear
To Theseus and his city, for the toils
They have endured our grateful reverence claim.

HIPPOLYTUS.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

VENUS.
HIPPOLYTUS.
ATTENDANTS OF HIPPOLYTUS.
OFFICER BELONGING TO THE
PALACE.
CHORUS OF TRÆZENIAN DAMES.

NURSE.
PHÆDRA.
THESEUS.
MESSENGERS,
DIANA.

SCENE—BEFORE PITTHEUS' PALACE AT TRÆZENE.

VENUS.

My empire man confesses, and the name
Of Venus echoes through heaven's wide expanse.
Among all those who on the distant coast
Of ocean dwell, and earth's remotest bounds
Old Atlas' station who upholds the skies,
Beholding the resplendent solar beams ;
On them who to my power due homage pay
Great honours I bestow, and to the dust
Humble each proud contemner. E'en the race
Of happy deities with pleasure view
The reverence mortals yield them. Of these words
Ere long will I display the truth : that son
Of Theseus and the Amazonian dame,
Hippolytus, by holy Pittheus taught,
E'en he alone among all those who dwell
Here in Træzene, of th' immortal powers
Styles me the weakest, loathes the genial bed,
Nor to the sacred nuptial yoke will bow :
Apollo's sister, Dian, sprung from Jove,
He worships, her the greatest he esteems
Of all the gods, and ever in her groves

A favoured comrade of the virgin dwells,
With his swift hounds the flying beasts of prey
Expelling from their haunts, and aims at more
Than human nature reaches. Him in this
I envy not : why should I ? Yet shall vengeance
This day o'ertake the miscreant : I have forged
Each implement already, and there needs
But little labour to effect his doom.

For erst, on his arrival from the house
Of Pittheus, in Pandion's land, to view
The mystic rites, and in those mystic rites
To be initiated, his father's wife,
Illustrious Phædra, saw the prince, her heart
At my behest love's dire contagion seized :
And ere she came to this Troezenian coast,
She, where Minerva's rock o'erlooks this land,
To Venus reared a temple, for the youth
Who in a foreign region dwelt, engrossed
By amorous frenzy, and to future times
Resolved this lasting monumental pile
Of her unhappy passion to bequeath.
But from Cecropia's realm since Theseus fled
To expiate his pollution, with the blood
Of Pallas' sons distained, and with his queen
Sailed for this coast, to voluntary exile
Submitting for one year, the wretched Phædra,
Groaning and deeply smitten by the stings
Of love, hath pined in silence, nor perceives
One of her menial train whence this disease
Invaded her. Yet of its full effect
Must not her amorous malady thus fail :
For I to Theseus am resolved to show
The truth, no longer shall it rest concealed :
Then will the father with his curses slay
My youthful foe : for the reward on Theseus
Conferred by Neptune, ruler of the waves,
Was this : that thrice he to that god might sue
For any gift, nor should he sue in vain.
Phædra is noble, yet she too shall perish,

For I of such importance shall not hold
Her ruin as to spare those foes, on whom
I the severest vengeance will inflict,
That I may reassert my injured fame.
But hence must I retreat : for I behold
Hippolytus, this son of Theseus, comes,
Returning from the labours of the chase :
A numerous band of servants, on their prince
Attending, in the clamorous song unite
To celebrate Diana : for he knows not
That hell hath oped its gates, and he is doomed
After this day to view the sun no more. [Exit VENUS.

HIPPOLYTUS, ATTENDANTS.

HIP. Come on, my friends, attune your lays
To resound Diana's praise,
From the radiant fields of air
She listens to her votaries' prayer.

ATT. Awful queen enthroned above,
Hail thou progeny of Jove,
Virgin goddess, whom of yore
Latona to the Thunderer bore,
Thy matchless beauties far outshine
Each of those lovely maids divine,
Who fill with their harmonious choir
The domes of Heaven's immortal sire.
Hail, O thou whose charms excel
All nymphs that on Olympus dwell.

HIP. To deck thee, I this wreath, O goddess, bear,
Cropt from yon mead, o'er which no swain his flock
For pasture drives, nor hath the mower's steel
Despoiled its virgin herbage ; 'midst each flower,
Which spring profusely scatters, there the bee
Roams unmolested, and religious awe
Waters the champaign with abundant springs :
They who owe nought to learning, but have gained
From nature wisdom such as never fails
In their whole conduct, are by Heaven allowed
To cull these sweets, not so the wretch profane.

Vouchsafe, O dearest goddess, to receive
 This braided fillet for thy golden hair,
 From me a pious votary, who alone
 Of all mankind am for thy worship meet,
 For I with thee reside, with thee converse,
 Hearing thy voice indeed, though I thy face
 Have never seen. My life as it began
 May I with spotless purity conclude !

OFFICER, HIPPOLYTUS.

OFF. My royal master (for the gods alone
 Challenge the name of lord), will you receive
 A servant's good advice ?

HIP. With joy ; else void
 Of wisdom I to thee might justly seem.

OFF. Know you the law prescribed to man ?

HIP. The law !
 I cannot guess the purport of thy question.

OFF. To loathe that pride which studies not to please.

HIP. Right : for what haughty man is not abhorred ?

OFF. Doth then an affable demeanour tend
 To make us popular ?

HIP. This much avails,
 And teaches us with ease to gain renown.

OFF. But think'st thou that among celestial powers
 It bears an equal influence ?

HIP. Since the laws
 By which we mortals act from Heaven derive
 Their origin.

OFF. Why, then, an awful goddess
 Neglect you to invoke ?

HIP. Whom ? Yet beware,
 Lest thy tongue utter some imprudent word.

OFF. This Venus who is stationed o'er your gate.

HIP. Still chaste I at a distance her salute.

OFF. By mortals deemed illustrious she exacts
 Your worship.

HIP. We select this god, that friend,
 As suits our various tempers.

OFF. Were you wise,
Wise as you ought, you might be truly happy.

HIP. I am not pleased with any god whose rites
Demand nocturnal secrecy.

OFF. My son,
We ought to reverence the immortal powers.

HIP. Entering the palace, O my friends, prepare
The viands, after a fatiguing chase
Delicious is the banquet : tend my steeds,
That, when I have refreshed myself with food,
Them I with more convenience to the car
May yoke and exercise : but as for this
Thy Cyprian queen, to her I bid adieu.

[*Exeunt HIPPOLYTUS and ATTENDANTS.*]

OFF. Meantime (for the example of young men
Must not be imitated), prompt to think,
And hold such language as a servant ought,
Before thy image I devoutly bend,
O sovereign Venus, thee doth it behove
To pardon the rash boy who, flushed with pride,
Speaks foolishly : seem thou as if his words
Had never reached thine ear : for sure the gods
In wisdom should transcend man's grovelling race.

[*Exit OFFICER.*]

CHORUS.

ODE.

I. I.

A rock supplies, as we are told,
In such abundance the exhaustless rill,
That oft the virgins 'gainst its basis hold
Their copious urns to fill.

One of our associate train
Thither, in the limpid wave,
Went, her purple vests to lave,
Then hung them dripping on a cliff, to drain
And imbibe the sunny gale :
I from her first caught this tale :

I. 2.

That with sickness faint, alone,
 In yonder palace on her sleepless bed
 Our queen reclines, she a thin veil hath thrown
 Over her beauteous head ;
 This the third revolving day,
 Since, o'erpowered by lingering pains,
 She from all nourishment abstains,
 Wasting that lovely frame with slow decay ;
 She thus her hidden griefs would end,
 Thus to the silent grave descend.

II. 1.

From some god this impulse springs ;
 Sure Pan or Hecat  have fired thy brain,
 Or awful Cybel  to vex thee brings
 Her priests, a frantic train ;
 Perhaps, exulting in the chase,
 Thee Dictynna doth pursue,
 For neglecting homage due
 Her altar with the promised cakes to grace,
 She swiftly glides o'er mountain steep,
 Fords the lake or billowy deep.

II. 2.

Have another's witching charms
 Seduced the monarch to a stol'n embrace ;
 Doth then a harlot in thy Theseus' arms
 The nuptial couch disgrace ?
 Or from Cretan shores I ween
 Some sailor crossed the billowy main,
 Reached this hospitable plain,
 And bore a doleful message to the queen :
 Hence with deepest anguish pained
 In her bed is she detained.

III.

Some hidden grief with pregnant throes combined
 Oft dwells upon the female mind,
 Erst in my entrails raged this hidden smart :
 Diana, that celestial maid,

Amid the pangs of childbirth wont to aid,
 I then invoked, and she, whose dart
 Pierces the hind, with tutelary care
 Descended at her votary's prayer,
 And with her brought each friendly power
 Who guards our sex in that distressful hour.

But lo ! her aged nurse before the gates
 Leads out the queen, over whose downcast brow
 Care spreads a deeper cloud : my inmost soul
 Burns with impatience to explore the grief
 Which preys in secret on her fading charms.

PHÆDRA, NURSE, CHORUS.

NUR. Ye wretched mortals, who by loathed disease
 Are visited ! What shall I do to aid thee,
 Or what shall I omit ? The solar beams
 Here mayst thou view, here find a cooling air.
 For we without the palace doors have borne
 The couch where sickening thou reclin'st. Thy talk
 Was all of coming hither : but in haste
 Back to thy chamber soon wilt thou return :
 For thou, each moment altering, tak'st delight
 In nothing long ; the present quickly grows
 Unpleasing, somewhat absent thou esteem'st
 More grateful. Better were it to be sick
 Than tend the lingering patient, for the first
 Is but a simple ill, the last unites
 The mind's more pungent griefs and manual toil.
 But the whole life of man abounds with woe,
 Our labours never cease : yet sure there is,
 There is a blest futurity, concealed
 Behind thick night's impenetrable veil.
 We therefore seem mistaken, when we dote
 On yonder sun, that o'er this nether earth
 Displays its glittering beams, because we know
 No other life, nor have the realms beneath
 Been e'er laid open : but by tales, devised
 To cheat, at random are we borne away.

PHÆ. Lift up my body, prop my sinking head,

Each limb, my friends, has lost its strength; sustain,
O ye who on your wretched mistress tend,
My hands, which hang quite motionless: away
With cumbrous ornaments, the caul remove,
And let these tresses o'er my shoulders flow.

NUR. Daughter, be cheerful, and compose to rest
Thy languid frame: thou, if with patience armed
And generous fortitude of soul, wilt bear
Thy sickness better. For mankind are doomed
By fate to struggle with a load of ills.

PHÆ. How shall I drink at yonder limpid fount
The cooling waters, and 'midst grassy vales
Recline my wearied limbs beneath the shade
Of spreading alders?

NUR. What confused discourse
Escapes thee? Utter not before the crowd
Such words as closely border on distraction.

PHÆ. Lead to yon mount; I tread the piny grove,
Where the staunch hounds along the mazy track
Follow their prey, and, lightly bounding, seize
The dappled stag. Ye gods, with my shrill voice
What joy to rouse them, while my auburn hair
Floats in the wanton gale, and brandish round
In my firm hand Thessalia's pointed lance.

NUR. Whence, O my child, proceed these anxious cares?
What business with the chase hast thou? Why thirst
For the pure fountain, while a constant spring,
Whose waters thou mayst drink, flows hard beside
The citadel?

PHÆ. Dread Artemis, thou goddess
Presiding o'er yon sacred lake, who aid'st
The fleet-hoofed racer, bear me o'er thy fields
To tame Hennesia's coursers.

NUR. Why repeat
These incoherent words? But now to climb
The mountain's lofty summit was thy wish
That thou might'st hunt, then on the sandy beach
To drive thy steeds. O for an abler seer
Who can expound what god with iron curb
Subdues my daughter and perverts thy soul.

PHÆ. Ah, what have I been doing ? Wretched me !
 From my right senses whither have I wandered ?
 Into this frenzy I, alas ! am plunged
 By some malignant demon. Yet once more
 Cover my head. The words which I have spoken
 Fill me with conscious shame, and many a tear
 Streams down my cheeks ; I feel the rising blush,
 And know not where to turn these eyes. The pang,
 When reason reassumes her throne, is great.
 Though madness be an evil : yet 'tis best
 When in that state unconscious we expire.

NUR. Thee thus I cover : but ah, when will death
 Cover my body ? A long life hath taught me
 Full many a useful lesson. Friendships formed
 With moderation for the human race
 Are most expedient, and not such as pierce
 The marrow of their souls : with the same ease
 As they the sacred chords entwine they ought
 To slacken them at will. But for one heart
 To suffer twofold anguish, as I grieve
 For my unhappy mistress, is a load
 Beyond endurance. 'Tis remarked, there springs
 From all sensations too intense, more pain
 Than pleasure, and our health they oft impair.
 A foe to all excess, I rather praise
 This sentence, " Not too much of anything ;"
 And in my judgment will the wise concur.

CHOR. Thōu aged dame, who hast with steadfast zeal
 Attended royal Phædra, we observe
 What agonies she suffers, but discern not
 The nature of her malady ; and wish
 By thee to be instructed whence it springs.

NUR. I know not ; for no answer will she give
 To my inquiries.

CHOR. Nor the source whence rise
 Her sufferings ?

NUR. Your account and mine agree :
 For she on all these points remains still dumb.

CHOR. How faint and wasted seems that graceful
 form !

NUR. No wonder : since she tasted any food
This day's the third.

CHOR. By Ate's wrath o'ercome,
Or does she strive to die ?

NUR. To die she strives,
And by such abstinence her life would end.

CHOR. Strange is thy tale : this cannot please her lord.

NUR. From him she hides her sickness, and pretends
To be in health.

CHOR. If in her face he look,
Can he not read it ?

NUR. To a foreign land
From hence, alas ! he went, nor yet returns.

CHOR. Why art thou not more urgent to explore
This malady, these wanderings of her soul ?

NUR. Without effect all methods have I tried :
Yet with the self-same zeal will I persist,
That ye may testify the strong attachment
Which I to my unhappy queen have borne.
O my loved daughter, let us both forget
What we have said : be thou more mild, that gloom
Which overcasts thy brow, those harsh resolves,
Lay thou aside, and if to thee erewhile
I spoke amiss, in milder accents now
Will I express myself ; if under pains
Thou labour, such as may not be revealed,
To succour thee thy female friends are here.
But if the other sex may know thy sufferings,
Let the physician try his healing art.
In either case, why silent ? It behoves thee,
O daughter, to reply ; and, if I speak
Unwittingly, reprove me, if aright,
With wholesome admonition, O concur.
Say somewhat : cast one look this way. Ah me !
But listen to this truth, though more perverse
Than ocean's waves : thy children, if thou die,
Will be deserted, and can have no share
In the paternal house : for his first queen,
That martial Amazonian dame, hath borne

Their sire a son to lord it o'er thy race,
Though illegitimate, with liberal views
Trained up from infancy, him well thou know'st,
Hippolytus.

PHÆ. Ah me !

NUR. Doth then that name
Affect thee ?

PHÆ. You have ruined me ; peace, peace :
Be silent, I conjure you by the gods,
Speak of that man no more.

NUR. With open eyes,
And senses now restored, canst thou neglect
Thy children's interest, nor preserve thy life ?

PHÆ. I love my children : but another storm
Assails me.

NUR. O my daughter, sure thy hands
Are undefiled with blood ?

PHÆ. My hands are pure,
Yet doth pollution harbour in my soul.

NUR. Proceeds this mischief from some foe ?

PHÆ. A friend—
An unconsenting friend, alas !—destroys me,
Nor do I perish through my own consent.

NUR. Hath Theseus wronged thee ?

PHÆ. May I ne'er be found
To have injured him !

NUR. Then what important cause
Precipitates thy death ?

PHÆ. Indulge my error ;
For I 'gainst you offend not.

NUR. My assent
To such request would be a breach of duty.

PHÆ. What mean you by this violence ? Why hang
Upon my hand ?

NUR. In suppliant posture thus,
Thus to thy knees for ever will I cling.

PHÆ. If you, unhappy woman, heard my woes,
You would partake them.

NUR. What severer woe

Can possibly befall me than the loss
Of thee, my honoured mistress? For I see
Thou art resolved to perish.

PHÆ.
To me will bring renown.

This affair

NUR. Why then conceal
Those merits into which I wish t' inquire?

PHÆ. Me virtuous motives prompt to deeds of shame.

NUR. Reveal those motives, hence shalt thou appear
More noble.

PHÆ. O depart, I by the gods
Conjure you, and release my hand.

NUR. Not thus,
If this request from me thou still withhold.

PHÆ. I will comply ; for you, my aged suppliant,
Such due respect I entertain.

NUR. In silence
Will I attend ; now is it thine to speak.

PHÆ. My wretched mother, what a love was thine !

NUR. Why shouldst thou name her passion for that bull?

PHÆ. And you, my hapless sister, Bacchus' wife—

NUR. What ails thee? Why dost thou recount the shame
Of these thy kindred?

PHÆ. But of me the third,
How wretched is the fate !

NUR. Thou strik'st me dumb.
Where will this history end?

PHÆ. Thence spring my woes,
Woes of no recent date.

NUR. I understand
As little of the secret I would learn,
As if thou still wert silent.

P.H.E. How should you
Divine my thoughts so as t' anticipate
What I would speak?

NUR. No prophetess am I,
These mysteries with precision to unfold.

PHÆ. Say what is that which men entitle love?

NUR. Love is a mixture formed of sweetest joys
And torments most severe.

PHÆ. The last of these
Have I experienced.

NUR. Daughter, hark, what solicit thou?
For whom thus burn'st thou with forbidden fires?

PHÆ. Who is that son of th' Amaltheian dame?

NUR. Mean'st thou Hippolytus?

PHÆ. By you, not me.
That name was uttered.

NUR. Ah, what words are these?
How hast thou ruined me! This, O my friends,
Is not to be endured; I cannot live
To bear it: to these eyes the lump of day
Grows odious; the encumbrance of this body
Will I cast off, nor on such tenure hold
A being I abhor. And now farewell
For ever! Count me dead. Chaste maidens yield
With some reluctance, yet to lawless love
At length they yield. Venus is then no goddess,
But somewhat more than goddess: for my queen
And me, and this whole house, hath she destroyed.

CHORUS.

STROPHE.

Too clear thou heard'st the royal dame confess
The horrors which her bosom stung:
O had I died ere this severe distress
Shook reason's seat and fired her frantic brain!
Thy sorrows are by Heaven decreed,
Ye miseries on which mortals feed:
Thy shame lies open to the sun,
And thou, my royal mistress, art undone.
Short is thy fate,
What cruel fate,
Such as with life alone has end,
Shall to the grave thy steps attend!
I see, I see through time's deep gloom,
These maidens fall by Venus' doom:
Such revolution is at hand,
Thee, hapless Creon's nymph, the fates demand.

PHÆ O ye Træzenian matrons, who reside
 On this extremity of the domains
 Where Pelops ruled ; through many a wakeful night
 Have I considered whence mankind became
 Thus universally corrupt, and deem
 That to the nature of the human soul
 Our frailties are not owing, for to form
 Sound judgments is a privilege enjoyed
 By many. But the matter in this light
 Ought to be viewed ; well knowing what is good,
 We practise not. Some do amiss through sloth,
 O'hers to virtue's rigid laws prefer
 Their pleasures ; for with various pleasures life
 Is furnished ; conversation lengthened out
 Beyond due bounds ; ease, that bewitching pest
 And shame, of which there are two kinds—one leads
 To virtue, by the other is a house
 Involved in woe ; but if the proper season
 For our expressing shame were ascertained
 With due precision, things which bear one name
 Could not have differed thus. When in my mind
 I had revolved these thoughts, to me it seemed
 As if no magic had sufficient power
 To warp the steadfast purpose of my soul.
 Here I to you the progress of my heart
 Will next unfold, since love with his keen shafts
 These wounds inflicted ; studious how to bear,
 As it became me, this abhorred disease,
 I from that time have by a wary silence
 Concealed the pangs I suffer. For the tongue
 Must not be trusted, well can it suggest
 To others wholesome counsels when they err,
 Though to its owner oft it proves the source
 Of grievous ills. I next this amorous rage
 With firmness was determined to endure,
 And conquer it by chastity. At length,
 When all these sage expedients proved too weak
 O'er Venus to prevail, my best resource
 I thought was death : none hath a right to blame

redundant

These counsels. May my virtues be conspicuous ;
But when I act amiss, I would avoid
Too many witnesses. That on such deed,
And e'en the inclination to transgress,
Disgrace attends, I knew, and was aware
That if from honour's paths a woman swerve
She to the world is odious. On her head
Be tenfold ruin heaped who first presumed
To introduce adulterers, and defile
The nuptial couch ; from those of nobler birth
Begun this evil through our sex to spread.
For when foul deeds please those who erst have borne
A virtuous character, to souls depraved
They recommend themselves beneath a form
Of seeming excellence. Those too I hate
Whose words are modest, but their lives impure
In private. O thou goddess, who didst rise
From ocean, lovely Venus, how can these
Without a blush their injured lords behold ?
Tremble they not, lest their accomplice darkness,
Or lest the vaulted roofs of their abodes,
Should send forth an indignant voice ? This robs
Your queen of life, my friends : so shall the charge
Of having shamed my lord, my children shamed,
Be never urged against me : free and blest
With liberty of speech, in the famed city
Of Athens, they shall dwell, maternal fame
Transmitted for their portion. E'en the man
Of dauntless courage dwindles to a slave
If conscious that his mother or his sire
Have acted wickedly. One only good,
A just and virtuous soul, the wise affirm,
Strives for pre-eminence with lie : for time,
At length, when like some blooming nymph her charms
Contemplating, he to our eyes holds up
His mirror, every guilty wretch displays.
Among that number may I ne'er be found !

CHOR. Wherever we discern it, O how fair
Is modesty, that source of bright renown !

NUR. O queen, at first, an instantaneous shock,
I, from the history of thy woes, received :
Now am I sensible my fears were groundless.
But frequently the second thoughts of man
Are more discreet ; for there is nothing strange,
Nought, in thy sufferings, foreign to the course
Of nature : thee the goddess in her rage
Invades. Thou lov'st. And why should this surprise ?
Many as well as thee have done the same.
Art thou resolved to cast thy life away
Because thou lov'st ? How wretched were the state
Of those who love, and shall hereafter love,
If death must thence ensue ! For though too strong
To be withstood, when she with all her might
Assails us, Venus gently visits those
Who yield ; but if she light on one who soars
With proud and overweening views too high,
As thou mayst well conceive, to utter scorn
Such she exposes ; through the boundless tracts
Of air she glides, and reigns 'midst ocean's waves :
All things from her their origin derive,
'Tis she that in each breast the genial seeds
Of potent love infuses, and from love
Descends each tribe that fills the peopled earth.
They who with ancient writings have conversed,
And ever dwell among the tuneful Nine,
Know how to Theban Semele's embrace
Flew amorous Jove, how bright Aurora stole
Young Cephalus, and placed among the gods
The object of her passion : yet in Heaven
They still reside, where unabashed they meet
Their kindred gods ; those gods, because they feel
A sympathetic wound, I deem, indulge
Their weakness : and wilt thou refuse to bear
Like imperfections ? Nature on these terms
Decreed thou from thy father shouldst receive
Thy being : look for other gods, or yield
Submission to these laws. Hast thou observed,
How many husbands, men who are endued

With a superior wisdom, when they see
 The nuptial bed by secret lust defiled,
 Appear as though they saw not : and how oft
 The fathers, if their sons transgress, connive
 At their unhappy passion ? To conceal
 Unseemly actions is no trifling part
 Of human wisdom ; nor should man his life
 Form with too great precision ; for the roof,
 The covering from the storm, the builder leaves
 Less fair, less highly finished. If immersed
 In evils great as those thou hast described,
 How canst thou hope to 'scape ? But if thy virtues,
 Since thou art only human, far exceed
 Thy failings, it is well with thee : desist,
 O my loved daughter, from thy evil purpose,
 And cease to utter these reproachful words :
 For there is nought but contumelious pride
 In thy endeavour to be yet more perfect
 Than the immortal gods : endure thy passion
 With fortitude, since 'twas the will divine
 That thou shouldst love : but give a prosperous turn,
 If possible, to thy disease. For songs
 There are with magic virtues fraught, and words
 Which soothe the soul : hence an effectual cure
 May be obtained : in such discovery man
 Would long in vain be busied, to our sex
 If no spontaneous stratagem occur.

CHOR. Though her advice, amid thy present woes,
 O Phædra, be more useful, I applaud
 Thy better purpose : yet applause unsought
 May haply give offence, and to thine ear
 Convey sounds harsher than her specious words.

PHÆ. 'Tis this, e'en this, too plausible a tongue,
 Which states administered by wholesome laws,
 And houses of the mighty, hath o'erthrown :
 Nor should we utter what delights the ear,
 But for renown a generous thirst instil.

NUR. What means this grave harangue ? No need
 hast thou

Of well-turned phrases, but the man thou lov'st.
 Look out with speed for those who, in clear terms,
 Will to the prince thy real state unfold.
 But had not such calamities assailed
 Thy life, and thou remained a virtuous dame,
 I ne'er, to gratify thy wild desires,
 Would have enticed thee to a lawless bed :
 But now this great exertion, to preserve
 Thy life, is such as envy could not blame.

PHÆ. Detested speech ! Will you ne'er close that
 mouth,
 And the ungrateful repetition cease
 Of words so infamous ?

NUR. What I proposed,
 Though culpable it be, far better suits
 Thy interests than severer virtue's rules ;
 For indiscretion, if it save thy life,
 Hath far more merit than that empty name
 Thy pride would make thee perish to retain.

PHÆ. I by the gods conjure you to desist
 (For you, in terms too plausible, express
 Things that are infamous), nor in this strain
 Attempt to prove that, yielding up my soul
 To love, I shall act right : for if you paint
 Foul deeds with specious colours, in the snares
 From which I now am 'scaping I afresh
 Shall be entangled.

NUR. Hadst thou earlier formed
 These rigid notions, thou shouldst ne'er have erred.
 But since this cannot be, my counsel hear :
 From thee this second favour I request ;
 I in my house have philtres to assuage
 The pangs of love (which but just now occurred
 To my remembrance) ; these, nor to disgrace
 Exposing thee, nor of such strong effect
 As to impair thy reason, yet will work
 On this thy malady a perfect cure,
 Unless through mere perverseness thou refuse
 To make th' experiment : for we from him

Thou lov'st, must either take a sign, a word,
Or fragment of his robe, to join two hearts
In mutual love.

PHÆ. But is this wondrous medicine
You recommend an ointment or a potion?

NUR. I cannot tell. Search for a cure, my child,
And not instruction.

PHÆ. Greatly do I fear
Your wisdom will be carried to excess.

NUR. Know then thou art disposed to be alarmed
At everything. But whence arise these terrors?

PHÆ. Aught that hath passed, lest you to Theseus' son
Should mention.

NUR. Peace, O daughter, be it mine
To manage this aright : I only sue,
Benignant goddess, sprung from ocean's waves,
That thou, O Venus, wouldst my projects aid.
But to our friends within, will it suffice
The rest of my intentions to unfold.

[Exit NURSE.

CHORUS.

ODE.

I. 1.

O love, whose sweet delusions fly,
Instilling passion through the eye,
And steal upon the heart,
Never thus my soul engage,
Come not with immoderate rage,
Nor choose thy keenest dart :
Not the lightning's awful glare,
Not the thunderbolts of Jove,
Such destructive terrors bear,
As strongly vibrate in the shafts of love.

I. 2.

On Alpheus' banks in vain, in vain,
Or at Apollo's Delphic fame,
Whole herds of slaughtered kine
Doth Greece present, if we neglect

Venus' son, who claims respect,
 The genial couch his shrine :
 With the vengeance of a foe,
 If the deity invades,
 On man he pours forth every woe,
 And crowds with victims all the Stygian shades.

II. 1.

By Venus was Œchalia's maid,
 Of hymeneal bonds afraid,
 Consigned in days of yore,
 Like a wild filly to the yoke,
 Espoused 'midst horrid slaughter, smoke,
 And rites profaned with gore ;
 Indignant was the virgin led,
 Streaming with dishevelled hair,
 To the stern Alcides' bed,
 While bridal shouts were mingled with despair.

II. 2.

Unite, thou sacred Theban wall,
 And fountain famed from Dirce's fall,
 To witness with what might
 Resistless Cytherca came,
 Brandishing ethereal flame ;
 To everlasting night,
 She, beauteous Semele consigned,
 Who to Jove Lyæus bore :
 Her breath's a pestilential wind,
 Our heads she like the bee still hovers o'er.

PHÆ. Restrain your tongues : we, O my friends, are
 ruined.

CHOR. O Phædra, say what terrible event
 In thy abode hath happened ?

PHÆ. Not a word
 Must now be uttered : I would hear these sounds
 Which issue from the palace.

CHOR. We are silent :
 Yet must this prelude sure denote some ill.

PHÆ. Wretch that I am ! How dreadful are my woes !

CHOR. What shrieks, alas ! are these—what clamorous
sounds

By thee now uttered ? Speak, my hapless queen,
What sudden rumour terrifies thy soul ?

PHÆ. We are undone, but stand ye at these doors
And listen to the uproar raised within.

CHOR. Thou to those portals art already close,
And in the voice which issues from the palace
Hast a great interest, therefore say what ill
Hath happened.

PHÆ. Stern Hippolytus, the son
Of that intrepid Amazonian dame,
In loudest tone full many a horrid curse
Is uttering 'gainst my servant.

CHOR. A mere noise
Is all I hear, yet cannot I collect
A single word distinctly : passing through
These doors their sound hath surely reached thine ear.

PHÆ. He plainly calls her harbinger of vice,
And the betrayer of her sovereign's bed.

CHOR. Wretch that I am ! Thou, O my dearest queen,
Hast been betrayed. What counsel can I give ?
The mystery is laid open ; thou art ruined—
Utterly ruined.

PHÆ. Ah !

CHOR. Thy friends have proved
Unfaithful to their trust.

PHÆ. To her I owe
My ruin, who, though prompted by her love,
Unwisely my calamity disclosed,
Hoping the desperate malady to heal.

CHOR. What part, alas ! remains for thee to act,
Surrounded by inevitable mischiefs ?

PHÆ. But one expedient for my present ills
I know ; their only cure is instant death.

HIPPOLYTUS, NURSE, PHÆDRA, CHORUS.

HIP. Earth, mother of us all, and sun, whose beams

Diffuse their splendour wide, what words, unfit
For any tongue to utter, reached these ears !

NUR. Peace, O my son, lest some one hear thy voice.

HIP. I cannot bury such atrocious crimes
As these in silence.

NUR. By that fair right hand,
Thee I implore.

HIP. Profane not by your touch
My garment.

NUR. Grovelling at thy knees, I crave
Thou wouldst not ruin me.

HIP. Why wish to check
My tongue, if you, as you pretend, have said
Nought that is blamable ?

NUR. Yet must my words
On no account be published

HIP. To the world
What's virtuous may with honour be revealed.

NUR. Forget not thus the reverence, O my son,
Due to a solemn oath.

HIP. Although my tongue
Hath sworn, my soul is from the compact free.

NUR. O thou rash youth, what mean'st thou ? Art thou
bent
On the destruction of thy friends ?

HIP. I hold
The friendships of the wicked in abhorrence.

NUR. Forgive me : error is the lot of man.

HIP. By a fair semblance to deceive the world,
Wherefore, O Jove, beneath the solar beams
That evil, woman, didst thou cause to dwell ?
For if it was thy will the human race
Should multiply, this ought not by such means
To be effected : better in thy fane
Each votary, on presenting brass or steel,
Or massive ingots of resplendent gold,
Proportioned to his offering, might from thee
Obtain a race of sons, and under roofs
Which genuine freedom visits, unannoyed

By women, live. But to receive this worst
Of evils, now no sooner are our doors
Thrown open than the riches of our house
We utterly exhaust. How great a pest
Is woman this one circumstance displays ;
The very father who begot and nurtured,
A plenteous dower advancing, sends her forth,
That of such loathed incumbrance he may rid
His mansions : but the hapless youth, who takes
This noxious inmate to his bed, exults
While he caparisons a worthless image,
In gorgeous ornaments and tissued vests
Squandering his substance. With some noble race
He who by wedlock a connection forms
Is bound by hard necessity to keep
The loathsome consort ; if perchance he gain
One who is virtuous sprung from worthless sires,
He by the good compensates for the ills
Attending such a union. Happier he,
Unvexed by these embarrassments, whose bride
Inactive through simplicity, and mild,
To his abode is like a statue fixed.
All female wisdom doth my soul abhor.
Never may the aspiring dame, who grasps
At knowing more than to her sex belongs,
Enter my house : for in the subtle breast
Are deeper stratagems by Venus sown :
But she whose reason is too weak to frame
A plot, from amorous frailties lives secure.
No female servant ever should attend
The married dame, she rather ought to dwell
Among wild beasts, who are by nature mute,
Lest she should speak to any, or receive
Their answers. But the wicked now devise
Mischief in secret chambers, while abroad
Their confidants promote it : thus, vile wretch,
In privacy you came, with me to form
An impious treaty for surrendering up
My royal father's unpolluted bed.

Soon from such horrors in the limpid spring
 My ears will I make pure : how could I rush
 Into the crime itself, when, having heard
 Only the name made mention of, I feel
 As though I some defilement thence had caught ?
 Base woman, know 'tis my religion saves
 Your forfeit life, for by a solemn oath
 If to the gods I had not unawares
 Engaged myself, I ne'er would have refrained
 From stating these transactions to my sire ;
 But now, while Theseus in a foreign land
 Continues, hence will I depart, and keep
 The strictest silence. But I soon shall see,
 When with my injured father I return,
 How you and your perfidious queen will dare
 To meet his eyes, then fully shall I know
 Your impudence, of which I now have made
 This first essay. Perdition seize you both :
 For with unsatiated abhorrence, still
 'Gainst woman will I speak, though some object
 To my repeating always the same charge :
 For they are ever uniformly wicked :
 Let any one then prove the female sex
 Possest of chastity, or suffer me,
 As heretofore, against them to inveigh.

[Exit HIPPOLYTUS.]

CHORUS.

ANTISTROPHE.

O wretched woman's inauspicious fate !
 What arts, what projects can we find,
 To extricate ourselves, ere yet too late,
 From our distress, or how the snare unbind ?
 PHÆ. Just are the sufferings I endure :
 Thou earth and sun, my anguish cure.
 How, O my friends, shall I avoid
 The stroke of fate before I am destroyed ?
 Or how conceal
 The pangs I feel ?

What tutelary god is near,
What friendly mortal will appear
To aid me in this hour of shame?
Afflictions and an evil name
The remnant of my life must vex :

I now am the most wretched of my sex.

CHOR. Alas ! all now is over ; O my queen,
The stratagems thy hapless servant framed
Fail of success, and desperate are thy fortunes.

PHÆ. O villanous destroyer of your friends,
How have you ruined me ! May Jove my grandsire
Uproot you in his vengeance from the earth,
And smite with thunderbolts that perjured head.
When I your baleful stratagems foresaw,
How oft did I enjoin you to conceal
That fatal truth, from whose discovery spring
The torments I endure : but you the secret
Contained not, hence with an unspotted fame
I cannot die, but some fresh scheme must forge.
For this rash youth, his soul with anger fired,
Will to his father my offence relate,
Inform the aged Pitthens of my woes,
And with this history, to my foul reproach,
Fill the whole world. May just perdition seize
Both you and all who by dishonest means
Their unconsenting friends are prompt to aid.

NUR. Thou, O my royal mistress, mayst condemn
The fault I have committed : for thy griefs
Are so severe that they awhile o'ercome
Thy better judgment. But wouldst thou admit
My answer, I could make one ; thee I nurtured,
And in thy happiness an interest feel.
But searching for a medicine to remove
Thy sickness, what I least could wish I found.
Success had stamped me wise : for by events
Are our opinions influenced.

PHÆ. Is it just,
And satisfactory, thus first to wound,
And then dispute with me ?

NUR. We dwell too long
On this unhappy subject : I confess
My folly : but, O daughter, there are means
To extricate thee still from all thy woes.

PHÆ. End this harangue; you counselled me amiss
At first, and undertook a vile design.
Go mind your own affairs: be mine the task,
What interests me, to settle as I ought. [Exit NURSE.
But, O my noble friends, Trœzenian dames,
Thus far indulgent to my earnest prayer,
In silence bury what you here have heard.

CHOR. I call, Diana, venerable daughter
Of Jove, to witness I will ne'er reveal
Aught of thy sorrows.

PHÆ. Ye have spoken well.
But after weighing all things in my mind,
I one expedient have at length devised
In this calamity, which may secure
To my loved sons an honourable life,
And to myself, encompassed by such woes
As now befall me, some relief afford.
For I will never scandalize the house
Of Crete, nor come, after so base a deed,
Into the presence of offended Theseus,
To save one single life.

CHOR. Art thou then bent
On mischief such as cannot be recalled?

PHÆ. To die is my resolve: but by what means
I must deliberate.

CHOR. More auspicious words
Than these I crave.

PHÆ. All I from you expect
Is wholesome counsel. For the Cyprian queen,
To whom I owe my ruin, I this day
Shall gratify, thus yielding up my life,
Vanquished by ruthless love. But after death
I to another shall become a curse ;
Hence shall he learn no longer to exult
In my disastrous fortunes, but acquire
Discretion, while my anguish he partakes. [*Exit PHÆDRA.*]

CHORUS.

ODE.

I. 1.

To where yon rock o'erhangs the main
Waft me, ye gods, thence bid me spring,
Transformed into a bird, on vigorous wing
Through trackless ether mid the feathered train :
With rapid pinions would I soar
On high above the Adriatic shore,
And Po's impetuous stream,
Fixed on whose banks that virgin choir,
Who spring from an immortal sire,
Intent on the same dolorous theme,
Still weep for Phaeton's untimely end,
While 'midst the purple tide their amber tears descend.

II. 2.

On to those coasts would I proceed
Where the Hesperides their song
Attune ; no mariner can thence prolong
The voyage, for, his daring bark t' impede,
Neptune those hallowed bounds maintains,
Where Atlas with unwearied toil sustains
The heavens' incumbent load ;
And from a never-failing spring
Ambrosia's streams their tribute bring,
Watering those chambers, Jove's abode :
There the glad soil its choicest gifts supplies
Obedient to the reign of happy deities.

II. 1.

Across yon hoarse resounding main,
O bark of Crete, those hastier gales,
Which caught the snowy canvas of thy sails,
Conveyed my mistress, but conveyed in vain ;
By fate from prosperous mansions torn,
To nuptial rites unhallowed was she borne,
And scenes of future shame :
For surely from her native land,

To the renowned Athenian strand,
 She with a luckless omen came ;
 Though, to the shore their twisted cables bound,
 With joy the sailors leaped on fair Munychia's ground.

II. 2.

Her strength in lingering sickness spent,
 Hence is she ordained to prove
 How great the tortures of unlawful love,
 By the command of angry Venus sent,
 And after struggling long in vain,
 Defeated by intolerable pain,
 Her snowy neck around,
 To bind that galling noose, resolves,
 Which from her bridal roofs devolves,
 Awed by the heaven-inflicted wound :
 Choosing to perish thus with glory blest,
 She, cruel love expels, the soul's tyrannic pest.

MESSENGER, CHORUS.

MES. Ho ! ho ! All ye who near the palace stand,
 With speed come hither ; by the fatal cord,
 Our queen, the wife of Theseus, is destroyed.

CHOR. The deed, alas ! is done. My royal mistress
 Suspended in the noose is now no more.

MES. Why are ye not more swift ? Will no one bring
 The sharpened steel, that, with its aid, this instant
 The bandage we may sever from her neck ?

1st SEMICHOR. What shall we do ? Were it not best, my
 friends,
 To rush into the palace, and our queen
 Loose from the knot which her own hands have tied ?
 2nd SEMICHOR. But why do the young servants, in this hour
 Of woe, absent themselves ? To be too busy
 Is never safe.

MES. Extend the hapless body ;
 Unwelcome office to the lords I serve. [*Exit MESSENGER.*]

CHOR. From what I hear, this miserable dame
 Hath left the world : for they are stretching forth
 Her corse as one who is already dead.

THESEUS, CHORUS.

THE. O woman, know ye what loud voice is that
 Within the palace? From the menial train
 Of damsels, shrieks most grievous reached my ear.
 None of my household, opening wide the gates,
 Deign to receive me with auspicious words
 On my return from the prophetic shrine.
 Hath aught befall'n the venerable Pittheus?
 What though he be already far advanced
 Into the vale of years, yet would his death
 These mansions with a general sorrow fill.

CHOR. Fate in its march, O Theseus, hath not pierced
 The aged : they who in the bloom of youth
 Are now cut off your sorrows will demand.

THE. Ah me ! Hath cruel death then torn away
 One of my sons ?

CHOR. They live, while breathless lies
 Their mother ; and most piteous was her end.

THE. What saidst thou ? Is my dearest Phædra dead ?
 Through what mischance ?

CHOR. She tied the fatal noose.

THE. Had grief congealed her blood ? Or was she
 urged
 To this by some calamitous event ?

CHOR. We only know the fact : for to the palace
 Am I just come, O Theseus, that with yours
 My sorrows I may mingle.

THE. Round these brows
 Why do I wear a garland, but to show
 That I the oracle in luckless hour
 Have visited ? Unbar those doors, my servants,
 Open them wide, that I the wretched corse
 Of my dear wife may view, who by her death
 Hath ruined me.

[*The palace doors are opened, and the body of PHÆDRA
 is discovered, with a veil thrown over it.*]

CHOR. Thy woes, unhappy queen,
 Were dreadful ; yet thou such a deed hast wrought

As in confusion this whole house will plunge :
 Presumptuous, violent, unnatural death
 By thine own hand inflicted : for, ah ! who—
 Who but thyself was author of thy fall ?

THE. Wretch that I am ! How many and how
 great

Are my afflictions ? But of all the ills
 Which I have felt, this last is most severe.
 Me and these mansions with what terrors armed,
 O fortune, dost thou visit ! From some fiend
 This unforeseen dishonour takes its rise.
 A life like mine is not to be endured,
 And worse than death itself : for I so vast
 An ocean of calamity behold,
 That I can never hope to swim to land,
 Or stem these overwhelming waves of woe.
 Thee how shall I accost, or in what terms
 Sufficiently deplore thy wretched fate ?
 Swift as a bird 'scaped from the fowler's hand
 Hence hast thou vanished with impetuous flight,
 To the domains of sullen Pluto borne.
 Grievous, alas ! most grievous are these woes.
 But from some ancient stores of wrath, reserved
 By vengeful Heaven to punish the misdeeds
 Of a progenitor, I sure derive
 This great calamity.

CHOR. Not you alone
 Have such afflictions visited, O king ;
 You but in common with a thousand mourners
 Have lost the noble partner of your bed.

THE. Under earth's deepest caverns would I dwell,
 Amid the shades of everlasting night,
 A wretch best numbered with the silent dead,
 Now I, alas ! for ever am bereft
 Of thy loved converse ; for thou hast destroyed
 Me rather than thyself. Who will inform me
 Whence death, with ruthless destiny combined,
 Thy vitals reached ? Can any one disclose
 The real fact ; or doth this palace harbour
 A menial swarm in vain ? For thee, for thee,

Alas, I grieve ! What sorrows of my house,
Too great to be supported or expressed,
Are these which I have witnessed ! But I perish ;
These mansions are a desert, and my sons
Have lost their mother.

CHOR. Thou hast left, hast left
Thy friends, thou dearest and thou best of women,
Whom the resplendent sun or glimmering moon
E'er visited in her nocturnal round.
O my unhappy, my unhappy queen !
This house what dreadful evils have befallen !
Thy fate bedews these swimming eyes with tears ;
But, shuddering, to the sequel of our woes
Already I look forward.

THE. Ha ! what means
The letter which she clasps in her dear hand,
What fresh intelligence can it contain ?
Hath the deceased here written a request
For aught that to the marriage bed pertains,
And her sons' welfare ? Thou pale shade, rely
On this assurance, that no other dame
The widowed couch of Theseus shall ascend,
Or enter these abodes. Yet with such force
These well-known characters the golden ring
Of her who is no more hath here impressed
Allure me, that the seal I will burst open,
And learn what charge to me she would convey.

CHOR. Some god, alas ! hath in succession heaped
Evil on evil : such my fate, that life
Will be no longer any life to me
After this deed of horror. I pronounce
The house of my devoted kings o'erthrown,
And now no more a house. Yet, O ye gods,
This family, if possible forbear
To crush, and listen to my fervent vow.
Yet, like the soothsayer, my foreboding soul
An evil omen views.

THE. To my past woes,
What woes, alas ! are added, far too great
To be endured or uttered ! Wretched me !

CHOR. What fresh event is this? Speak, if the secret
To ~~me~~ you can disclose.

THE. With loudest voice,
The letter echoes such atrocious crimes
As are not to be borne. To 'scape this load
Of misery, whither, whither shall I fly?
For I, alas! am utterly undone.
What strains of horror have these wretched eyes
Beheld, in that portentous scroll expressed!

CHOR. All that is terrible your words announce.

THE. Within the door of my indignant lips
No longer thus will I contain a deed
Of unexampled guilt. O city, city!
Hippolytus with brutal force hath dared
To violate my bed, and set at nought
Jove's awful eye. O Neptune, O my sire,
Since thou hast firmly promised that thou thrice
Wouldst grant me what I prayed for; now fulfil
One vow, and slay my son, nor let him 'scape
This single day, if thou with me design
To ratify the compact thou hast made.

CHOR. Recall that imprecation to the gods:
For you, O king, your error will perceive;
Attend to my advice.

THE. These ears are closed:
Moreover I will drive him from the land;
For of these twofold fates, or this or that
Must smite him; Neptune, when he hears my curses,
Will plunge the miscreant to the shades of hell;
Else, cast forth from this region, and ordained
To wander in some foreign land, a life
Of the profoundest misery shall he drag.

CHOR. Behold how seasonably your son himself,
Hippolytus, is coming: O subdue,
My royal lord, subdue that baleful rage;
Consult the good of your unhappy house.

HIPPOLYTUS, THESEUS, CHORUS.

HIP. Hearing your voice, I with the utmost speed
Am hither come, O father; though whence rise

These groans I know not, and from you would learn.
 Ha ! what is here ? Your consort, O my sire,
 I see, a breathless corse : this needs must cause
 The greatest wonder. Since I left her living
 How short the intervening space ! But now
 She oped those eyes to view the radiant sun.
 What dire mischance befell her, in what manner
 She died, inform me. Are you silent still ?
 In our calamities of no avail
 Is silence : for solicitous to know
 All that hath passed, with greediness the heart
 Explores a tale of woe ; nor is it just,
 My father, your afflictions to conceal
 From friends, and those who are yet more than
 friends.

THE. O mortals, why, unprofitably lost
 In many errors, strive ye to attain
 A thousand specious arts, some new device
 Still meditating, yet ye neither know
 One rare attainment, nor by your inquiries
 Could ever reach the gift of teaching those
 Who lack discretion how to think aright ?

HIP. The sage you speak of, he who could compel
 Fools to grow wise, must be expert indeed.
 But since the subtle arguments you use
 Are so ill-timed, my sire, I greatly fear
 Your woes should cause your tongue to go beyond
 The bounds of reason.

THE. With some clearer test
 Man ought to have been furnished, to discern
 The thoughts and sever from the real friend
 Each vile impostor. All the human race
 Should have two voices—one of sacred truth,
 No matter what the other : 'gainst each plot
 Devised by foul injustice, hence the first
 Might in perpetual evidence come forth,
 And none could be deceived.

HIP. Hath any friend
 Accused me in your ear, and fixed reproach
 Upon the guiltless ? I with dire amaze

Am smitten : in such incoherent words
Your rage bursts forth that horror fills my soul.

THE. Ah, whither will the mind of man proceed
In its career? Can nature fix no bounds
To impudence? For if this evil take
Still deeper root through each succeeding age,
The son grown more abandoned than the father,
In pity to this world the gods should add
Another world sufficient to contain
All those who swerve from justice and the brood
Of sinners. Look upon that impious wretch,
Though sprung from my own loins, who hath defiled
My nuptial couch; too clearly the deceased
His most atrocious villany hath proved.
Show then thy face before thy injured sire,
Since to this pitch of unexampled guilt
Thou hast proceeded. Yet art thou the man
Who holds familiar converse with the gods
As though his life were perfect? Art thou chaste
And pure from all defilement? By thy boasts
I will not be deluded, nor suspect
Thou canst impose upon the powers divine.
Now glory in thy vegetable food,
Disciple of the tuneful Orpheus, rave
With Bacchus' frantic choir, and let the fumes
Of varied learning soothe thee. Thou art caught.
From me let all take warning, and avoid
Those artful hypocrites who bait the snare
With words denoting great austerity,
While they contrive base projects. She is dead,
And so thou deem'st thyself secure; yet hence
Thy guilt, O miscreant, is more clearly proved.
What weightier oath, what plea canst thou devise
This letter to confute, that thou mayst 'scape
Unpunished for thy crime? Wilt thou allege
She hated thee, and that thy spurious birth
Makes the legitimate thy foes? 'Twill argue
That she was prodigal of life, if thus
She forfeited whate'er her soul held dear

Through enmity to thee. But man belike
 Is privileged from lust, whose power innate
 Misleads frail woman. Well am I aware
 Both male and female are alike exposed
 To danger, oft as Cytherea fires
 The youthful heart, although a partial world
 Forbear to brand our sex with equal shame.
 But wherefore in an idle strife of words
 With thee should I engage, when here, the corse,
 That witness most irrefragable, lies?
 With speed an exile from this land depart,
 Nor dare to enter Athens by the gods
 Erected, or the bounds of my domain.
 For if from thee I tamely should submit
 To wrongs like these, no more would Sinnis tell
 How erst I slew him at the Isthmian pass,
 But say my boasts are vain ; nor would the rocks
 Of Schiron, dashed by the surrounding waves,
 Call me the scourge of villains.

CHOR.

At a loss

Am I of any mortal how to speak
 As truly happy : for their lot who once
 Were blest hath undergone a total change.

HIP. Though dreadful, O my father, is the wrath
 And vehement commotion of your soul,
 The charge against me which now seems so strong,
 If duly searched into, will prove devoid
 Of truth and honour. I am not expert
 At an harangue before assembled crowds,
 Though somewhat better qualified to speak
 Among my youthful comrades, and where few
 Are present : a sufficient cause for this
 May be assigned ; for they who are held cheap
 Among the wise, in more harmonious strains
 Address the people. Yet am I constrained
 By the severe emergency to burst
 The bonds of silence, and begin my speech
 With a discussion of that odious charge
 By you first urged against me, to convict

And bar me from replying. Do your eyes
Behold the sun and wide extent of earth ?
Say, what you list ; of all the numerous tribes
Who here were born, there's not a man more chaste
Than I am : the first knowledge I acquired
Was this—to reverence the immortal gods,
And with those friends associate who attempt
Nought by the laws condemned, but are endued
With a deep sense of virtuous shame, and scorn
Either themselves to practise or to aid
Unseemly actions. I ne'er made a jest
Of those whom I converse with, O my sire,
But to my friends have still remained the same
When they are absent as when near at hand :
And above all, by that peculiar crime
In which you think that you have caught me now,
Am I untainted : by impure delight
I to this day have never been enticed.
Of love and its transactions nought I know,
Except what I from casual talk have heard
Or seen in pictures, but I am not eager
To look on these, for still my soul retains
Its virgin purity. But if no credence
My spotless chastity with you should find,
On you is it incumbent to show how
I was corrupted. Did your consort's charms
Eclipse all other women ? Could I hope
Beneath your roofs to dwell, and with your wife
That I the rich inheritance should gain ?
This sure had been the highest pitch of folly.
But what a bait is empire ! None at all
To those who are discreet, unless a lust
For kingly power already hath corrupted
Those who delight in it O'er all the sons
Of Greece, in every honourable strife,
Is it my great ambition to prevail,
And be the first ; but rather in the state
Would I live happy with my dearest friends,
And occupy the second rank : for bliss

Exempt from every danger, there is found,
Transcending all that royalty can give.
One thing there is by me not mentioned yet :
Though all beside already have you heard.
Had I a single witness like myself,
Of tried veracity, and could debate
With her while yet she lived, you from the fact,
After a strict inquiry, might decide
Which was the criminal. But now, by Jove,
Who guards the oath inviolate, I swear,
And by the conscious ground on which we tread,
That I your consort never did approach—
No, not in will or deed. May I expire
Stript of renown, and overwhelmed with shame,
Torn from my country, my paternal house,
An exile and a vagrant through the world,
Nor may the ocean or the earth receive
My breathless corse, if I have thus transgressed !
I know not whether 'twas through fear she lost
Her life, and more than this I must not say.
With her discretion amply hath supplied
The place of chastity ; I still have practised
That virtue, but, alas ! without success.

CHOR. Sufficient is it to refute the charge
That thou this oath hast taken, and called down
The powers immortal to attest its truth.

THE. Is he not rather an audacious cheat,
Trusting in magic arts, who dares to think
He by an oath can bias the resolves
Of his insulted sire ?

HIP. The part you act
Challenges my astonishment. Were you
My son, and I your father, had you dared
To violate my wife, I would not banish,
But kill you.

THE. Seasonable remark : the sentence
Which on thyself with justice thou hast passed
I will not now inflict ; for instant death
Is grateful to the wretched. But ordained

An exile from thy native land to roam,
A life of tedious sorrow shalt thou drag
In foreign realms ; such are the wages due
To an unrighteous man.

HIP. What means my sire?
Instead of waiting till impartial time
The merits of my conduct ascertain,
Hence will you banish me?

THE. Had I the power,
Beyond the ocean, and where Atlas stands
Upon the utmost limits of the world,
So strong the hatred which to thee I bear—

HIP. What, without searching into any proof
From oath, or witness, or the voice of seers,
Expel me uncondemned from these domains !

THE. This letter, which no soothsayer can require
To make it better understood, the charge
'Gainst thee authenticates; so to those birds
Who hover o'er our heads I bid adieu.

HIP. Why I am not permitted, O ye gods,
To ope my mouth, when I my ruin owe
To you whom I adore? I will not speak :
For he I ought to move hath 'gainst my voice
Closed his obdurate ears : I should infringe
A solemn oath. and sport with Heaven in vain.

THE. To me past all endurance is that mask
Of sanctity which thou assum'st. With speed
Why go'st thou not from thy paternal land?

HIP. Whither can I betake myself? What friend
Will to his house admit an exiled wretch
Charged with this great offence?

THE. Whoe'er receives
Each base invader of the marriage bed,
And with the wicked man delights to dwell.

HIP. What wounds my soul, and from these eyes extorts
The tear, is your believing me so wicked.

THE. There was a proper season for these groans
And all thy forethought, when thou to dishonour
The consort of thy father didst presume.

HIP. O mansions, would to Heaven that ye a voice
Could utter, and your testimony give,
Whether I have transgressed.

THE. Hast thou recourse
To witnesses who lack the power of speech?
Beyond all words this deed thy guilt displays.

HIP. In such position as to view my soul
O could I stand, that I might cease to weep
For the calamities I now endure !

THE. Thou thine own merits hast much more been wont
To reverence, than with pious awe to treat
Thy parents as thy duty doth enjoin.

HIP. Unhappy mother ! wretched son ! Avert
The curse which on a spurious race attends,
From those who share my friendship, righteous gods !

THE. Will ye not drag him from my sight, ye slaves ?
Did you not hear how I long since decreed
He shall be banished !

HIP. They should rue it soon,
If they presumed to touch me. But yourself
May from these realms expel me if you list.

THE. If thou obey not these commands, I will :
For I feel no compassion for thy exile.

[Exit THESEUS.]

HIP. The sentence is, it seems, already passed ;
Wretch that I am ! My doom indeed I know,
Yet know not in what language to express
The pangs I feel. O thou to me most dear
Of all the gods, Latona's virgin daughter,
Who dwell'st with me, companion of the chase,
Far from illustrious Athens let us fly ;
I to that city and Erectheus' land
Now bid farewell. O thou Træzenian realm,
Fraught with each varied pleasure youth admires,
Adieu ! I see thee now for the last time,
And these last parting words to thee address :
Come, O ye youths, my comrades, hither come,
Speak kindly to me now, and till we reach
The frontiers of this country, on my steps

Attend. For ye shall ne'er behold a man
More chaste, though such I seem not to my sire.

[*Exit* HIPPOLYTUS.]

CHORUS.

ODE.

I. I.

When I reflect on Heaven's just sway,
Each anxious thought is driven away ;
But, ah ! too soon, hope's flattering prospect ends,
And in this harassed soul despair succeeds,
When I compare with human deeds
What fate those deeds attends.
At each various period changing,
Formed upon no settled plan,
In a maze of errors ranging,
Veers the precarious life of man.

I. 2.

May the kind gods' paternal care,
Attentive to their votary's prayer,
Grant unalloyed prosperity and wealth,
Let me enjoy, without conspicuous fame.
A character unstained by shame,
With mental ease and health :
Thus exempt from wrinkled sorrow,
Would I ape the circling mode,
Alter my conduct with the morrow,
And snatch each pleasure as it flowed.

II. I.

Now I a heart no longer pure
Against the shocks of fortune can secure,
But feel at length e'en hope itself expire :
Since from the land we see that star, whose light
On Athens shone serenely bright,
Removed by Theseus' ire.
Lament, thick scattered on the shore, ye sands,
Where Træzene's city stands,
And steep mountains, which ascending

With thy hounds to trace the prey,
Thou, Hippolytus, attending
Dictynna, the swift hind didst slay.

II. 2.

No longer the Hennesian steeds,
Yoked to thy chariot, o'er yon sacred meads
Around the ring, wilt thou expertly guide.
The Muse, whose lyre is doomed to sound no more,
Shall the paternal house deplore,
Bereft of thee its pride.
For Dian's haunts beneath th' embowering shade
Now no hand the wreath will braid.
Thou art from this region banished,
Hence is Hymen's torch decayed:
All prospects of thy love are vanished,
The rivalry of many a maid.

III.

By thy calamity inspired,
With plaintive strains will I bewail thy fate,
O wretched mother, who in vain
The throes of childbirth didst sustain.
I with indignant hate
Against the gods themselves am fired.
Ah, gentle graces, smiling at his birth,
Could not you screen by your benignant power
Your guiltless votary, in an evil hour
Sentenced to wander far from his paternal earth?
The servant of Hippolytus, with looks
Which witness grief, I see in haste approach.

MESSENGER, CHORUS.

MES. Ye matrons, whither shall I speed my course
To find the royal Theseus? If ye know,
Inform me; is the monarch here within?

CHOR. Forth from the palace he in person comes.

THESEUS, MESSENGER, CHORUS.

MES. O Theseus, the intelligence I bring
Deserves the serious thoughts of you, and all

The citizens who, or in Athens dwell,
Or on the borders of Trœzene's land.

THE. What mean'st thou? Hath some recent woe
befallen

These two adjacent cities?

MES. In one word,
To sum up all, Hippolytus is dead;
For he but for a moment views the sun.

THE. Say, by what hostile arm the miscreant fell.
Did any one, whose wife with brutal force,
As late his father's, he defiled, assail him?

MES. The fiery coursers who his chariot drew
Destroyed him, and the curses you addressed
To the stern ruler of the deep, your sire,
Against your son.

THE. Thanks, O ye righteous gods;
Now, Neptune, hast thou proved thyself my father,
Since thou my imprecations hast fulfilled.
Inform me how he perished, how the sword
Of justice smote the villain who hath wronged me.

MES. We, near the beach, oft dashed by the hoarse
waves

Of ocean, smoothed his generous coursers' manes,
Yet weeping. For a messenger arrived
With tidings that Hippolytus no more
Would to this realm be suffered to return,
Sentenced by you to miserable exile.

But, to confirm this piteous tale, soon came
The banished prince, and joined us on the strand,
A numerous group of comrades on his steps
Attended. After a long pause, he said,
Ceasing his plaints: "Why still should I lament
My doom, my father's word must be obeyed:
Those steeds, ye servants, harness to the car;
Trœzene is no longer my abode."

Soon as we heard, all hastened: these commands
Scarce was there time to issue, when we brought
The ready coursers harnessed to their lord:
Mounting his chariot then the reins he seized,

When he his feet had in strong buskins clad :
But first with hands outspread invoked the gods,
And cried : " O righteous Jove, here end my life
If I have sinned : but let my father know
How much he wrongs us, whether we expire
Or still behold the light." With lifted thong
The rapid coursers onward then he drove ;
We servants close behind our master's car
Followed, along the Epidaurian road,
Which leads direct to Argos. But at length,
Passing the limits of this realm, we entered
A wilderness adjoining to the coast
Of the Saronian deep : a dreadful sound
Was from the inmost caverns of the earth
Sent forth, like Jove's own thunder, while the steeds,
Astonished, with their heads and ears erect
Towards Heaven, stopped short. An instant terror seized
On all of us ; we wondered whence the sound
Could issue, till at length, as on the beach
We looked, a mighty wave we saw, which reached
The skies, and from our view concealed the cliffs
Of Sciron, the whole isthmus covered o'er,
And Æsculapius' rock, then to a size
The most enormous swollen, and pouring forth
With loud explosion foam on every side,
The tide impelled it onward to the coast
Where stood the harnessed steeds ; amid the storm
And whirlwind's rage the wave disgorged a bull,
Ferocious monster, with whose bellowings filled,
All earth resounded horribly : our eyes
Scarce could endure the sight. With panic fear
The steeds were seized that instant : but meantime
Their lord, who to the managing them long
Had been inured, caught up with both his hands
The reins, and drew them tight, as the rude oar
A sailor plies ; exerting all his strength,
Then backward leaned, and twisted them around
His body : but the raging coursers gnashed
Their steely curbs, and scoured along the field

Regardless of the hand that steered their course,
 Or rein or polished car. Along the plain,
 If he attempted their career to guide,
 The bull in front appeared, to turn them back,
 And e'en to madness scared: but if they ran
 Close to the shelving rocks with frantic rage,
 He, silently approaching, followed hard
 Behind the chariot; 'gainst a rugged cliff,
 Till he the wheel directing, had o'erthrown
 The vehicle. 'Twas dire confusion all:
 Upward the spokes and shivered axle flew;
 The hapless youth, entangled in the reins,
 Confined by an inextricable bond,
 Was dragged along; against the rock his head
 With violence was dashed, and his whole body
 Received full many a wound. These horrid words
 He uttered with a shriek: "Stop, O my steeds,
 Nor kill the master in whose stalls ye fed!
 O dreadful imprecations of my sire!
 Who is at hand to save a virtuous man?"
 Though many wished to rescue him, too late
 We came. But from the broken reins released,
 At length, I know not by what means, he fell,
 In a small portion yet the breath of life
 Retaining. But the horses, from all eyes,
 And that accursed monster, were concealed
 Among the mountains, where I cannot tell.
 Though I indeed, O king, am in your house
 A servant, yet I never can be brought
 To think your son was with such guilt defiled,
 Though the whole race of women should expire
 Suspended in the noose, and every pine
 On Ida's summit were with letters filled;
 So well am I convinced that he was virtuous.

CHOR. The measure of our recent woes is full:
 No means, alas, are left for us to 'scape
 The sentence of unalterable fate.

THE. From hatred to the man who hath endured
 These sufferings I with pleasure heard thy tale:

But now through a just reverence for the gods,
And for that wretch, because he was my son,
I from his woes nor joy nor sorrow feel.

MES. But whither must we bear the dying youth,
To gratify your wish, or how proceed?
Consider well: but if you would adopt
My counsels, you with harshness would not treat
Your hapless son.

THE. The miscreant hither bring;
That I, when face to face I shall behold
Him who denies that he my nuptial bed
Polluted, may convict him by my words,
And these calamities the gods inflict. [*Exit MESSENGER.*]

CHOR. To yours, O Venus, and your son's control,
Whose glittering pinions speed his flight,
The gods incline their stubborn soul,
And mortals yielding to resistless might.

For, o'er land and stormy main,
Love is borne, who can restrain

By more than magic art
Each furious impulse of the heart:
Savage whelps on mountains bred,
Monsters in the ocean fed,

All who on earth behold the solar ray,
And man, his mild behests obey.

For you, O Venus, you alone
Sit on an unrivalled throne,
By each duteous votary feared,
As a mighty queen revered.

DIANA, THESEUS, CHORUS.

DIA. Thee, sprung from noble Ægeus, I command
To listen, for to thee Diana speaks,
The daughter of Latona. Why, O Theseus,
Do these disastrous tidings fill thy heart
With pleasure, when unjustly thou hast slain
Thy son, the false assertions of thy consort
On no clear proof believing? Yet too clear
Is the atrocious guilt thou hast incurred.

Covered with shame, why hid'st thou not thy head
 In gloomy Tartarus, in the realms beneath ;
 Or, this abhorred pollution to escape,
 On active wings why mount'st thou not the skies ?
 In the society of virtuous men
 Thou canst not pass the remnant of thy life.
 Hear me, O Theseus, while I state the ills
 In which thou art involved : though now to thee
 It can avail no longer, thy regret
 Will I excite. The purposes I came for
 Are these : to show that to thy son belongs
 An upright heart, how to preserve his fame
 His life he loses, and that frantic rage
 Thy consort seized, whose conduct hath in part
 Been generous : for, with lawless passion stung,
 By that pernicious goddess, whom myself,
 And all to whom virginity is dear,
 Peculiarly abhor, she loved thy son,
 And while she strove by reason to o'ercome
 Th' assaults of Venus, unconsenting fell
 By those vile stratagems her nurse devised,
 Who to thy son the queen's disease revealed
 Under the awful sanction of an oath ;
 But he, by justice rendered strong, complied not
 With her solicitations, yet no wrongs
 Which he from thee experienced could provoke
 The pious youth to violate that faith
 Which he had sworn to. She meanwhile alarmed,
 Lest to his father he her guilt should prove,
 Wrote that deceitful letter, on thy soul
 Gaining too prompt a credence, and thy son
 Hath by her baleful artifice destroyed.

THE.

Ah me !

DIA. Doth what I have already spoken,
 O Theseus, wound thee ? To the sequel lend
 A patient ear, and thou shalt find just cause
 To wail yet more. Thou know'st thy sire engaged
 That thy petitions thrice he would fulfil ;
 And one of these, O thou most impious man,

HIP. How am I rent,
 Ah me ! through those unrighteous vows pronounced
 By an unrighteous father ! Through my head
 Shoot dreadful pangs, and strong convulsions rend
 My tortured brain. Ah me ! Lay down to rest
 This shattered body ! Ye accursed steeds,
 Though fed with my own hand, have ye destroyed
 And slain your master. Ah, I by the gods
 Entreat you, softly handle, O my friends,
 This wounded frame. Who stands there on my right ?
 Carefully raise me up, and bear along
 With even step a wretch who hath been cursed
 By his mistaken sire. Jove, righteous Jove,
 Behold'st thou this ? I who devoutly worshipped
 The gods, and all the human race excelled
 In chastity, deprived of life am plunged
 Into the yawning subterraneous realms
 Of Orcus. Sure I exercised in vain
 Each pious toil to benefit mankind.
 My pangs return afresh. Let loose your hold !
 Come, death, thou best of medicines. Kill me ! kill me !
 O for a sword to pierce my heart, and close
 In endless slumbers this detested life.
 How inauspicious was my father's curse !
 That lingering vengeance which pursues the guilt
 By my progenitors in ancient days
 Committed, and my kindred who are stained
 With recent murders, terminate in me,
 No longer now suspended. O ye gods,
 Why do ye punish me who had no share
 In those enormities ? But in what words
 Can I express myself, or how escape
 From the oppressive numbness which weighs down
 My senses ? Would to Heaven the fates who haunt
 Pluto's abode, the realm of ancient night,
 Would lay me down in everlasting sleep !

DIA. With what calamity, O hapless youth,
 Hast thou been yoked ! It is thy generous soul
 Which hath destroyed thee.

HIP. From celestial lips
How doth a fragrant odour breathe around !
Amid my sufferings thee did I perceive,
The pangs I feel were instantly assuaged.
Diana sure is here.

DIA. Beside thee stands
Thy favourite goddess.

HIP. Dost thou see my woes,
O thou whom I adore ?

DIA. These eyes behold
What thou endur'st : but they no tear must shed.

HIP. Thy faithful comrade in the sylvan chase,
Thy votary is no more.

DIA. Alas ! no more !
Yet e'en in death to me thou still art dear.

HIP. Nor he who drove thy fiery steeds, and watched
Thy images.

DIA. These stratagems, by Venus,
From whom all mischief takes its rise, were planned.

HIP. Too well I know the goddess who destroyed me.

DIA. For her neglected homage much enraged
Against thee, to the chaste a constant foe.

HIP. Us three I find her hatred hath undone.

DIA. Thy father, thou, and his unhappy wife
Complete that number.

HIP. I bewail my sire.

DIA. Him by her arts that goddess hath misled.

HIP. To you, my father, this event hath proved
A source of woes abundant.

THE. O my son, }
I perish, and in life have now no joy.

HIP. Yet more for you, who have been thus deluded,
Than for myself, I grieve.

THE. My son, I gladly
Would die to save thee.

HIP. Fatal gifts of Neptune
Your father.

THE. Now most earnestly I wish
These lips had never uttered such a prayer.

HIP. What then? You would have slain me, such your wrath.

THE. Because I by the gods was then deprived
Of understanding.

HIP. O that in return

Mankind could with their curses blast the gods!

DIA. Be pacified: for in earth's darksome caves,

The rage of Venus who on thee hath wreaked

Such horrors for thy pure and virtuous soul

I will not suffer unatoned to rest.

For in requital, my vindictive hand

With these inevitable darts shall smite

The dearest of her votaries. But on thee

These sufferings to reward will I bestow

The greatest honours in Trœzene's realm:

For to thy shade, ere jocund Hymen wave

The kindled torch, each nymph her tresses shorn

Shall dedicate, and with abundant tears

For a long season thy decease bewail.

In their harmonious ditties the chaste choir

Of virgins ever shall record thy fate,

Nor pass unnoticed Phœdra's hapless love.

But, O thou son of Ægeus, in those arms

Embrace the dying youth; for 'gainst thy will

Didst thou destroy him. When the gods ordain

That man should err, he cannot disobey.

This counsel, O Hippolytus, to thee

I give; no hatred to thy father bear,

For well thou know'st from whence thy fate arose.

And now farewell! for I am not allowed

To view unholy corpses of the slain,

Or with the pangs of those who breathe their last

Pollute these eyes: too clearly I discern

That thou art near the moment of thy death. [*Exit* DIANA]

HIP. Farewell, blest virgin, grieve not thus to part

From a most faithful votary, who with thee

Hath long held converse. With my sire I end

All strife at thy behest; for to thy words

I still have been obedient. Wretched me!

Already thickest darkness overspreads

These swimming eyes. My father, in your arms
Receive me, and support this sinking frame.

THE. How, O my son, dost thou increase my woes !

HIP. I perish, and already view the gates
Of yon drear realms beneath.

THE. But wilt thou leave
My soul polluted ?

HIP. No, from the foul crime
You I absolve.

THE. What saidst thou ? Shall the stain
Of having shed thy blood no longer rest
On me thy murderer ?

HIP. Let Diana witness,
Who with her shafts subdues the savage brood.

THE. How generous is this treatment of thy sire,
My dearest son !

HIP. Farewell ! a long adieu
I bid to you, my father.

THE. Ah, how pious,
How virtuous is thy soul !

HIP. Implore the gods
That all your race legitimate may tread
In the same path.

THE. Desert me not, my son :
Take courage.

HIP. It is now, alas ! too late,
For, O my sire, I die. Make no delay,
But with this garment cover o'er my face. [He dies.

THE. Minerva's fortress, thou Athenian realm,
Of what a virtuous prince art thou deprived !
Ah, wretched me ! how oft shall I reflect,
O Venus, on the ills which thou hast caused.

CHOR. On our whole city hath this public loss
Fallen unforeseen. Abundant tears shall flow.
When bleed the mighty, their sad history leaves
A more profound impression on the heart.

III

HECUBA
AND OTHER PLAYS



III

	PAGE
HECUBA	9
HERCULES DISTRACTED	45
THE CHILDREN OF HERCULES	85
RHESUS	117
THE TROJAN CAPTIVES	145
THE CYCLOPS	181
HELEN	201
ANDROMACHE	253

INTRODUCTION.

WE left the history of the House of Tantalus with a reference to Helen, as we find her in the translated play which is among those which here complete the collection of the extant works of Euripides.

Menelaus sent ambassadors to Troy to demand back Helen, his wife, whom Paris had carried off. The counsels of Antenor were set aside at Troy, by the persuasions of Paris that gave occasion to the Siege of Troy. Agamemnon, on the throne of the deposed Thyestes, had extended his dominion. Homer gave him command over a hundred ships in the expedition against Troy. Some were from Mycene, which although but six or seven miles from Argos had been capital of a separate kingdom until it was reunited to Argos after the defeat and death of Eurystheus; and when Agamemnon succeeded his father Atreus, he enlarged and beautified Mycene. Twenty-eight unsuccessful suitors of Helen were summoned by Menelaus to contribute aid, and under command of the strongest of the confederates, Agamemnon—who was the brother of Menelaus, and who then had by his wife Clytemnestra three daughters, Iphigenia, Chrysothemis, and Electra, also one son, Orestes, then an infant—the expedition sailed for Troy.

But first, when the confederate fleets met as agreed, in the haven of Aulis they were stayed by a dead calm. Guidance was sought from the Oracle, and the soothsayer Calchas reminded Agamemnon of a vow made in the year of Iphigenia's birth that he would sacrifice to Diana the most beautiful production of the year. That was his daughter, Iphigenia, whom now Diana claimed. The fleet would remain bound in Aulis until the sacrifice of Iphigenia. The story of the sacrifice, of the anger of the maiden's mother Clytemnestra, and her lover Achilles, is told by Euripides in his "Iphigenia in Aulis." The Goddess in the act of sacrifice miraculously substituted a hind for the daughter, whom she wafted in a cloud to her temple among the Scythians at Tauris, where she became a Priestess,

and where it was the custom of the barbarous people to sacrifice every Greek who landed on their shores.

In the siege of Troy, Paris was slain by the arrows of Philoctetes. Helen then married his brother Deiphobus, whom she betrayed to the Greeks. When she came again into the hands of Menelaus, he was soon reconciled to her. In returning from the ten years' siege of Troy, many of the companions of Agamemnon were lost by wreck on the coast of Eubœa, where the father of Palamedes, to avenge the unjust killing of his son in the camp of the Greeks, had set up false lights. Agamemnon came safely to Argos with the captive prophetess Cassandra, whom he intended for himself. This was a new affront to Clytemnestra; who remembered the murder of her first husband Tantalus and her first infant, who remembered also the sacrifice of Iphigenia, and who had found a paramour in Ægisthus, son of Thyestes. Clytemnestra murdered Agamemnon with an axe as he was coming out of the bath, and then married Ægisthus, who took Agamemnon's throne.

The young Orestes was saved from his stepfather by a faithful servant, who carried him to Phocis, and there put him under the protection of Strophius. Electra remained at Argos and was married to a peasant, lest a husband powerful in the State should help to restore to their birthrights the children of Agamemnon.

When Orestes had passed out of childhood, he went for guidance to the Oracle of Apollo at Delphi, and was directed to avenge the murder of his father. He went then, with his inseparable friend Pylades, in disguise to Argos, and was received in a cottage on the boundary of Argos, by Electra and her peasant husband. He learnt that the peasant, strongly attached to the family of Agamemnon, had cancelled the wrong intended by Ægisthus, and had never claimed rights of a husband. Electra was still a maiden princess. Brother and sister then devised and carried out a plan for the killing of their mother Clytemnestra and Ægisthus.

But when the hands of Orestes were stained with his mother's blood, the Furies rose from Hell, and drove him to distraction. Six days after the murder of Clytemnestra, the citizens of Argos met to pass sentence on Orestes and Electra. Menelaus after a voyage from Troy of seven years' long delays, then landed at Nauplia near Argos, and would have helped his nephew Orestes; but he gave up Orestes and Electra to the people of Argos upon being told by Tyndarus that if he interfered he should never return to Sparta. The Council of Argos gave leave to Orestes and Electra to carry out upon themselves its sentence of death. After consulting with Pylades they resolved to kill Helen and seize their uncle's one daughter, Hermione, as hostage. Helen had vanished; Menelaus breathed revenge; Apollo descended to save Orestes from his uncle, and from the people, by declaring

that Orestes had done what the gods required. But Apollo bade him cleanse away pollution of his mother's blood by a year's banishment, after which he was to submit himself to the judgment of the Areopagus at Athens.

Before the Areopagus one of the Furies was his accuser, Apollo witnessed in his favour. The votes of the Court were equal, and Athené gave the casting vote for his acquittal. But still the Furies were implacable, and Orestes, again appealing to Apollo's Oracle, was ordered to bring the statue of Diana from Tauris to Athens. Orestes sailed upon this mission with Pylades, whom he had affianced to his sister Electra. When the friends landed on the coast of Tauris, the barbarous people seized them and they were carried to Iphigenia to be sacrificed according to the custom of the land. When on the point of being sacrificed, discovery was made, and, with help of Minerva, not only the image of the goddess Diana, but also Iphigenia her priestess, was conveyed to Athens, in whose territories, at Brauronia, Iphigenia remained priestess until her death.

Meanwhile Menelaus had married his only daughter, Hermione, to Neoptolemus, the son of Achilles. Neoptolemus, who had offended Apollo by making the god answerable for the death of Achilles, went to Delphi to appease his wrath. Orestes, who sought Hermione for wife, went also to Delphi and persuaded the people there that Neoptolemus sought plunder of the temple. Neoptolemus was, therefore, murdered by the people of Delphi, as he was going unarmed to the temple to propitiate the god. Then Orestes carried off Hermione, and married her, at the same time when his sister Electra was married to Pylades. The plays of Euripides here leave Orestes; ruler on the throne of Agamemnon, reconciled to Menelaus, and married to Hermione, through whom, by right of her mother Helen and her father Menelaus, he may hope to bring also under his rule the dominions of Sparta.

Here ends an abstract of an abstract of the History of the House of Tantalus, as given by Michael Wodhull, Esq., to show the relations to each other of the stories upon which Euripides based many of his plays.

This volume completes our set of English versions of all extant plays of Euripides.

H. M.

April 1888.

EURIPIDES.

HECUBA.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

POLYDORE'S GHOST.

HECUBA.

CHORUS OF CAPTIVE TROJAN

DAMES.

POLYXENA.

ULYSSES.

FEMALE ATTENDANT OF HECUBA.

AGAMEMNON.

POLYMESTOR.

TALTHYBIUS.

SCENE.—THE THRACIAN CHERSONESUS.

THE GHOST OF POLYDORE.

LEAVING the cavern of the dead, and gates
Of darkness, where from all the gods apart
Dwells Pluto, come I Polydore, the son
Of Hecuba from royal Cisseus sprung,
And Priam, who, when danger threatened Troy,
Fearing his city by the Grecian arms
Would be laid low in dust, from Phrygia's realm
In privacy conveyed me to the house
Of Polymestor, of his Thracian friend,
Who tills the Chersonesus' fruitful soil,
Ruling a nation famed for generous steeds ;
But secretly, with me, abundant gold
My father sent, that his surviving children
Might lack no sustenance, if Ilion's walls
Should by the foe be levelled with the ground.
I was the youngest of all Priam's sons,
By stealth he therefore sent me from the realm ;
Nor could my feeble arm sustain the shield,
Or launch the javelin ; but while yet entire
Each ancient landmark on our frontiers stood,
The turrets of the Phrygian state remained
Unshaken, and my brother Hector's spear

Prospered in battle ; nurtured by the man
 Of Thrace, my father's friend, I, wretched youth,
 Grew like a vigorous scion. But when Troy,
 When Hector failed, when my paternal dome
 Was from its basis rent, and Priam's self,
 My aged father, at the altar bled
 Which to the gods his pious hands had reared,
 Butchered by curst Achilles' ruthless son ;
 Me, his unhappy guest, my father's friend
 Slew for the sake of gold, and having slain,
 Plunged me into the sea, that he might keep
 Those treasures in his house. My breathless corse,
 In various eddies by the rising waves
 Of ocean tost, lies on the craggy shore,
 Unwept, unburied. But by filial love
 For Hecuba now prompted, I ascend
 A disembodied ghost, and thrice have seen
 The morning dawn, to Chersonesus land,
 Since my unhappy mother came from Troy.
 But all the Grecian army, in their ships,
 Here anchoring on this coast of Thrace remain
 Inactive ; for appearing on his tomb
 Achilles, Peleus' son, restrained the troops,
 Who homeward else had steered their barks, and claims
 Polyxena my sister, as a victim
 Most precious at his sepulchre to bleed ;
 And her will he obtain, nor will his friends
 Withhold the gift ; for fate this day decrees
 That she shall die : my mother must behold
 Two of her slaughtered children's corpses, mine,
 And this unhappy maid's—that in a tomb
 I may be lodged, where the firm beach resists
 The waves, I to her servant will appear,
 Since from the powers of hell I have obtained
 The privilege of honourable interment,
 And that a mother's hand these rites perform :
 I shall accomplish what my soul desired.
 But on the aged Hecuba's approach,
 Far hence must I retreat ; for from the tent
 Of Agamemnon she comes forth, alarmed
 By my pale spectre. O my wretched mother,
 How art thou torn from princely roofs to view
 This hour of servitude ! what sad reverse
 Of fortune ! some malignant god hath balanced
 Thy present misery 'gainst thy former bliss.

[Exit.

HECUBA, attended by TROJAN DAMSELS.

HEC. Forth from these doors, ye gentle virgins, lead me,
 A weak old woman : O ye nymphs of Troy,

Support your fellow-servant, once your queen
 Bear me along, uphold my tottering frame,
 And take me by this aged hand ; your arm
 Shall be my staff to lean on, while I strive
 My tardy pace to quicken. O ye lightnings
 Of Jove, O Night in tenfold darkness wrapt,
 By such terrific phantoms from my couch
 Why am I scared? Thou venerable earth,
 Parent of dreams that flit on raven wing ;
 The vision I abhor, which I in sleep
 This night have seen, relating to my son,
 Who here is fostered in the Thracian realm,
 And to Polyxena my dearest daughter ;
 For I too clearly saw and understood
 The meaning of that dreadful apparition ;
 Ye tutelary gods of this domain,
 Preserve the only anchor of our house,
 My son, who dwells in Thracian fields, o'erspread
 With snow, protected by his father's friend,
 Some fresh event awaits us, and ere long
 By accents most unwelcome shall the ear
 Of wretchedness be wounded : till this hour,
 By such incessant horrors, such alarms,
 My soul was never seized. Where shall I view
 The soul of Helenus, on whom the god
 Bestowed prophetic gifts, ye Phrygian maids ?
 Where my Cassandra to unfold the dream ?
 With bloody fangs I saw a wolf, who slew
 A dappled hind, which forcibly he tore
 From these reluctant arms, and what increased
 My fears, was this—Achilles' spectre stalked
 Upon the summit of his tomb, and claimed
 A gift, some miserable Trojan captive.
 You therefore I implore, ye gods, avert
 Such doom from my loved daughter,

CHORUS, HECUBA.

CHOR. I to thee,
 To thee, O Hecuba, with breathless speed,
 Fly from the tents of our imperious lords,
 Where I by lot have been assigned, and doomed
 To be a slave, driven by the pointed spear
 From Troy ; by their victorious arms the Greeks
 Have made me captive : nothing can I bring,
 Thy sorrows to alleviate ; but to thee
 Laden with heaviest tidings am I come
 The herald of affliction. For 'tis said,
 Greece in full council hath resolved thy daughter
 A victim to Achilles shall be given.

The warrior mounting on his tomb, thou know'st,
 Appeared in golden armour, and restrained
 The fleet just ready to unfurl its sails,
 Exclaiming, "Whither would ye steer your course,
 Ye Greeks, and leave no offering on my grave?"
 A storm of violent contention rose,
 And two opinions in the martial synod
 Of Greece went forth; the victim, some maintained,
 Ought on the sepulchre to bleed, and some
 Such offering disapproved. But Agamemnon,
 Who shares the bed of the Prophetic Dame,
 Espoused thy interest; while the sons of Theseus,
 Branches from the Athenian root, discussed
 The question largely in each point of view,
 But in the same opinion both concurred,
 And said that never should Cassandra's love
 To great Achilles' valour be preferred:
 Equally balanced the debate still hung,
 When he, that crafty orator, endued
 With sweetest voice, the favourite of the crowd,
 Laertes' son, persuaded all the host,
 Not to reject the first of Grecian chiefs,
 And yield the preference to a victim slave:
 Lest some vindictive ghost, before the throne
 Of Proserpine arising, might relate
 How Greece, unmindful of her generous sons,
 Who nobly perished for their native land,
 From Ilion's fields departed. In a moment
 Ulysses will come hither, from thy breast,
 And aged arms to drag the tender maid.
 But to the temples, to the altars, go,
 In suppliant posture clasp Atrides' knees,
 Invoke the gods of heaven and hell beneath,
 For either thou wilt by thy prayers avert
 Thy daughter's fate, else must thou at the tomb
 Behold the virgin fall distained with gore,
 And gushing from her neck a crimson stream.

HEC. Wretch that I am! ah me! what clamorous sounds,
 What words, what plaints, what dirges shall I find,
 Expressive of the anguish which I feel?
 Opprest by miserable old age, bowed down
 Under a load of servitude too heavy
 To be endured: what sanctuary remains,
 What valiant race, what city will protect me?
 The hoary Priam is no more, my sons
 Are now no more. Or to this path, or that,
 Shall I direct my steps? or whither go?
 Where shall I find some tutelary god?
 Ye Phrygian captives, messengers of ill,

O ye who with unwelcome tidings fraught,
Come hither, ye have ruined me. The orb
Of day shall never rise to fill this breast
With any comfort more. Ye luckless feet,
Bear an infirm old woman to the tent
Of our captivity. Come forth, my daughter,
Come forth and listen to thy mother's voice,
That thou may'st know the rumour I have heard,
In which thy life is interested.

POLYXENA, HECUBA, CHORUS.

POLYX. O mother,
What mean you by those shrieks? what fresh event
Proclaiming, from my chamber, like a bird,
Have you constrained me, urged by fear, to speed
My flight?

HEC. Ah, daughter!

POLYX. With foreboding voice,
Why do you call me? these are evil omens.

HEC. Alas! thy life, Polyxena.

POLYX. Speak out,
Nor aggravate the horrors yet untold
By long suspense. I fear, O mother, much
I fear. What mean those oft repeated groans?

HEC. Thou child of a most miserable mother!

POLYX. Why speak you thus?

HEC. The Greeks, with one consent,
Resolve that on the tomb of Peleus' son
Thou shalt be sacrificed.

POLYX. What boundless woes
Are these which to your daughter you announce!
Yet, O my mother, with the tale proceed.

HEC. Of a most horrible report I speak,
Which says, that, by the suffrage of the Greeks,
It is resolved to take away thy life.

POLYX. O, my unhappy mother, doomed to suffer
Wrongs the most dreadful, doomed to lead a life
Of utter wretchedness: what grievous curse,
Such as no language can express, on you
Hath some malignant demon hurled! no more
Can I, your daughter, share the galling yoke
Of servitude with your forlorn old age;
For like some lion's whelp, or heifer bred
Upon the mountains, hurried from your arms
Shall you behold me, and with severed head
Consigned to Pluto's subterraneous realms
Of darkness, there among the silent dead,
Wretch that I am, shall I be laid. These tears
Of bitter lamentation I for you,

For you, O mother, shed ; but my own life
I heed not, nor the shame, nor fatal stroke,
For I in death a happier lot obtain.

CHOR. To thee, O Hecuba, with hasty step
Behold Ulysses some new message brings.

ULYSSES, HECUBA, POLYXENA, CHORUS,

ULY. Though I presume the counsels of our troops
And their decision are already known
To thee, O woman, yet must I repeat
Th' unwelcome tidings ; at Achilles' tomb,
Polyxena, thy daughter, have the Greeks
Resolved to slay ; me to attend the virgin
Have they commanded : but Achilles' son
Is at the altar destined to preside,
And be the priest. Know'st thou thy duty then ?
Constrain us not to drag her from those arms
With violence, nor strive with me ; but learn
The force of thy inevitable woes :
For there is wisdom, e'en when we are wretched,
In following reason's dictates.

HEC. Now, alas !
It seems a dreadful struggle is at hand,
With groans abounding and unnumbered tears.
I died not at the time I ought to die,
Neither did Jove destroy me ; he still spares
My life, that I may view fresh woes, yet greater,
Wretch that I am, than all my former woes.
But if a slave, who not with bitter taunt,
Or keen reproach, her questions doth propose,
Might speak to freemen, now 'tis time for you
To cease, and give me audience while I ask——

ULY. Allowed, proceed ; for I without reluctance
Will grant thee time.

HEC. Remember you when erst
You came to Troy a spy, in tattered garb
Disguised, and from your eyes upon your beard
Fell tears extorted by the dread of death ?

ULY. I well remember : for by that event
My inmost heart was touched.

HEC. But Helen knew you,
And told me only.

ULY. I can ne'er forget
Into what danger I was fallen.

HEC. My knees
You in a lowly posture did embrace.

ULY. And to thy garment clung with faltering hand.

HEC. At length I saved and from our land dismissed you.

ULY. Hence I the solar beams yet view.

HEC. What language
Did you then hold, when subject to my power?

ULY. Full many were the words which I devised
To save my life.

HEC. Doth not your guilt appear
 From your own counsels? Though your tongue avows
 The generous treatment you from me received
 No benefit on me do you confer,
 But strive to harm me. O ungrateful race
 Of men, who aim at popular applause
 By your smooth speeches; would to Heaven I ne'er
 Had known you, for ye heed not how ye wound
 Your friends, whene'er ye can say ought to win
 The crowd. But what pretence could they devise
 For sentencing this virgin to be slain?
 Are they constrained by fate, with human victims,
 To drench the tomb on which they rather ought
 To sacrifice the steer? or doth Achilles
 Demand her life with justice, to retaliate
 Slaughter on them who slaughtered? But to him
 Hath she done nought injurious. He should claim
 Helen as victim at his tomb, for she
 His ruin caused by leading him to Troy.
 If it was needful that some chosen captive
 Distinguished by transcendent charms should die,
 We were not meant; for the perfidious daughter
 Of Tyndarus is most beauteous, and her crimes
 To ours at least are equal. Justice only
 In this debate supports me: hear how large
 The debt which 'tis your duty to repay
 On my petition: you confess you touched
 My hand, and these my aged cheeks, in dust
 Grovelling a suppliant; yours I now embrace,
 From you the kindness which I erst bestowed
 Again implore, and sue to you: O tear not
 My daughter from these arms, nor slay the maid:
 Sufficient is the number of the slain.
 In her I yet rejoice, in her forget
 My woes; she, for the loss of many children,
 Consols me, I in her a country find,
 A nurse, a staff, a guide. The mighty ought not
 To issue lawless mandates, nor should they,
 On whom propitious fortunes now attend,
 Think that their triumphs will for ever last:
 For I was happy once, but am no more,
 My bliss all vanished in a single day.
 Yet, O my friend, revere and pity me,
 Go to the Grecian host, admonish them
 How horrible an action 'twere to slay

To the illustrious dead ; hence Greece prevails ;
But ye from your pernicious counsels reap
The bitter fruits they merit.

CHOR. Ah, what ills
Ever attend the captive state, subdued
By brutal violence, and forced t' endure
Unseemly wrongs.

HEC. Those words I vainly spoke
Thy slaughter to avert, in air were lavished ;
But, O my daughter, if thy power exceed
Thy mother's, like the nightingale send forth
Each warbled note, to save thy life, excite,
By falling at his knees, Ulysses' pity,
And on this ground, because he too hath children,
Entreat him to compassionate thy doom.

POLYX. I see thee, O Ulysses, thy right hand
Beneath thy robe concealing, see thee turn
Thy face away, lest I should touch thy beard.
Be of good cheer ; I'll not call down the wrath
Of Jove who guards the suppliant, but will follow
Thy steps, because necessity ordains
And 'tis my wish to die ; if I were loth,
I should appear to be an abject woman,
And fond of life : but what could lengthened life
Avail to me, whose father erst was lord
Of the whole Phrygian realm ? Thus first I drew
My breath beneath the roofs of regal domes ;
Then was I nurtured with the flattering hope
That I should wed a monarch, and arrive
At the proud mansion of some happy youth.
Ill-fated princess, thus I stood conspicuous
Amid the dames and brightest nymphs of Troy,
In all but immortality a goddess ;
But now am I a slave, and the first cause
Which makes me wish to die, is that abhorred
Unwonted name ; else some inhuman lord
With gold perchance might purchase me, the sister
Of Hector, and full many a valiant chief,
Might make me knead the bread, and sweep the floor,
And ply the loom, and pass my abject days
In bitterness of woe : some servile mate
Might bring dishonour to my bed, though erst
I was deemed worthy of a sceptred king :
Not thus. These eyes shall to the last behold
The light of freedom. O ye shades receive
A princess. Lead me on then, O Ulysses,
And as thou lead'st despatch me, for no hope,
No ground for thinking, I shall e'er be happy,
Can I discern : yet hinder not by word

Or deed the steadfast purpose I have formed ;
 But, O my mother, in this wish concur
 With me, that I may die ere I endure
 Such wrongs as suit not my exalted rank.
 For whosoe'er hath not been used to taste
 Of sorrow, bears indeed the galling yoke,
 Yet is he grieved, when he to such constraint
 Submits his neck : but they who die may find
 A bliss beyond the living ; for to live
 Ignobly were the utmost pitch of shame.

CHOR. A great distinction, and among mankind
 The most conspicuous, is to spring from sires
 Renowned for virtue ; generous souls hence raise
 To heights sublimer an ennobled name.

HEC. Thou, O my daughter, well indeed hast spoken ;
 Yet these exalted sentiments of thine
 To me will cause fresh grief ; but, if the son
 Of Peleus must be gratified, and Greece
 Avoid reproach, Ulysses, slay not her,
 But me, conducting to Achilles' tomb,
 Transpierce with unrelenting hand. I bore
 Paris, whose shafts the son of Thetis slew.

ULY. Not thee for victim, O thou aged dame,
 But her, Achilles' spectre hath demanded.

HEC. Yet slay me with my daughter ; so shall earth,
 And the deceased who claims these hateful rites,
 A twofold portion drink of human gore.

ULY. Enough in her of victims ; let no more
 Be added : would to Heaven we were not bound
 To offer up this one !

HEC. The dread behests
 Of absolute necessity require,
 That with my daughter I should die.

ULY. What mean'st thou ?
 I know no lord to counteract my will.

HEC. Her, as the ivy clings around the oak,
 Will I embrace.

ULY. Not if to wiser counsels
 Thou yield just deference.

HEC. I will ne'er consent
 My daughter to release.

ULY. Nor will I go,
 And leave her here.

POLYX. Attend to me, my mother,
 And, O thou offspring of Laertes, treat
 The just emotions of parental wrath
 With greater mildness. But, O hapless woman,
 Contend not with our conquerors. Would you fall
 Upon the earth and wound your aged limbs,

'Thrust from me forcibly, by youthful arms
'Torn with disgrace away? Provoke not wrongs
Unseemly; O, my dearest mother, give
'That much-loved hand, and let me join my cheek
To yours; for I no longer shall behold
The radiant orb of yonder sun. Now take
A last farewell, O you who gave me birth;
I to the shades descend.

HEC. But I the light
Am doomed to view, and still remain a slave.

POLYX. Unwedded, reft of promised bridal joys.

HEC. Thou, O my daughter, claim'st the pitying tear:
But I am a most miserable woman.

POLYX. There shall I sleep among the realms beneath,
From you secluded.

HEC. What resource, alas!
For me, the wretched Hecuba is left?

Where shall I finish this detested life?

POLYX. Born free, I die a slave.

HEC. I too, bereft
Of all my children.

POLYX. What commands to Hector,
Or to your aged husband, shall I bear?

HEC. Tell them I of all women am most wretched.

POLYX. Ye paps which sweetly nourished me——

HEC. Alas!

My child's untimely miserable fate.

POLYX. Farewell, my mother, and my dear Cassandra.

HEC. To others in that language speak; be theirs.
The happiness thy mother cannot taste.

POLYX. And thou, my brother Polydore, who dwell'st
Among the Thracians, famed for generous steeds——

HEC. If yet he live; but this I greatly doubt,
Because I am in all respects so wretched.

POLYX. He lives, and when the hour of death is come,
Will close your eyes.

HEC. I'm prematurely dead
While yet alive, bowed down to earth by woe.

POLYX. Now bear me hence, Ulysses, o'er my face
Casting a veil: for ere I at the altar

Am slain, this heart is melted by the plaints
Of my dear mother, and my tears augment

Her sorrows. O thou radiant light; for still
Am I permitted to invoke thy name,

But can enjoy thee only till I meet
The lifted sword, and reach Achilles' tomb.

[*Exeunt* ULYSSES and POLYXENA.]

HEC. I faint, my limbs are all unnerved; return,
My daughter, let me touch that hand once more,

Leave me not childless. O, my friends, I perish ;
 Ah, would to Heaven I could see Spartan Helen,
 In the same state, that sister to the sons
 Of Jove, for by her beauteous eyes was Troy,
 That prosperous city, with disgrace o'erthrown.

CHORUS.

ODE.

I. 1.

Ye breezes, who the ships convey,
 That long becalmed at anchor lay,
 Nor dared to quit the strand;
 As the swift keel divides the wave,
 Say whither am I borne a slave,
 Ordained to tread the Doric land,
 Or Phthia, where beset with reeds,
 Apidanus, the sire of limpid rills,
 Winding a-down the channelled hills,
 Waters the fruitful meads?

I. 2.

Or to that isle, with dashing oar
 Impelled, shall I my woes deplore,
 And on the sacred earth,
 Where first the palm and laurel rose,
 Memorials of Latona's throes,
 Which to the twins divine gave birth,
 Teach the harmonious strain to flow ;
 With Delos' nymphs Diana's praise resound,
 Her hair with golden fillet bound,
 And never-erring bow?

II. 1.

Or, pent in some Athenian tower,
 Devoted to Minerva's power,
 On the robe's tissue ground
 While, shadowed by my needle, spread
 Expressive forms, in vivid thread,
 Picture the goddess whirling round
 Her chariot with unrivalled speed ;
 Or represent the Titan's impious crew,
 Whom Jove's red lightnings overthrew,
 Those monsters doomed to bleed?

II. 2.

Alas ! my sons, a valiant band,
 My fathers, and my native land,

Ye shared the general fate.
Sacked by the Greeks, Troy's bulwarks smoke,
But I, constrained to bear the yoke,
Shall soon behold some foreign state,
To ignominious bondage led;
And leaving vanquished Asia Europe's slave,
Debarred an honourable grave,
Ascend the victor's bed.

TALTHYBIUS, HECUBA, CHORUS.

TAL. Where. O ye Phrygian damsels, shall I find
The wretched Hecuba, who erst was queen
Of Ilion?

CHOR. Prostrate near you on the ground,
Wrapt in her mantle, there she lies.

TAL. Great Jove!
What shall I say? that thou from Heaven look'st down
Upon mankind, or have they rashly formed
A vain opinion, deeming that the race
Of gods exist, though fortune governs all?
Ha! was not this the queen of wealthy Phrygia,
And was not she the happy Priam's wife?
But her whole city by the hostile spear
Is now destroyed, while she a slave, bowed down
By age, and childless, stretched upon the ground,
Defiles with dust her miserable head.
Old as I am, yet gladly would I die
Rather than sink into abhorred disgrace.
Arise, unhappy woman, O lift up
That feeble body, and that hoary head.

HEC. Away! O suffer this decrepit frame
To rest. Why move me! Whosoe'er thou art,
What mean'st thou? why dost thou molest th' afflicted?

TAL. Talthybius: me, the herald of the Greeks,
O woman, Agamemnon hath despatched
To fetch you.

HEC. Com'st thou, by the Greeks ordained,
My friend, to slay me also at the tomb?
How welcome were such tidings; let us go,
With speed conduct me thither.

TAL. To inter
Your daughter, I invite you: both the sons
Of Atreus, and the assembled Grecian host,
Have sent me for that purpose.

HEC. Ah! what say'st thou?
Thou com'st not to inform me I must die,
But to unfold the most disastrous tidings.
Then art thou lost, my daughter, from the arms
Of thy fond mother torn; of thee, my child

Am I bereft. But how did ye destroy her,
Respectfully, or with the ruthless hand
Of hostile rage? Speak, though it wound my soul.

TAL. A second time, in pity to your daughter,
You make me weep; for now while I relate
Her sufferings, tears bedew these swimming eyes,
Such as I shed when at the tomb she perished.
To view the sacrifice the Grecian host
Were all assembled: taking by the hand
Polyxena, on the sepulchral hillock
Achilles' son then placed her: I drew near,
Attended by the chosen youths of Greece,
To hold the tender victim, and prevent
Her struggles. But Achilles' son, uplifting
With both his hands a cup of massive gold,
Poured forth libations to his breathless sire;
And gave a sign to me, through the whole camp
Strict silence to proclaim. I in the midst
Stood up and cried: "Be mute, ye Greeks, let none
Presume to speak, observe a general silence."
The troops obeyed, and through their crowded ranks
Not e'en a breath was heard, while in these words
The chief expressed his purpose: "Son of Pelcus,
My father, the propitiatory drops
Of these libations which invite the dead
Accept; O come and quaff the crimson blood
Of this pure virgin, whom to thee all Greece
And I devote; be thou benign, O grant us
Securely to weigh anchor, to unbind
Our halsters, and on all of us bestow
A happy voyage to our native land
From vanquished Troy." He ceased, and in his prayer
Joined the whole army, when the chief unsheathed
His golden-hilted sword, and gave a sign
To chosen youths of Greece to hold the virgin,
Which she perceived, and in these words addressed
The warriors: "O ye Argives, who laid waste
My city, willingly I die, let no man
Confine these arms, I with undaunted breast
Will meet the stroke. I by the gods conjure you
Release, and slay me as my rank demands
Like one born free; for I from mighty kings
Descend, and in the shades beneath should blush
To be accounted an ignoble slave."
Through all the host ran murmurs of assent,
And royal Agamemnon bade the youths
Release the virgin; they their monarch's voice,
Soon as they heard, obeyed; our lord's behests
The princess too revering, from her shoulder

Down to her waist rent off the purple robe,
 Displayed her bosom like some statue formed
 In exquisite proportion, and to earth
 Bending her knee, in these affecting words
 Expressed herself: "If at my breast thou aim
 The wound, strike here; if at my neck, that neck
 Is ready bared." Half willing, and half loth,
 Through pity for the maid, he with keen steel
 Severed the arteries; streams of blood gushed forth:
 Yet even thus, though at her latest gasp,
 She showed a strong solicitude to fall
 With decency, while stood the gazing host
 Around her: soon as through the ghastly wound
 Her soul had issued, every Greek was busied
 In various labours; o'er the corse some strewed
 The verdant foliage, others reared a pyre
 With trunks of fir: but he who nothing brought,
 From him who with funereal ornament
 Was laden, heard these taunts: "O slothful wretch,
 Bear'st thou no robe, no garland, hast thou nought
 To give in honour of this generous maid?"
 Such their encomiums on thy breathless daughter.
 You, of all women, who in such a child
 Were happiest, now most wretched I behold.

CHOR. Fate, the behests of the immortal gods
 Accomplishing, with tenfold weight hath caused
 This dreadful curse to fall on Priam's house,
 And on our city.

HEC. 'Midst unnumbered ills
 I know not, O my daughter, whither first
 To turn my eyes, for if on one I touch,
 Another hinders me, and I again,
 By a long train of woes succeeding woes,
 To some fresh object am from thence called off;
 Nor can I from my tortured soul efface
 The grief thy fate occasions; yet the tale
 Of thy exalted courage checks my groans,
 Which else had been immoderate. No just cause
 Have we for wonder, if the barren land
 Cheered by Heaven's influence, with benignant suns
 Yields plenteous harvests, while a richer soil
 Deprived of every necessary aid
 Bears weeds alone. But 'midst the human race
 The wicked man is uniformly wicked,
 The good still virtuous, nor doth evil fortune
 Corrupt his soul; the same unsullied worth
 He still retains. Is this great difference owing
 To birth, or education? We are taught
 What virtue is, by being nurtured well,

And he who thoroughly hath learnt this lesson,
 Guided by the unerring rule of right,
 Can thence discern what's base.—My soul in vain
 Hath hazarded these incoherent thoughts.
 But, O Talthybius, to the Greeks repair,
 And strict injunctions give, that no man touch
 My daughter's corse, but let the gazing crowd
 Be driven away. For in a numerous host
 Its multitudes break loose from all restraints,
 The outrages of mariners exceed
 Devouring flame, and whosoe'er abstains
 From mischief, by his comrades is despised.
 But, O my aged servant, take and dip
 That urn in ocean's waves, and hither bring,
 Filled with its water, that the last sad rites
 To my departed daughter I may pay,
 And lave the corse of that unwedded bride,
 Of that affianced virgin : but alas !
 Whence with such costly gifts as she deserves,
 Her tomb can I adorn ? My present state
 Affords them not, but what it doth afford
 Will I bestow, and from the captive dames
 Appointed to attend me, who reside
 Within these tents, some ornaments collect,
 If, unobserved by their new masters, aught
 They have secreted. O ye splendid domes,
 Ye palaces once happy, which contained
 All that was rich and fair ; O Priam thou
 The sire, and I who was the aged mother
 Of an illustrious race, how are we dwindled
 To nothing, stripped of all our ancient pride !
 Yet do we glory, some in mansions stored
 With gold abundant, others when distinguished
 Among the citizens by sounding titles.
 Vain are the schemes which with incessant care
 We frame, and all our boastful words are vain.
 The happiest man is he who, by no ill
 O'ertaken, passes through life's fleeting day.

[*Exit* HECUBA.]

CHORUS.

ODE.

I.

By Heaven was my devoted head
 Menaced with impending ill,
 What time the pines, whose branches spread
 Their tutelary shade o'er Ida's hill,

Were laid by Phrygian Paris low,
That his adventurous bark might stem the tide,
From Sparta's coast to waft the fairest bride
On whom the solar beams their golden radiance throw.

II.

Surrounding labours were at hand
Leagued with the behests of fate ;
Then did such madness seize the land,
As called down vengeance from a foreign state.
The royal swain with dazzled eyes
Gave that decree, the source of all our woes,
When from three rival goddesses he chose
Bright Venus, and pronounced that she deserved the prize.

III.

The spear and death hence raged around,
Hence were my mansions levelled with the ground ;
Staining with tears Eurotas' tide,
Too deeply grieved to share the victor's pride,
The Spartan virgin too in vain
Bewails her favoured youth untimely slain,
While, sprinkling ashes o'er their vest
And hoary head, the matrons bend
O'er their sons' urns ; their groans to Heaven ascend,
They tear their cheeks, and beat their miserable breast.

ATTENDANT, CHORUS.

ATT. Where is the wretched Hecuba, my friends,
Who in her woes surpasses all, or male,
Or of the female race ? her none can rob
Of her just claim, pre-eminence in grief.

CHOR. With the harsh sounds of that ill-boding tongue,
O wretch, what mean'st thou ? wilt thou never cease
To be th' unwelcome herald of affliction ?

ATT. Most grievous are the tidings which I bring
To Hecuba, nor easy were the task
In words auspicious to make known to mortals
Such dire calamities.

CHOR. From her apartment
She seasonably comes forth to give thee audience.

HECUBA, ATTENDANT, CHORUS.

ATT. O most unfortunate, whose woes exceed
All that the power of language can express,
My queen, you perish, doomed no more to view
The blessed light ; of children, husband, city,
Bereft and ruined.

HEC. Nothing hast thou told

But what I knew, thou only com'st t' insult me :
 Yet wherefore dost thou bring to me this corpse
 Of my Polyxena, o'er whom 'twas said
 The Grecian host with pious zeal all vied
 To heap a tomb ?

ATT. She knows not, but laments
 For the deceased Polyxena alone,
 And to her recent woes is yet a stranger.

HEC. Ah, bring'st thou the inspired prophetic head,
 And the dishevelled tresses of Cassandra ?

ATT. You speak of one yet living, but bewail not
 This the deceased : survey the naked corpse
 Of him whose death to you will seem most strange
 And most unlooked for.

HEC. Ha, I see my son,
 My dearest Polydore, whom he of Thrace
 Beneath his roof protected. I am ruined ;
 Now utterly I perish. O my son,
 For thee, for thee I wake the frantic dirge,
 By that malignant demon which assumed
 Thy voice, thy semblance, recently apprized
 Of this calamity.

ATT. O wretched mother,
 Know you then what was your son's fate ?

HEC. A sight
 Incredible and new to me is that
 Which I behold : for from my former woes
 Spring woes in long succession, and the day
 When I shall cease to weep, shall cease to groan,
 Will never come.

CHOR. The woes which we endure
 Alas ! are dreadful.

HEC. O my son, thou son
 Of an ill fated mother, by what death
 Didst thou expire ? through what disastrous cause
 Here liest thou prostrate ? ah, what bloody hand——

ATT. I know not : on the shore his corpse I found.

HEC. Cast up by the impetuous waves, or pierced
 With murderous spear ?

ATT. The surges of the deep
 Had thrown it on the sand.

HEC. Alas ! too well
 I comprehend the meaning of the dream
 Which to these eyes appeared : the spectre borne
 On sable pinions no illusion proved,
 When, O my son, thee, thee it represented
 No longer dwelling in the realms of light.

CHOR. Instructed by that vision, canst thou name
 The murderer ?

HEC. 'Twas my friend, the Thracian king,
With whom in secrecy his aged sire
Had placed him.

CHOR. Ha ! what mean'st thou ? to possess
That gold by slaying him ?

HEC. O, 'twas a deed
Unutterable, a deed without a name,
Surpassing all astonishment, unholy,
And not to be endured. Where now the laws
Of hospitality ? Accursed man,
How cruelly hast thou with reeking sword
Transpierced this unresisting boy, nor heard
The gentle voice of pity !

CHOR. Hapless queen,
How hath some demon, thy malignant foe,
Rendered thee of all mortals the most wretched :
But I behold great Agamemnon come,
And therefore, O my friends, let us be silent.

AGAMEMNON, HECUBA, CHORUS.

AGA. Whence this delay ? why go you not t' inter,
O Hecuba, your daughter, whom Talthybius
Directed that no Greek might be allowed
To touch ? We therefore have with your request
Complied, nor moved the corse. But you remain
Inactive, which I wonder at, and come
To fetch you, for each previous solemn rite
That best might please, if aught such rites can please,
Have we performed. But ah, what Trojan youth
Do I behold lie breathless in the tent ?
For that he was no Greek, the garb informs me
In which he's clad.

HEC. Thou wretch, for of myself
I speak, when thee, O Hecuba, I name ;
What shall I do, at Agamemnon's knees
Fall prostrate, or in silence bear my woes ?

AGA. Why weep, with face averted, yet refuse
T' inform me what hath happened ? who is he ?

HEC. But from his knees, if, deeming me a slave
And enemy, the monarch should repel me,
This would but make my sorrows yet more poignant.

AGA. I am no seer, nor can I uninformed
Trace out the secret purpose of your soul.

HEC. Am I mistaken then, while I suppose
A foe in him who doth not mean me ill ?

AGA. If 'tis your wish I should not be apprized,
We both are of one mind ; you will not speak,
And I as little am disposed to hear.

HEC. Without his aid no vengeance for my child

Can I obtain : yet why deliberate thus ?
 Prosper or fail I must take courage now.
 O royal Agamemnon, by those knees
 A suppliant I conjure you, by that beard,
 And that right hand, victorious o'er your foes.

AGA. What do you wish for ? To obtain your freedom ?
 This were not difficult.

HEC. No, give me vengeance
 On yonder guilty wretch, and I am willing
 To linger out the remnant of my life
 In servitude.

AGA. Then why implore our aid ?

HEC. For reasons you suspect not. Do you see
 That breathless corse o'er which my tears I shed ?

AGA. The corse I see ; but cannot comprehend
 What follows next.

HEC. Him erst I bore and nurtured.

AGA. Is the deceased, O miserable dame,
 One of your children ?

HEC. Not of those who fell
 Beneath Troy's walls.

AGA. What ! had you other sons ?

HEC. Yes, him you see, born in an evil hour.

AGA. But where was he when Ilion was destroyed ?

HEC. His father, apprehensive of his death,
 Conveyed him thence.

AGA. From all the other children
 Which then he had, where placed he this apart ?

HEC. In this same region where his corse was found.

AGA. With Polymestor, sovereign of the land ?

HEC. He, to preserve that execrable goid,
 Was hither sent.

AGA. But, by what ruthless hand,
 And how, was he de-patched ?

HEC. By whom beside ?
 The murderer was his friend, the Thracian king.

AGA. Was he thus eager ? O abandoned wretch,
 To seize the gold !

HEC. E'en thus ; soon as he knew
 Troy was o'erthrown.

AGA. But where did you discover
 The body, or who brought it ?

HEC. On the shore
 This servant found it.

AGA. Or in quest of him
 Or other task then busied ?

HEC. To fetch water
 To lave Polyxena's remains she went.

AGA. When he had slain him, it appears, his friend
Did cast him forth.

HEC. He to the waves consigned
The stripling's mangled corse.

AGA. O wretched woman,
Surrounded by immeasurable woes.

HEC. I am undone ; no farther ill remains
For me t' experience.

AGA. Ah ! what woman e'er
Was born to such calamities ?

HEC. Not one
Exists, whose sorrows equal mine, unless
You of Calamity herself would speak.
Yet hear the motive why I clasp your knees.
If I appear to merit what I suffer,
I must be patient ; but if not, avenge
My wrongs upon the man who 'gainst his guest
Such treachery could commit, who, nor the gods
Of Erebus beneath, nor those who rule
In Heaven above regarding, this vile deed,
Did perpetrate, e'en he with whom I oft
Partook the feast, on whom I showered each bounty,
Esteeming him the first of all my friends ;
Yet, when at Ilion's palace with respect
He had been treated, a deliberate scheme
Of murder forming, he destroyed my sor,
On whom he deigned not to bestow a tomb,
But threw his corse into the briny deep.
Though I indeed am feeble, and a slave,
Yet mighty are the gods, and by their law
The world is ruled : for by that law we learn
That there are gods, and can mark out the bounds
Of justice and injustice ; if such law
To you transmitted, be infringed, if they
Who kill their guests, or dare with impious hand
To violate the altars of the gods,
Unpunished 'scape, no equity is left
Among mankind. Deeming such base connivance
Unworthy of yourself, revere my woes,
Have pity on me, like a painter take
Your stand to view me, and observe the number
Of my afflictions ; once was I a queen,
But now am I a slave ; in many a son
I once was rich, but now am I both old
And of my children reft, without a city,
Forlorn, and of all mortals the most wretched.
But whither would you go ? With you I seem
To have no interest. Miserable me !

Why do we mortals by assiduous toil,
 And such a painful search as their importance
 Makes requisite, all other arts attain,
 Yet not enough intent on the due knowledge
 Of that sole empress of the human soul
 Persuasion, no rewards bestow on those
 Who teach us by insinuating words
 How to procure our wishes? who can trust
 Hereafter in prosperity? That band
 Of my heroic sons is now no more,
 Myself a captive, am led forth to tasks
 Unseemly, and e'en now these eyes behold
 The air obscured by Ilion's rising smoke.
 It might be vain perhaps, were I to found
 A claim to your assistance on your love:
 Yet must I speak: my daughter, who in Troy
 Was called Cassandra, the prophetic dame,
 Partakes your bed; and how those rapturous nights
 Will you acknowledge, or to her how show
 Your gratitude for all the fond embraces
 Which she bestows, O king, or in her stead
 To me her mother? In the soul of man
 Th' endearments of the night, by darkness veiled,
 Create the strongest interest. To my tale
 Now listen: do you see that breathless corse?
 Each act of kindness which to him is shown,
 Upon a kinsman of the dame you love
 Will be conferred. But, in one point my speech
 Is yet deficient. By the wondrous arts
 Of Dædalus, or some benignant god,
 Could I give voice to each arm, hand, and hair,
 And each extremest joint, they round your knees
 Should cling together, and together weep,
 At once combining with a thousand tongues.
 O monarch, O thou light of Greece, comply,
 And stretch forth that avenging arm to aid
 An aged woman, though she be a thing
 Of nought, O succour: for the good man's duty
 Is to obey the dread behests of justice,
 And ever punish those who act amiss.

CHOR. 'Tis wonderful, indeed, how all events
 Happen to mortals, and the dread behests
 Of fate, uncircumscribed by human laws,
 Constrain us to form amities with those
 To whom the most inveterate hate we bore,
 And into foes convert our former friends.

AGA. To you, O Hecuba, your son, your fortunes,
 And your entreaties, is my pity due.
 I in obedience to the gods and justice

Wish to avenge you on this impious friend,
 Could I appear your interests to espouse,
 Without the troops suspecting that I slay
 The Thracian monarch for Cassandra's sake :
 My terrors hence arise ; the host esteem
 Him our ally, and the deceased a foe :
 What though you held him dear, his fate, the loss
 Of you alone, affects not the whole camp.
 Reflect too, that you find me well disposed
 To share your toils, and in your cause exert
 My utmost vigour ; but, what makes me slow,
 Is a well-grounded fear of blame from Greece.

HEC. Alas ! there's no man free : for some are slaves
 To gold, to fortune others, and the rest,
 The multitude or written laws restrain
 From acting as their better judgment dictates.
 But since you are alarmed, and to the rabble
 Yield an implicit deference, from that fear
 I will release you ; only to my schemes
 Be privy, if some mischief I contrive
 Against the murderer of my son : but take
 No active part. If, when the Thracian suffers,
 As he shall suffer, 'mongst the Greeks a tumult
 Break forth, or they attempt to succour him,
 Restrain them, without seeming to befriend
 My interests. As for what remains, rely
 On me, and I will manage all things well.

AGA. How then ? what mean you ? With that aged hand
 To wield a sword, and take away the life
 Of that barbarian, or by drugs endued
 With magic power ? the help you need, what arts
 Can furnish ? what strong arm have you to fight
 Your battles ? whence will you procure allies ?

HEC. These tents conceal a group of Trojan dames.

AGA. Mean you those captives whom the Greeks have
 seized.

HEC. With them I on the murderer will inflict
 Due punishment.

AGA. How can the female sex
 O'er men obtain a conquest ?

HEC. Numbers strike
 A foe with terror, and the wiles of women
 Are hard to be withstood.

AGA. They may strike terror,
 But in their courage I no trust can place.

HEC. What ? did not women slay Ægyptus' sons,
 And in their rage exterminate each male
 From Lemnos ? But leave me to find out means
 How to effect my purpose. Through the camp

In safety this my faithful servant send ;
 And thou, when to my Thracian friend thou com'st,
 Say, " Hecuba, erst Queen of Troy, invites
 Thee and thy children, on thy own account,
 No less than hers, because she to thy sons
 And thee the self-same message must deliver."
 The newly slain Polyxena's interment
 Defer, O Agamemnon ; in one flame
 That when their kindred corse are consumed ;
 The brother with the sister, who demand
 A twofold portion of their mother's grief
 Together may be buried in one grave.

AGA. These rites shall be performed, which could the
 troops

Set sail, I needs must have denied : but now,
 Since Neptune sends not an auspicious breeze,
 Expecting a more seasonable voyage,
 Here must we wait. But may success attend you ;
 For 'tis the common interest of mankind,
 Of every individual, every state,
 That he who hath transgressed should suffer ill,
 And fortune crown the efforts of the virtuous.

[Exit AGAMEMNON.]

CHORUS.

I. 1.

No more, O Troy, thy dreaded name
 Conspicuous in the lists of fame,
 'Midst fortresses impregnable shall stand,
 In such thick clouds an armed host
 Pours terrors from the Grecian coast,
 And wastes thy vanquished land :
 Shorn from thy rampired brow the crown
 Of turrets fell ; thy palaces o'erspread
 With smoke lie waste, no more I tread
 Thy wonted streets, my native town.

I. 2.

I perished at the midnight hour,
 When, aided by the banquet's power,
 Sleep o'er my eyes his earliest influence shed ;
 Retiring from the choral song,
 The sacrifice and festive throng,
 Stretched on the downy bed
 The bridegroom indolently lay,
 His massive spear suspended on the beam,
 No more he saw the helmets gleam,
 Or nautic troops in dread array.

II. 1.

While me the golden mirror's aid,
 My flowing tresses taught to braid
 In graceful ringlets with a fillet bound,
 Just as I cast my robe aside,
 And sought the couch ; extending wide
 Through every street this sound
 Was heard ; " O when, ye sons of Greece,
 This nest of robbers levelled with the plain,
 Will ye behold your homes again ?
 When shall these tedious labours cease ? "

II. 2.

Then from my couch up starting, drest
 Like Spartan nymph in zoneless vest,
 At Dian's shrine an ineffectual prayer
 Did I address ; for hither led,
 First having viewed my husband dead,
 Full oft I in despair,
 As the proud vessel sailed from land,
 Looked back, and saw my native walls laid low,
 Then fainting with excess of woe
 At length lost sight of Iliou's strand.

III.

Helen that sister to the sons of Jove,
 And Paris Ida's swain,
 With my curses still pursuing,
 For to them I owe my ruin.
 Me they from my country drove,
 Never to return again,
 By that detested spousal rite
 On which Hymen never smiled.
 No, 'twas some demon who with lewd delight
 Their frantic souls beguiled :
 Her may ocean's waves no more
 Waft to her paternal shore.

POLYMESTOR, HECUBA, CHORUS.

POLYM. For thee, O Priam, my unhappy friend,
 And you, my dearest Hecuba, I weep,
 Beholding your distress, your city taken,
 Your daughter newly slain : alas ! there's nought
 To be relied on ; fame is insecure,
 Nor can the prosperous their enjoyments guard
 Against a change of Fortune, for the gods
 Backward and forward turn her wavering wheel,
 And introduce confusion in the world,
 That we, because we know not will happen,

May worship them. But of what use are plaints
Which have no virtue to remove our woes?

If you my absence censure, be appeased,
For in the midst of Thracia's wide domains
I from these coasts was distant at the time
Of your arrival: soon as I returned,

When from the palace I was issuing forth,
This your attendant met me, and delivered
The message, hearing which, I hither came.

HEC. O Polymestor, wretched as I am,
I blush to see thy face; because thou erst
In happier days didst know me, I with shame
Appear before thee in my present fortunes.
Nor can I look at thee with steadfast eyes:
But this thou wilt not deem to be a mark
Of enmity: the cause of such behaviour
Is only custom, which forbids our sex
To gaze on men.

POLYM. No wonder you thus act
Under such circumstances. But what need
Have you of me, and wherefore did you send
To fetch me from the palace?

HEC. I in private
A secret of importance would disclose
To thee and to thy children. From these tents
Give orders for thy followers to depart.

POLYM. [*to his attendants, who retire.*]
Withdraw; this solitary spot is safe.
For you and the confederate Grecian host
Are all attached to me. But 'tis incumbent
On you t' inform me what my prosperous fortunes
Can yield to succour my unhappy friends!
For this is what I wish to do.

HEC. Say first,
If he, my son, whom this maternal hand
And his fond father in thy mansions placed,
My Polydore, yet live. I'll then pursue
My questions.

POLYM. Yes, in him you still are blest.

HEC. How kind, how worthy of thyself that speech,
My dearest friend!

POLYM. What farther would you know?

HEC. If haply yet the youth remember aught
Of me his mother.

POLYM. Much he wished to come
And visit you in private.

HEC. Is the gold
He brought from Troy preserved?

- POLYM. I keep it safe
In my own palace.
- HEC. Keep it if thou wilt :
But covet not the treasures of thy friends.
- POLYM. I do not covet them ; my utmost wish
Is to enjoy, O woman, what I have.
- HEC. Know'st thou then, what to thee and to thy sons
I want to say ?
- POLYM. I know not ; till in words
Your thoughts are signified.
- HEC. Bestow such love
On Polydore as thou receiv'st from me.
- POLYM. What is it that to me and to my children
You would disclose ?
- HEC. The spot, where deep in earth,
The ancient treasures of all Priam's house
Lie buried.
- POLYM. Is this secret what you wish
Should to your son be mentioned ?
- HEC. Yes, by thee,
Because thou art a virtuous man !
- POLYM. But wherefore
Did you require these children should be present ?
- HEC. For them to know the secret, if thou die,
Will be of great advantage.
- POLYM. You have spoken
Well and discreetly.
- HEC. Know'st thou where at Troy
Minerva's temple stands ?
- POLYM. Is the gold there ?
- But by what mark shall I the spot distinguish ?
- HEC. Above the surface rises a black stone.
- POLYM. Will you describe the place yet more minutely ?
- HEC. The gold I in thy custody would place,
Which I from Ilion hither bring.
- POLYM. Where is it ?
- Concealed beneath your garment ?
- HEC. 'Midst a heap
Of spoils laid up within yon tents.
- POLYM. Where mean you ?
- These are the Grecian mariners' abode.
- HEC. In separate dwellings have they placed the captives ?
- POLYM. But how can we rely upon the faith
Of those within ? doth no man thither come ?
- HEC. There's not a Greek within ; we are alone ;
But enter thou these doors : for now the host,
Impatient to weigh anchor, would return
From Ilion to their homes. Thou with thy children.

T' accomplish all the dread behests of fate,
Shalt thither go where thou hast lodged my son.

[*Exeunt* HECUBA and POLYMESTOR.]

CHOR. Thou hast not yet received the blow,
But justice sure will lay thee low.
Like him who headlong from on high
Falls where no friendly haven's nigh,
Into the ocean's stormy wave,
Here shalt thou find a certain grave:
For twofold ruin doth impend
O'er him who human laws pursue,
And righteous gods indignant view:
Thee shall the hope of gain mislead,
Which prompts thee to advance with speed,
And Pluto's loathed abode descend:
Soon shalt thou press th' ensanguined strand,
Slain by a woman's feeble hand.

POLYM. [*within.*] Ah me, the light that visited these eyes
Is darkened.

SEMICHOR. Heard ye, O my friends, the shriek
Of yonder Thracian?

POLYM. [*within*] Yet again, alas,
My children's foul and execrable murder!

SEMICHOR. My friends, some recent mischief hath within
Been perpetrated.

POLYM. [*within.*] Though your feet are swift,
Ye shall not 'scape, for through the walls I'll burst
My passage.

SEMICHOR. With a forceful hand, behold
He brandishes the javelin. Shall we rush
To seize him? This important crisis bids us
Assist our queen and Phrygia's valiant dames.

HEC. Now do thy worst, and from their hinges rend
Yon massive gates; no more canst thou impart
To those lost eyes their visual orbs, nor see
Thy sons, whom I have slain, to life restored.

HECUBA, CHORUS.

CHOR. Hast thou, my honoured mistress, caught the Thracian,
Over this treacherous friend hast thou prevailed,
And all thy threats accomplished?

HEC. Ye shall see him
Before the tent, without delay, deprived
Of sight, advancing with unsteady foot,
And the two breathless corpses of his sons,
Whom I, assisted by the noblest matrons
Of Troy, have slain. Th' atonement he hath paid
To my revenge, is just. But now behold

He issues forth : I will retire and shun
The Thracian chief's unconquerable rage.

POLYMESTOR, HECUBA, CHORUS.

POLYM. Ah, whither am I going? wretched me!
Where am I? what supports me? With these hands
Groping my way like some four-footed beast,
How shall I turn me, to the right or left,
That I those murderous Phrygian dames may seize
Who have destroyed me? Impious and accurst
Daughters of Ilion, in what dark recess
Do they escape me? Would to heaven, O Sun,
Thou to these bleeding eyeballs could'st afford
A cure, that thou my blindness could'st remove.
But hush, I hear those women's cautious tread.
How shall I leap upon them? with their flesh
How shall I glut my rage, and for a feast
To hungry tigers cast their mangled bones,
In just requital of the horrid wrongs,
Which I from them, ah wretched me, have suffered?
But whither, by what impulse am I borne,
Leaving the corpses of my sons exposed
To hellish Bacchanalians, as they lie
Torn by the dogs, and on the mountain's ridge
Cast forth unburied! Where shall I stand still?
Or whither shall I go? Like some proud bark
Towed into harbour, which contracts its sails;
I to that fatal chamber which contains
The corpses of my murdered sons rush onward
With speed involuntary.

CHOR. Hapless man,
How art thou visited by woes too grievous
To be endured! but by dread Jove thy foe,
On him whose deeds are base, it is ordained
That the severest punishments await.

POLYM. Rouse, O ye Thracians, armed with ponderous
spears,
Arrayed in mail, for generous steeds renowned,
A hardy race, whom Mars himself inspires.
To you, O Grecian troops, and both the sons
Of Atreus, I with clamorous voice appeal:
Come hither, I implore you by the gods.
Do any of you hear me? Is there none
Who will assist? Why loiter ye? Those women,
Those captives have destroyed me. Horrid wrongs
Have I endured; ah me, the foul reproach!
But whither shall I turn, or whither go?
Through the ærial regions shall I wing
My swift career to that sublime abode

Where Sirius or Orion from his eyes
Darts radiant flames? or, to perdition doomed,
Shall I descend to Pluto's sable flood?

CHOR. He merits pardon, whosoe'er assailed
By ills too grievous to be borne, shakes off
The loathed encumbrance of a wretched life.

AGAMEMNON, POLYMESTOR, HECUBA, CHORUS.

AGA. Hearing thy shrieks I came. For Echo, child
Of craggy mountains, in no gentle note
Wafted those sounds tumultuous through the host.
Had we not known that by the Grecian spear
The towers of vanquished Phrygia are o'erthrown,
Such uproar would have caused no small alarm.

POLYM. My dearest friend, soon as I heard your voice,
I instantly perceived 'twas Agamemnon.
See you my sufferings?

AGA. Wretched Polymestor!
Who hath destroyed thee? who bereaved of sight
Thy bleeding orbs, and those thy children slew?
Whoe'er the author of such deeds, his rage
Was dreadful sure 'gainst thee and 'gainst thy sons.

POLYM. With the assistance of those captive dames,
Me Hecuba hath murdered, more than murdered.

AGA. What mean'st thou? Are you guilty of the crime
With which he charges you? and have you dared
To perpetrate an action thus audacious?

POLYM. Ah me! what said you? Is she near at hand?
Inform me where to find, that I may seize her,
And scatter wide to all the fowls of heaven
Her mangled corse.

AGA. Ha! what is thy design?

POLYM. Allow me, I conjure you by the gods,
To grasp her with this frantic arm.

AGA. Desist,
And casting forth all rancour from thy heart,
Now plead thy cause; that, hearing both apart,
I with unbiassed justice may decide,
If thou these sufferings merit'st.

POLYM. I will speak.
There was one Polydore, the youngest son
Of those whom Hecuba to Priam bore;
Him erst removing from the Phrygian realm,
His sire to me consigned, that in my palace
He might be nurtured, when that hoary king
The fall of Troy suspected: him I slew:
But hear my motives for the deed, to prove
How justly and how prudently I acted,

Your enemy, that boy, if he survived
The ruin of his country, might, I feared,
Collect the scattered citizens of Troy,
And there again reside. I also feared,
That when the Greeks knew one of Priam's line
Was living, with a second fleet invading
The shores of Phrygia, they again might drain
Of their inhabitants our Thracian fields,
Involving us, their neighbours, in the vengeance
They on their foes at Ilium wreak. To us
Already hath such neighbourhood, O king,
Proved baneful. But, apprized of her son's fate,
Hecuba drew me hither, on pretence
She would inform me where in massive gold
The hidden treasures of old Priam's race
Beneath Troy's ruins were secured. Alone,
She with my children brought me to this tent,
That none beside might know. With bended knee,
While on a couch I sat, some on my left,
And others on my right, as with a friend,
Full many of the Trojan damsels took
Their places, holding up against the sun
My robe, the woof of an Edonian loom :
Some feigned t' admire it, others viewed my spear,
And stripped me of them both. From hand to hand
The matrons, seeming to caress my children,
Removed them far from their unhappy sire :
And after their fond speeches, in an instant,
(Could you believe it ?) snatching up the swords,
Which they beneath their garments had concealed,
They stabbed my sons, whom while I strove to aid,
In hostile guise their comrades held my arms
And feet : if I looked up, they by the hair
Confined me ; if I moved my hands, my struggles
Proved ineffectual, through the numerous band
Of women who assailed me, and to close
The scene of my calamity, accomplished
A deed with more than common horror fraught,
For they tore out my bleeding eyes, and fled.
But, like a tiger starting up, I chased
These ruthless fiends, and with a hunter's speed
Each wall examined, dashing to the ground,
And breaking what I seized. These cruel wrongs,
While I your interests study to maintain,
O Agamemnon, and despatch your foe,
Have I endured. To spare a long harangue,
The whole of what 'gainst woman hath been said
By those of ancient times, is saying now,
Or shall be said hereafter, in few words

Will I comprise ; nor ocean's waves, nor earth,
Nurture so vile a race, as he who most
Hath with the sex conversed, but knows too well.

CHOR. Curb that audacious virulence of speech,
Nor, by thy woes embittered, thus revile
All womankind ; the number of our sex
Is great, and some there are, whom as a mark
To envy, their distinguished worth holds forth,
Though some are justly numbered with the wicked.

HEC. O Agamemnon, never ought the tongue
To have a greater influence o'er mankind
Than actions ; but whoever hath done well,
Ought to speak well ; and he, whose deeds are base,
To use unseemly language, nor find means
By specious words to colour o'er injustice.
Full wise indeed are they to whom such art
Is most familiar : but to stand the test
Of time not wise enough ; for they all perish,
Not one of them e'er 'scapes. These previous thoughts
To you, O mighty king, have I addressed.
But now to him I turn, and will refute
The fallacies he uttered. What pretence
Hast thou for saying, that to free the Greeks
From such a second war, and for the sake
Of Agamemnon, thou didst slay my son ?
For first, O villain, the barbarian race
With Greece, nor will, nor ever can be friends.
What interest roused thy zeal ? Didst thou expect
To form a nuptial union ? Wert thou moved
By kindred ties, or any secret cause ?
Greece with a fleet forsooth would have returned
To lay thy country waste. Who, canst thou think,
Will credit such assertions ? If the truth
Thou wilt confess, gold and thy thirst of gain
Were my son's murderers. Why, when Troy yet flourished,
Why, when the city was on every side
Fenced by strong bulwarks, why, when Priam lived,
And Hector wielded a victorious spear,
Didst thou not, if thou hadst designed to act
In Agamemnon's favour, at the time
When thou didst nurture my unhappy son,
And in thy palace shelter, either slay,
Or to the Greeks surrender up the youth
A living prisoner ? But when Ilion's light
Was utterly extinguished, when the smoke
Declared the city subject to our foes,
The stranger thou didst murder, at thy hearth
Who sought protection. To confirm thy guilt,
Now hear this farther charge : if thou to Greece

Hadst been a friend indeed, thou should'st have given
 The gold thou say'st thou keep'st, not for thine own,
 But Agamemnon's sake, among the troops
 Who suffer want, and from their native land
 Have for a tedious season been detained.
 But thou from those rapacious hands e'en now
 Canst not endure to part with it, but hoard'st it
 Still buried in thy coffers: as became thee.
 Hadst thou trained up my son, hadst thou to him
 Been a protector, great is the renown
 Thou would'st have gained; for in distress the good
 Are steadfast; but our prosperous fortunes swarm
 With friends unbidden. Hadst thou been in want,
 And Polydore abounded, a sure treasure
 To thee would he have proved: but now no longer
 In him hast thou a friend; thou of thy gold
 Hast lost th' enjoyment, thou thy sons hast lost,
 And art thyself thus wretched. But to you,
 O Agamemnon, now again I speak:
 If you assist him, you will seem corrupt;
 For you will benefit a man devoid
 Of honour, justice, piety, or truth;
 It might be said that you delight in evil;
 But, I presume not to reproach my lords.

CHOR. How doth a virtuous cause inspire the tongue
 With virtuous language!

AGA. On a stranger's woes
 Reluctant I pronounce, but am constrained;
 For shame attends the man who takes in hand
 Some great affair, and leaves it undecided.
 Know then, to me thou seem'st not to have slain
 Thy guest through an attachment to my cause,
 Nor yet to that of Greece, but that his gold
 Thou might'st retain: though in this wretched state
 Thou speak to serve thy interests. Among you
 Perhaps the murder of your guests seems light;
 We Greeks esteem it base. If I acquit thee
 How shall I 'scape reproach? Indeed I cannot:
 Since thou hast dared to perpetrate the crime,
 Endure the consequence.

POLYM. Too plain it seems,
 Ah me! that, vanquished by a female slave,
 Here shall I perish by ignoble hands.

HEC. Is not this just for the atrocious deed
 Which thou hast wrought?

POLYM. My children, wretched me!
 And these quenched orbs.

HEC. Grief'st thou, yet think'st thou not
 That I lament my son?

POLYM. Malignant woman,
Do you rejoice in taunting my distress?
HEC. In such revenge have not I cause for joy?
POLYM. Yet not so hastily, when ocean's wave—
HEC. Shall in a bark convey me to the shores
Of Greece?

POLYM. Shall whelm you in its vast abyss
Fall'n from the shrouds.

HEC. Raised thither by what impulse?

POLYM. Up the tall mast you with swift foot shall climb.

HEC. On feathered pinions borne, or how?

POLYM. With form

Canine endued, and eyeballs glaring fire.

HEC. Whence didst thou learn that I such wondrous change
Shall undergo?

POLYM. Bacchus, the Thracian seer,
Gave this response.

HEC. To thee did he unfold
Nought of the grievous sufferings thou endur'st?

POLYM. Then could you ne'er have caught me by your wiles.

HEC. But on this change of being, after death,
Or while I yet am living, shall I enter?

POLYM. After your death, and men shall call your tomb—

HEC. By my new form, or what is it thou mean'st?

POLYM. The sepulchre of that vile brute, an object
Conspicuous to the mariner.

HEC. I care not;
My vengeance is complete.

POLYM. Cassandra too,
Your daughter, must inevitably bleed.

HEC. Abomination! On thy guilty head
These curses I retort.

POLYM. Her shall the wife
Of Agamemnon slay, who sternly guards
His royal mansion.

HEC. Such a frantic deed
As this may Tyndarus' daughter ne'er commit!

POLYM. She next uplifting the remorseless axe
Shall smite her lord.

AGA. Ha! madman, dost thou court
Thy ruin?

POLYM. Slay me; for the murderous bath
Awaits you, when to Argos you return.

AGA. Will ye not drag him from my sight by force?

POLYM. Hear you with grief what I announce?

AGA. My followers,
Why stop ye not the miscreant's boding mouth?

POLYM. This mouth be closed for ever: I have spoken.

AGA. Will ye not cast him with the utmost speed

HERCULES DISTRACTED.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

AMPHITRYON.

MEGARA.

CHORUS OF THEBAN OLD

MEN.

HERCULES.

LYCUS.

IRIS.

A FIEND.

MESSENGER.

THESEUS.

SCENE.—BEFORE THE ALTAR OF JUPITER, AT THE ENTRANCE
OF THE HOUSE OF HERCULES IN THEBES.

AMPHITRYON, MEGARA.

AMP. Is there on earth, a stranger to the man
Who shared the same auspicious nuptial bed
With Jove, Amphitryon born at Argos, sprung
From Perseus' son Alcæus, me the sire
Of Hercules? He in these regions dwelt,
Where from the soil a helmed crop arose;
Mars, a small number of that race, preserved,
Whose children's children people Cadmus' city.
Hence Creon king of Thebes, Menæceus' son,
Derives his birth, and Creon is the sire
Of this unhappy Megara, to grace
Whose hymeneal pomp, each Theban erst
Attuned the jocund lute, into my house
When Hercules conducted her. But leaving
This realm where I resided, and his consort
And kindred, my son chose to fix his seat
Within the walls of Argos, of that city
Erected by the Cyclops, whence I fled
Stained with Electryon's gore: but to alleviate
My woes, and in his native land obtain
A quiet re-idence, this great reward
He on Eurystheus promised to bestow,
That he would rid the world of every pest:
Harassed by Juno's stings, or envious fate,
With her conspiring: but, his other labours
Accomplished, he through Tænarus' jaws at length

Went to the house of Pluto, to drag forth
 Into the realms of day hell's triple hound :
 He thence returns not. But an old tradition
 Among the race of Cadmus hath prevailed,
 That Lycus, Dirce's husband, erst bore rule
 Over this city, till Jove's sons, Amphion
 And Zethus, who on milk-white coursers rode,
 Became its sovereigns. Lycus' son who bears
 His father's name, no Theban, but arriving
 From the Eubœan state, slew royal Creon,
 And having slain him, seized the throne, invading
 The city with tumultuous broils convulsed.
 But the affinity which we have formed
 With Creon, seems to be my greatest curse :
 For while my son stays in the realms beneath,
 Lycus th' egregious monarch of this land
 Would with the children of Alcides kill
 His consort, by fresh murders to extinguish
 The past, and kill me too (if one through age
 So useless may be numbered among men),
 Lest when the boys attain maturer age,
 They should avenge their grandsire Creon's death.
 But I (for my son left me here to tend
 His children, and direct the house, since he
 Entered the subterraneous realms of night,
 With their afflicted mother, lest the race
 Of Hercules should bleed, for an asylum
 Have chosen this altar of protecting Jove,
 Which my illustrious son for a memorial
 Of his victorious arms did here erect,
 When he in battle had subdued the Minyans.
 But we, though destitute of every comfort,
 Of food, drink, clothing, though constrained to lie
 On the bare pavement, here maintain our seat,
 For every hospitable door is barred
 Against us, and we have no other hope
 Of being saved. Some of our friends I see
 Are faithless, and the few who prove sincere,
 Too weak to aid us. Such is the effect
 Of adverse fortune o'er the race of men ;
 May he to whom I bear the least attachment,
 Never experience that unerring test
 Of friendship.

MEG. Thou old man, who erst didst storm
 The Taphian ramparts, when thou with renown
 Didst lead the host of Thebes ; the secret will
 Of Heaven, how little can frail mortals know !
 For to me too of no avail have proved
 The fortunes of my father, who elate

With wealth and regal power (whence at the breasts
 Of its possessors spears are hurled by those
 Whose souls the lust of mad ambition fires),
 And having children, gave me to thy son,
 Joining a noble consort in the bonds
 Of wedlock with Alcides, through whose death
 These blessings are all fled. Now I, and thou,
 Old man, are doomed to perish with the sons
 Of Hercules, whom, as the bird extends
 Her sheltering wings over her callow brood,
 I guard. By turns they come and question me :
 " O mother, whither is my father gone ?
 What is he doing ? when will he return ?"
 Though now too young sufficiently to feel
 How great their loss, thus ask they for their sire.
 I change the theme, and forge a soothing tale,
 But am with wonder smitten when the doors
 Creak on their massive hinges, and at once
 They all start up, that at their father's knees
 They may fall prostrate. But what hope hast thou
 Of saving us, or what support, old man ?
 For I to thee look up. We from the bounds
 Of these domains unnoticed cannot 'scape ;
 Mightier than us, a watchful guard is placed
 At every avenue, and in our friends
 No longer for protection can we trust.
 Explain thyself, if thou hast any scheme,
 By which thou from impending death canst save us ;
 But let us strive to lengthen out the time,
 Since we are feeble.

AMP. 'Tis no easy task
 In such a situation, O my daughter,
 To form a sure and instantaneous judgment.

MEG. What is there wanting to complete thy woes,
 Or why art thou so fond of life ?

AMP. That blessing
 I still enjoy, still cherish pleasing hopes.

MEG. I also hope, old man : but it is folly
 To look for what we never can attain.

AMP. We by delaying might avert our fate.

MEG. But I in this sad interval of time
 Feel piercing anguish.

AMP. The auspicious gales
 Of fortune, O my daughter, yet may waft
 Both you and me out of our present troubles,
 If e'er my son your valiant lord return.
 But O be pacified yourself, and cause
 Your children to dry up their streaming tears ;
 With gentle language and delusive tales

Beguile them, though all fraudulent arts are wretched.
 For the disasters which afflict mankind
 Are wearied out ; the stormy winds retain not
 Their undiminished force ; nor are the blest
 Perpetually blest : for all things change,
 And widely differ from their former state.
 The valiant man is he who still holds fast
 His hopes ; but to despair bespeaks the coward.

CHORUS, AMPHITRYON, MEGARA.

CHOR. Propped on my faithful staff, from home,
 And from the couch of palsied age,
 In melancholy guise I roam,
 Constrained to chaunt funereal strains,
 As the expiring swan complains,
 A war of words alone I wage,
 In semblance, but a flitting sprite,
 An airy vision of the night.
 I totter ; yet doth active zeal
 This faithful bosom still inspire.
 Ye children who have lost your sire,
 Thou veteran, and thou aged dame,
 Doomed for thy lord these griefs to feel,
 Whose Pluto's dreary mansions claim ;
 O weary not your tender feet.
 Like steeds by galling harness bound,
 To turn the ponderous mill around,
 I would advance my friends to meet,
 Yet are my utmost efforts vain,
 This shattered frame I scarce sustain :
 Draw near, O take this trembling hand,
 And holding fast my robe, support
 My steps, thy needful aid I court,
 Because I am too weak to stand.
 Lead on the chief, though now by years
 Bowed down, who marshalled on the strand,
 His comrades erst a hardy band ;
 With him in youth we launched our spears,
 Nor then belied our native land.
 See how their eyes dart liquid fire,
 Those children emulate their sire ;
 But still hereditary fate,
 Pursues with unrelenting hate
 Their tender years, nor can their charms
 Redeem them from impending harms.
 What valiant champions of thy cause,
 O Greece, thy violated laws,
 When these thy great supports shall fail,
 Torn from thy fostering land wilt thou bewail,

But I behold the monarch of the realm,
Tyrannic Lycus, who these doors approaches.

LYCUS, AMPHITRYON, MEGARA, CHORUS.

LYC. This question (if I may) I to the sire
And consort of Alcides would propose
(But, as your king, I have a right to make
Any inquiries I think fit): How long
Seek ye to spin out life? What farther hope
Have ye in view, what succour to ward off
The stroke of death? Expect ye that the father
Of these deserted children, who lies stretched
Amid the realms beneath will thence return,
That ye bely your rank, and meanly utter
These clamorous complaints on being doomed to die?
Through Greece hast *thou* diffused an idle boast,
That Jove enjoyed thy consort, and begot
An offspring like himself; while *you* exulted
In being called wife to the first of heroes.
But what great action hath your lord performed,
In having slain that hydra at the lake,
Or the Nemæan lion whom with snares
He caught, and then did arrogantly boast
That he had strangled in his nervous arms?
Will these exploits enable you to vie
With me? and for such merit am I bound
To spare the sons of Hercules, who gained
A name which he deserved not? He was brave
In waging war with beasts, in nought beside,
With his left hand he never did sustain
The shield, nor faced he the pretended spear,
But with his bow, that weapon of a dastard,
Was still prepared for flight: such arms afford
No proof of courage; but the truly brave
Is he who in the ranks where he is stationed
Maintains his ground, and sees with steadfast eye
Those ghastly wounds the missile javelin gives.
Old man, I act not thus through cruelty,
But caution; for I know that I have slain
Creon *her* father, and possess his throne.
These children therefore will not I allow
To live till they attain maturer years,
Lest they should punish me for such a deed.

AMP. Jove will assert the cause of his own son.
But as for me, O Hercules, my care
Shall be to prove the folly of this tyrant:
For thy illustrious name I will not suffer
To be reproached. First from a hateful charge

(And that of cowardice I deem most hateful),
Calling the gods to witness; am I bound
To vindicate thy honour. I appeal
To Jove's own thunder, and th' impetuous steeds,
Which drew Alcides' chariot when he sped
Those winged arrows to transpierce the flanks
Of earth-born giants, and among the gods
Triumphant revelled at the genial board.
Go next to Pholoe's realm, thou worst of kings.
And ask the Centaurs' monstrous brood, what man
They judge to be most brave, whether that title
Belongs not to my son, who only bears,
As you assert, the semblance of a hero?
But should you question the Eubœan mount
Of Dirphys, where your infancy was nurtured,
It cannot sound your praise: you have performed
No glorious action for your native land
To testify, yet scorn that wise invention
The quiver fraught with shafts: attend to me
And I will teach you wisdom. By his arms
Encumbered, stands the warrior who is sheathed
In ponderous mail, and through the fears of those
Who fight in the same rank, if they want courage,
Loses his life; nor, if his spear be broken,
Furnished with nought but courage, from his breast
Can he repel the wound; but he who bends
With skilful hand the bow, hath this advantage,
Which never fails him: with a thousand shafts
He smites the foe, no danger to himself
Incurring, but securely stands aloof,
And wreaks his vengeance while they gaze around,
Without perceiving whence the weapon comes:
His person he exposes not, but takes
A guarded post: for what in war displays
The greatest prudence, is to vex the foe,
Nor rush at random on their pointed spears.
Such reasoning on the subject in debate
With yours indeed agrees not: but what cause
Have you for wishing to destroy these children?
How have they injured you? In one respect
I deem you wise, because you dread the race
Of valiant men, and feel yourself a coward:
Yet is it hard on us, if we must bleed
Your apprehensions to remove; you ought
To suffer all we would inflict, from us
Whose merit is superior far to yours,
Were Jove impartial. Would you therefore wield
The sceptre of this land, let us depart
As exiles from the realm, or you shall meet

With strict retaliation, when the gales
 Of wavering fortune alter. O thou land
 Of Cadmus (for to thee I now will speak,
 But in reproachful accents), such protection
 Afford'st thou to the sons of Hercules,
 Who singly warring with the numerous host
 Of Minyæ, caused the Thebans to lift up
 Their free-born eyes undaunted? I on Greece
 No praises can bestow, nor will pass over
 In silence its base treatment of my son.
 For 'twas its duty in these children's cause,
 Bearing flames, pointed spears, and glittering mail,
 To have marched forth, and recompensed the toils
 Of their great father, who hath purged the sea
 And land from all its monsters. Such protection
 Nor doth the Theban city, O my children,
 Nor Greece afford you : but ye now look up
 To me a feeble friend who can do nought,
 But plead for you with unavailing words.
 For all the vigour which I once possessed
 Hath now deserted me ; old age assails
 My trembling limbs and this decrepit frame.
 Were I again endued with youthful strength,
 I would snatch up my javelin, and defile
 With gore the yellow ringlets on the head
 Of that oppressor, whom his fear should drive
 Beyond the most remote Atlantic bounds.

CHOR. Are there not causes such as may provoke
 Those who are virtuous to express their thoughts,
 Though destitute of eloquence?

LYC. 'Gainst me
 Speak what thou wilt, for thou art armed with words,
 But for injurious language by my deeds
 Will I requite thee. Go, send woodmen, some
 To Helicon, some to Parnassus' vale,
 Bid them fell knotted oaks, and having borne them
 Into the city, heap their ponderous trunks
 Around the altar, and with kindled flames
 Consume the bodies of this hated race ;
 So shall they learn that Creon the deceased
 No longer is the ruler of this land,
 But that I wield the sceptre. As for you
 Who thwart my counsels, O ye aged men,
 Not for the sons of Hercules alone
 Shall ye lament, but for those evil fortunes
 Which ye and your own house are doomed to suffer :
 But this shall ye remember, that to me,
 Your monarch, ye are slaves.

CHOR.

O ye the race

Of earth, whom Mars erst sowed, when he had torn
 From the huge dragon's jaws th' envenomed teeth,
 With those right hands why will ye not uplift
 The staves on which ye lean, and with his gore
 Defile the head of this unrighteous man,
 Not born at Thebes, but in a foreign realm,
 From inconsiderate youths who gains that homage
 Which he deserves not? but in evil hour
 O'er me shalt thou bear rule, nor shall my wealth
 Acquired by many toils be ever thine :
 Go, act the tyrant in Eubœa's land,
 From whence thou hither cam'st : for while I live,
 The sons of Hercules thou ne'er shalt slay,
 Nor is their mighty father plunged so deep
 Beneath earth's surface, that he cannot hear
 His children's outcries. Thou to whom this land
 Owes its destruction dost possess the throne :
 But he its benefactor is deprived
 Of the rewards he merits. Me thou deem'st
 Officious, for protecting those I love
 E'en in the grave, where friends are needed most.
 O my right arm, how dost thou wish to wield
 The spear, but through enfeebling age hast lost
 Thy vigour : else would I have quelled thy pride
 Who dar'st to call me slave, and in this Thebes,
 Where thou exult'st, with glory dwelt. A city
 Diseased through mutiny and evil counsels
 Is void of wisdom, or would ne'er have chosen
 Thee for its lord.

MEG. Ye veterans, I applaud
 Your zeal ; for indignation at the wrongs
 His friends endure becomes the virtuous friend.
 But let not anger 'gainst your lord expose you
 To suffer in our cause. My judgment hear,
 Amphitryon, if to thee in aught I seem
 To speak discreetly. I these children love
 (And how can I help loving those I bore ?)
 For whom I have endured the painful throes
 Of childbirth. And to die is what I think of
 As of a thing most dreadful ; but the man
 Who with necessity contends I hold
 An idiot. But let us, since die we must,
 Not perish in the flames to furnish scope
 Of laughter to our foes, which I esteem
 An ill beyond e'en death : for much is due
 To the unsullied honour of our house,
 For thee who erst in arms hast gained renown,
 To die with cowardice, were a reproach
 Not to be borne. My lord, though I forbear

To dwell on his just praises, is so noble,
 He would not wish these children saved, to bear
 The imputation of an evil name :
 For through the conduct of degenerate sons
 Reproach oft falls on their illustrious sires ;
 And the examples which my husband gave me,
 I ought not to reject. But view what grounds
 Thou hast for hope, that I of these may form
 A proper estimate. Dost thou expect
 Thy son to issue from the realms beneath ?
 What chief deceased from Pluto's loathed abode
 Did e'er return ? Can we by gentle words
 Appease this tyrant ? No : we ought to fly
 From fools who are our foes : but to the wise
 And generous yield ; for we with greater ease
 May make a friend of him in whom we find
 A sense of virtuous shame. But to my soul
 This thought occurs, that we, the children's sentence,
 By our entreaties, haply might obtain
 Converted into exile : yet this too
 Is wretched, at th' expense of piteous need
 To compass our deliverance. For their friends
 Avoid the face of guests like these, and look
 No longer kindly on the banished man
 After one day is over. Rouse thy courage,
 And bleed with us, thee too, since death awaits.
 By thy great soul, O veteran, I conjure thee.
 Although the man who labours to repel
 Evils inflicted by Heaven's wrath, is brave,
 Yet doth such courage border upon frenzy :
 For what the fates ordain, no god can frustrate.

CHOR. While yet these arms retained their youthful strength,
 Had any one insulted thee, with ease
 Could I have quelled him ; but I now am nothing :
 On thee, Amphityron, therefore 'tis incumbent
 To think how best thou may'st henceforth ward off
 Th' assaults of fortune.

AMP. No unmanly fear,
 No wish to lengthen out this life, prevents
 My voluntary death : but I would save
 The children of my son, though I appear
 To grasp at things impossible. Behold
 I bear my bosom to the sword ; pierce, slay,
 Or cast me from the rock. But I, O king,
 For this one favour sue to you ; despatch
 Me and this hapless dame before the children,
 Lest them we view, most execrable sight,
 In death's convulsive pangs, to her who bore them,
 And me their grandsire, shrieking out for aid.

But as for all beside, do what you list,
For we have now no bulwark which from death
Can save us.

MEG. I entreat one favour more,
Which to us both will equally be grateful.
Permit me in funereal robes to dress
My children ; for that purpose be the gates
Thrown open (for the palace now is closed
Against us) that they from their father's house
This small advantage may obtain.

LYC. Your wishes
Shall be complied with. I my servants bid
Unbar the gates. Go in, b. deck yourselves ;
The costly robes I grudge not : but no sooner
Shall ye have put them on, than I to you
Will come, and plunge you in the shades beneath.

[Exit LYCUS.]

MEG. Follow your hapless mother. O my children,
To your paternal house, where, though our weakh
Be in the hands of others, our great name
We still preserve.

AMP. O Jove, 'twas then in vain
That thou didst deign to share my nuptial couch,
In vain too, of thy son have I been styled
The father, for thou hast not proved the friend
Thou didst appear to be. I, though a man,
Exceed in virtue thee a mighty god ;
Because I to their foes have not betrayed
The sons of Hercules : but thou, by stealth,
Entering my chamber, to another's wife
Without permission cam'st ; yet know'st not how
To save thy friends ; thou surely art a god
Either devoid of wisdom, or unjust.

[Excunt AMPHITRYON and MEGARA.]

CHORUS.

ODE.

I. I.

For Linus' death, by all the tuneful Nine
Bewailed, doth Phœbus' self complain,
And loudly uttering his auspicious strain,
Smite with a golden quill the lyre ; but mine
Shall be the task, while songs of praise
I chaunt and twine the laureate wreath,
His matchless fortitude t' emblaze,
Who sought hell's inmost gloom, the dreary shades beneath ;

Whether I call the hero son of Jove,
 Or of Amphytrion ; for the fame
 To which his labours have so just a claim,
 Must e'en in death attract the public love :
 In the Nemean forest first he slew
 That lion huge, whose tawny hide
 And grinning jaws extended wide,
 He o'er his shoulders threw.

I. 2.

The winged arrows whizzing from his bow,
 Did on their native hills confound
 The Centaurs' race with many a deadly wound :
 Alcides' matchless strength doth Peneus know,
 Distinguished by his limpid waves,
 The fields laid waste of wide extent,
 With Pelion, and the neighbouring caves
 Of Homöies, uprooting from whose steep ascent,
 Tall pines that cast a venerable shade,
 The monsters armed their forceful hands,
 And strode terrific o'er Thessalia's lands :
 Then breathless on th' ensanguined plain he laid
 That hind distinguished by her golden horns,
 And still in Dian's temple seen
 His prize, to glad the huntress queen,
 Oenöe's walls adorns.

II. I.

The chariot with triumphal ensigns graced
 Ascending, to his stronger yoke
 He Diomedes' furious coursers broke,
 Scorning the bit, in hateful stalls who placed
 By their fell lord, the flesh of man
 Raging devoured, accursed food ;
 A stream from their foul mangers ran,
 Filled with unholy gore, and many a gobbet crude.
 O'er Hebrus' silver tide at the command
 Of Argos' unrelenting king
 Eurystheus, he these captive steeds did bring,
 Close to Anauros' mouth on Pelion's strand.
 Inhuman Cycnus, son of Mars, next felt
 The force of his resounding bow,
 Unsocial wretch, the stranger's foe,
 Who in Amphanea dwelt.

II. 2.

Then came he to th' harmonious nymphs, that band
 Who in Hesperian gardens hold
 Their station, where the vegetative gold
 Glows in the fruitage ; with resistless hand

To snatch the apple from its height ;
 The dragon wreathed his folds around
 The tree's huge trunk, portentous sight,
 In vain ; that monster fell transfix'd with many a wound.
 Into those straits of the unfathomed main
 He entered, with auspicious gales,
 Where feared the mariner 'd unfurl his sails,
 And fixing limits to the watery plain
 His columns reared: then from the heavens' huge load
 The wearied Atlas he relieved,
 His arm the starry realms upheaved,
 And propped the gods' abode.

III. 1.

Foe to the Amazons' equestrian race
 He crossed the boisterous Euxine tide,
 And gave them battle by Mæotis' side.
 What friends through Greece collected he to face
 Hippolita, th' intrepid maid,
 That he the belt of Mars might gain,
 And tissued robe with golden braid.
 Still doth exulting Greece the virgin's spoils retain,
 Lodged in Mycene's shrine, with gore imbrued,
 The dog of Lerna's marshy plain,
 Who unresisting multitudes had slain,
 The hundred-headed hydra, he subdued,
 Aided by fire, and winged shafts combined,
 These from his well-stored quiver flew,
 And triple-formed Geryon slew,
 Fierce Erythræa's hind.

III. 2.

But having finished each adventurous strife,
 At length in evil hour he steers
 To Pluto's mansion, to the house of tears,
 The goal of labour, there to end his life,
 Thence never, never to return ;
 His friends dismayed forsake these gates,
 In hopeless solitude we mourn.
 Hell's stern award is passed, the boat of Charon waits
 To their eternal home his sons to bear,
 Most impious lawless homicide !
 For thee, O Hercules, thee erst his pride,
 Thy sire now looks with impotent despair.
 Had I the strength which I possessed of yore,
 I with my Theban friends, arrayed
 In brazen arms, thy sons would aid :
 But youth's blest days are o'er.

Clad in funereal vestments I behold
 The children of Alcides erst the great,
 With his loved wife and his decrepit sire
 Conducting them. O wretched me ! no longer
 Can I restrain the fountain of these tears
 Which gush incessant from my aged eyes.

MEGARA, AMPHITRYON, CHORUS.

MEG. Come on. What priest, what butcher is at hand
 To slay these wretched children, or transpierce
 My bosom ? Now the victims stand prepared
 For their descent to Pluto's loathed abode.
 By force, my children, are we borne along
 United in th' unseemly bands of death ;
 Decrepit age with helpless infancy
 And intermingled matrons. O dire fate
 Of me and of my sons, whom these sad eyes
 Shall never more behold ! Aias ! I bore,
 I nurtured you, to be the scorn, the sport,
 Of our inveterate foes, and by their hands
 To perish. Each fond hope, which from the words
 Of your departed father erst I formed,
 Hath proved fallacious. The deceased to *thee*
 Allotted Argos, in Eurystheus' palace
 Wert *thou* to dwell a mighty king, and wield
 The sceptre of Pelasgia's fruitful land,
 Then with the lion's hide himself had worn
 Thy front he covered : *you* were to ascend
 The throne of Thebes for brazen chariots famed,
 Possessing my hereditary fields,
 Such were the hopes of your exulting sire,
 Who to *your* hand consigned that ponderous mace
 Deceitful gift of Dædalus : on *thee*,
 Thou little one, he promised to bestow
 Ocalia, which his shafts had erst laid waste :
 To you all three, these realms in threefold portions
 Did he distribute ; for your father's views
 Were all magnanimous : but I marked out
 Selected consorts for you, and formed schemes
 Of new affinities, from the domains
 Of Athens, Sparta, and the Theban city ;
 That binding up your cables, and secure
 From the tempestuous deep, ye might enjoy
 A happy life : these prospects now are vanished :
 For to your arms hath changeful Fortune given
 The Destinies to be your brides, while tears
 Are your unhappy mother's lustral drops.
 Your grandsire celebrates the nuptial feast,

O'er which he summons Pluto to preside,
 The father of your consorts. But, alas !
 Whom first of you my children, or whom last
 To this fond bosom shall I clasp, on whom
 Bestow a kiss, whom in my arms sustain ?
 How like the bee with variegated wings
 Shall I collect the sorrows of you all,
 And blend the whole together in a flood
 Of tears exhaustless ? O my dearest lord,
 If any of those spirits who reside
 In Pluto's realms beneath, can hear the voice
 Of mortals, in these words to thee I speak :
 O Hercules, thy father and thy sons
 Are doomed to bleed ; I perish too who erst
 On thy account was by the world called happy.
 Protect us, come, and to these eyes appear,
 Though but a ghost ; thy presence will suffice :
 For these thy children's murderers, when with thee
 Compared, are dastards.

AMP. To appease the powers
 Of hell beneath, O woman, be thy care.
 But lifting to the skies my suppliant hands,
 I call on thee, O Jove, that, if thou mean
 To be a friend to these deserted children,
 Thou interpose without delay and save them,
 For soon 'twill be no longer in thy power :
 Thou oft hast been invoked ; but all my prayers
 Are ineffectual ; die, it seems, we must.
 But, O ye aged men, the bliss which life
 Can yield is small, contrive then how to pass
 As sweetly as is possible the hours
 Which fate allots you, e'en from morn till night
 Shaking off every grief : for Time preserves not
 Our hopes entire, but on his own pursuits
 Intent, deserts us, borne on rapid wings.
 Look but on me, amid the sons of men
 Conspicuous erst performing glorious deeds ;
 And yet hath Fortune in one single day
 Taken all from me, like a feather wafted
 Into the trackless air. I know not him
 To whom collected stores of wealth or fame
 Are durable. Farewell, for this, my comrades,
 Is the last time ye shall behold your friend.

HERCULES, MEGARA, AMPHITRYON, CHORUS.

MEG. Ha ! O thou aged man, do I behold
 My dearest husband ? How shall I find utterance ?

AMP. I know not, O my daughter ; for I too
 Am with amazement seized.

MEG. This sure is he
 Who as we heard was in the realms beneath ;
 Else doth some vision in the noontide glare
 Delude our senses. But what frantic words
 Were those I spoke as if 'twas all a dream ?
 This is no other than thy real son,
 Thou aged man. Come hither, O my children,
 Cling to your father's robe, with speed advance,
 Quit not your hold, for ye in him shall find
 An equal to our great protector Jove.

HER. All hail, thou man-ion, and thou vestibule
 Of my abode ; thee with what joy once more
 Do I behold, revisiting the light.
 Ha ! what hath happened ? I my children see
 With garlands on their temples, and my wife
 Amidst a throng of men, my father too
 Weeping for some mischance. I'll go to them,
 And ask the cause. What recent ill, O woman,
 Hath happened to this house ?

MEG. My dearest lord,
 O thou who to thy aged father com'st
 A radiant light, in safety hast thou reached,
 At this important crisis, the abodes
 Of those thou lov'st.

HER. What mean you by these words ?
 What tumults, O my sire, are we involved in ?

MEG. We are undone ; but, O thou aged man,
 Forgive, if I've anticipated that
 Thou would'st have said to him : for in some points
 Our sex are greater objects of compassion
 Than males. I deem my children dead ; I too
 Am perishing.

HER. O Phœbus ! with what preludes
 Do you begin your speech ?

MEG. My valiant brothers,
 And aged sire, alas ! are now no more.

HER. Who slew them, how, or with what weapon ?

MEG. Lycus,
 The monarch of this city, was their murderer.

HER. With arms did he oppose them, or prevail,
 When foul sedition through the land diffused
 Its pestilent contagion ?

MEG. By revolt
 He holds the sceptre of the Theban realm.

HER. But wherefore hath this sudden panic reached
 You and my aged sire ?

MEG. He would have slain
 Thy father, me, and these defenceless children.

HER. What mean you ? could he fear my orphan race ?

MEG. Lest they hereafter might avenge the death
Of Creon.

HER. But what garb is this they wear,
Which suits some corse?

MEG. Already in these vestments
For our funereal rites are we arrayed.

HER. And were ye on the point of perishing
By violence? Ah me!

MEG. Our friends desert us;
For we have heard that thou wert dead.

HER. Whence rose
This comfortless depression of the soul?

MEG. Eurystheus' heralds the sad tidings bore.

HER. But for what cause did ye forsake my house,
My sacred Lares?

MEG. From his bed thy sire
Was forcibly dragged forth.

HER. So void of shame
Was Lycus as to treat his age with scorn?

MEG. Shame dwells not near the shrine of brutal force.

HER. Were we thus destitute of friends when absent?

MEG. What friends abide with him who is unhappy?

HER. But did they scorn the battles which I fought
Against the Minyans?

MEG. I to thee repeat it,
Calamity is friendless and forlorn.

HER. Will ye not cast from your dishevelled hair
These wreaths of Pluto? will ye not look up
To yon bright sun, and ope your eyes to view
Scenes far more pleasing than the loathsome shades
Of hell beneath? But I, for wrongs like these
Demand my vengeful arm, with speed will go
And overturn the house of that new king,
His impious head I to the ravenous hounds
Lopped from his trunk will cast, and each base Theban
Who with ingratitude repays my kindness
With this victorious weapon smite: my shafts
The rest shall scatter, till Ismenos' channel
Be choked up with the corpses of the slain,
And Dirce's limpid fountain stream with gore.
For whom, in preference to my wife, my children,
And aged father, shall I aid? Farewell,
Ye labours which unwittingly I strove
'T' accomplish, mindless of these dearest pledges;
In their defence I equally am bound
To yield up life, if for their father they
Were doomed to bleed. What! shall we call it noble
To war against the hydra or the lion,
And execute the mandates of Eurystheus,

If I avert not my own children's death?
No longer else shall I, as erst, be styled
Alcides the victorious.

CHOR. It is just
Parents should aid their sons, their aged sire,
And the dear partner of the nuptial bed.

AMP. My son, this mighty privilege is yours,
To be the best of friends to those you love,
And a determined foe to those you hate.
But be not too impetuous.

HER. In what instance
Have I been hastier, O my honoured sire,
Than it becomes me?

AMP. To support his cause,
The king hath many, who in fact are poor,
Though fame accounts them rich; they raised a tumult,
And caused the ruin of the state, to plunder
Their neighbours; for the fortunes they possessed
Are through their own extravagance and sloth
Reduced to nothing. As the gates you entered,
These could not fail to see you: O beware
Lest since you by your foes have been perceived,
You perish when you least foresee your danger,
Oppressed by numbers.

HER. Though all Thebes beheld me,
I care not. But when I descried a bird
Of evil omen perched aloof, I knew
That there had some calamity befallen
My house, and therefore with presaging soul
In secrecy I entered these domains.

AMP. Draw near with pious awe, my son, salute
The Lare-, and display that welcome face
In your paternal mansions. For to drag
Your wife and children forth, with me your sire
To murder us, the king himself will come.
But all will prosper, if you here remain,
And a secure asylum will you find.
Nor through the city spread a loud alarm
Ere your designs succeed.

HER. Thus will I act,
For thou hast rightly spoken: I am entering
The palace. From the sunless caves beneath
Of Proserpine, after a long delay
Returning, first to our domestic gods
Will I be mindful to address my vows.

AMP. Have you indeed then visited the house
Of Pluto, O my son?

HER. And thence the dog
With triple-head brought to these realms of light.

AMP. Conquered in battle, or on you bestowed
By hell's indulgent goddess?

HER. I prevailed
O'er him in combat, and have been so happy
As to behold the far-famed mystic orgies.

AMP. But is the beast lodged in Eurystheus' palace?

HER. Him Cthonia's groves and Hermion's walls
confine.

AMP. Knows not Eurystheus that you are returned
Into this upper world?

HER. He doth not know :
For I came first to learn what passes here.

AMP. But wherefore in the realms beneath, so long
Did you remain?

HER. I there prolonged may stay,
My sire, to bring back Theseus from the shades.

AMP. And where is he, gone to his native land?

HER. He went to Athens, pleased with his escape
From the infernal regions. But attend

Your father to the palace, O my sons,
Which now ye enter in a happier state
Than when ye left it : but take courage, cease
To pour forth floods of tears ; and, O my wife,
Collect thyself, let all thy terrors cease,
And loose my garments ; for I have not wings,
Nor would I vanish from my friends. Alas !
Their hold they quit not, but cling faster still,
And faster to my vest. Because ye stand
Upon the verge of ruin, I will take

And bear you hence, as by the ship light boats
Are guided o'er the deep : for I refuse not
The care my children claim. Here all mankind
Are on a level, they of nobler rank
And mean condition, to their progeny

Bear equal love. The gifts of fortune vary,
Some have abundant wealth, and some are poor ;
But the whole human race feels this attachment.

[Exeunt HERCULES and MEGARA, with the children]

CHORUS.

ODE.

I.

Youth is light, and free from care
But now a burden on my head
Heavier than *Ætna's* rock, old age, I bear,
Before these eyes its sable veil is spread.

Not for the wealth of Asiatic kings,
 Or heaps of gold that touched yon roof sublime,
 Ere would I barter life's enchanting prime;
 Hence wealth a brighter radiance flings,
 And poverty itself can charm:
 But thou, curst dotage, art the sum
 Of every fancied, every real harm;
 May'st thou be plunged beneath the deep, nor come
 To peopled town, or civilized abode,
 Go wing thy distant flight along th' aerial road.

I. 2.

Did the gods with sapient care
 Mete out their bounty to mankind,
 The good, the gift of twofold youth should share
 Unquestioned token of a virtuous mind,
 Behold life's son its blest career renew,
 While the degenerate sleep to wake no more.
 We by these means distinctly might explore
 Their merits with as clear a view,
 As sailors, who each starry spark
 Enumerate that adorns the skies.
 But now the gods have by no certain mark
 Directed whom we for their worth should prize,
 Whom shun as wicked: uninformed we live,
 Revolving time hath nought but plenteous wealth to give.

II. I.

Mindful of its ancient themes,
 This faltering tongue shall ne'er refuse,
 Oft as I wander by their haunted streams,
 To blend each gentle grace and tuneful muse:
 O may I dwell among the harmonious choirs,
 My brows still circled with a laureate wreath!
 Still shall the bard, a hoary veteran, breathe
 The strains Mnemosuné inspires:
 While memory wakes, I ne'er will cease
 Th' exploits of Hercules to sing;
 Where Bromius yields the purple vine's increase,
 Where Libyan pipes and the lute's sevenfold string
 Are heard in dulcet unison; to praise
 The Nine who aid the dance, I'll wake my choral lays.

II. 2.

Delian virgins at the gate
 Assembled, festive pæans sing,
 The triumphs of Latona's son relate,
 And nimbly vaulting form their beauteous ring.

Into thy temple, by devotion led,
 O Phœbus, will I raise my parting breath ;
 The swan thus warbles at the hour of death :
 Though hoary hairs my cheeks o'erspread.
 How great the hero's generous love,
 Whose merits aid our votive song,
 Alcides the resistless son of Jove ;
 Those trophies, which to noble birth belong
 By him are all surpassed, his forceful hand
 Restoring peace, hath cleansed this monster-teeming land.

LYCUS, AMPHITRYON, CHORUS.

LYC. Forth from the portals at due season comes
 Amphitryon ; for 'tis long since ye were decked
 In robes and trappings such as suit the dead.
 But go, command the children and the wife
 Of Hercules without these gates t' appear,
 Because ye have engaged that ye will die
 By your own hands.

AMP. You persecute, O king,
 Me whom already fortune hath made wretched,
 And with sharp taunts insult my dying race :
 Although in power supreme, you ought to act
 With moderation ; but since you impose
 This harsh necessity, we must submit,
 And execute your will.

LYC. Where's Megara ?
 Where are the children of Alcmena's son ?

AMP. To me she seems, as far as I can guess,
 From looking through the door——

LYC. What grounds hast thou
 For this opinion ?

AMP. In a suppliant posture
 To sit before the Lares.

LYC. And implore them
 With unavailing plaints to save her life.

AMP. In vain too calls she on her lord deceased.

LYC. But he is absent, he can ne'er return.

AMP. Unless some god should raise him up again.

LYC. Go thou, and from the palace lead her hither.

AMP. 'Twould make me an accomplice in the murder,
 If this I acted.

LYC. Since thy soul recoils,
 I, whom such idle scruples cannot move,
 Will with their mother bring the children forth.
 Follow my steps, my servants, that at length
 We may behold sweet peace succeed our toils

[Exit LYCUS.]

AMP. Depart : for to that place the Fates ordain
 You now are on the road ; perhaps the sequel
 Will be another's province : but expect,
 Since you have done amiss, to suffer vengeance.
 He, O ye veterans, at a lucky hour
 Enters the palace, for on ambushed swords
 His feet will stumble, while the villain hopes
 Those he would murder are too near at hand
 To 'scape : but I will go to see him fall
 A breathless corse : for when our foe endures
 The just requital of his impious deeds,
 There is a joy resulting from his death.

[Exit AMPHITRYON.]

CHOR. Changed are our evil fortunes. To the shades
 He who was erst a mighty king descends.
 O justice, and ye dread vicissitudes
 Of fate, ordained by Heaven !

1st SEMICHOR. Thou art at length
 Gone thither, where by death thou for those taunts,
 With which thou o'er the virtuous didst exult,
 Shalt make atonement.

2nd SEMICHOR. My delight bursts forth
 In floods of tears : for now is come that day
 The tyrant deemed would never visit him.

1st SEMICHOR. But let us also look into the palace,
 My aged friend, and mark if yonder miscreant
 Be punished as I wish.

LYC. [*within.*] Ah me ! ah me !

CHOR. That melody most grateful to mine ear
 Beneath yon roofs commences ; nor is death
 Far distant ; for these cries the monarch utters
 Are but a prelude to the fatal stroke.

LYC. [*within.*] Ye realms of Cadmus, I through treachery
 perish !

2nd SEMICHOR. Others have perished by that bloody
 hand.
 Since then the retribution thou endur'st
 Is just, endure it bravely.

1st SEMICHOR. Where is he
 Who uttered 'gainst the blest immortal powers
 His foolish blasphemies, and calied the gods
 Too weak to punish him ?

2nd SEMICHOR. That impious man
 Is now no more. Yon vaulted roofs are silent,
 Let us begin the harmonious choral lay ;
 For, as I wished, our comrades prove victorious.

CHORUS.

ODE.

I. 1.

The sumptuous banquet, with th' enlivening dance
 Now every Theban shall employ ;
 Dried are our tears, and past mischance
 Yields to the lyre abundant themes of joy :
 Stretched low in dust the tyrant lies ;
 But he, who by an ancient right
 Obtains the sceptre, is our king ;
 From Acheron's loathed stream behold him rise,
 Revisiting the cheerful realms of light,
 And hope, unlooked for, doth fresh transports bring.

I. 2.

The gods take cognizance of broken trust,
 Nor are they deaf to holy prayer.
 On gold and fortune, power unjust
 Attends ; man's reason is too weak to bear
 The joint temptations. Heaven at length,
 Whose kind protection we invoke,
 Deigning with pity to behold
 Our woes, to the neglected laws their strength
 Restoring, with vindictive fury broke
 The sable car which bore the god of gold.

II. 1.

Now let the flowery wreath, the victor's pride,
 Adorn Ismenos ; let each street employ
 The hours in dance and social joy ;
 Let Dirce from the silver wave arise,
 And old Asopus' daughters by her side,
 Forsaking their paternal stream,
 Conspire to aid our rapturous theme,
 And for Alcides claim the victor's prize.
 Ye Pythian rocks, with waving forests crowned,
 And seats of Helicon's melodious choir,
 Come every nymph, with cheerful sound,
 Visit these walls which to the clouds aspire ;
 In helmed crop here warriors filled the plains.
 Whose lineage undecayed from age to age remains.

II. 2.

O ye, the partners of one nuptial bed,
 Happy Amphitryon, sprung from mortal race,
 And Jove, who rushed to the embrace

Of bright Alcmena ; for of thee aright,
 Though erst, O Jove, I doubted, was it said
 Thou didst enjoy that beauteous dame ;
 With the renown his triumphs claim,
 Time through the world displays Alcides' might,
 Emerged from grisly Pluto's realms abhorred,
 Who quits the darksome caverns of the earth,
 To me a far more welcome lord,
 Than yon vile tyrant of ignoble birth.
 Now to the bloody strife we lift our eyes ;
 The vengeful sword is bared, if Justice haunt the skies.
 SEMICHOR. Ha ! are we all by the same panic seized ?
 My aged friends, what spectre, hovering o'er
 The palace, do I see ? Those tardy feet
 Raise from the ground, precipitate thy flight,
 Be gone.—From me, O Pæan, mighty king,
 Avert these evils.

IRIS, A FIEND, CHORUS.

IRIS. O, ye aged men,
 Be not dismayed : the fiend whom ye behold
 Is daughter of old Night, and I am Iris,
 The gods' ambassadress. We are not come
 To harm your city ; for we only war
 Against one man, who, sprung 'tis said from Jove
 And from Alcmena : till he had performed
 Severest labours, fate preserved his life ;
 Nor did his father Jove permit, or me,
 Or Juno, e'er to hurt him : but, each toil
 Eurystheus' hate enjoined, now he hath finished,
 Those oft-polluted hands with recent gore
 Will Juno stain, by urging him to slay
 His children : in this scheme I too conspire.
 Come on then, armed with a relentless heart,
 Unwedded daughter of the pitchy Night ;
 Instil into that hero's breast such frenzy
 As shall o'erturn his reason, and constrain him
 To perpetrate this murder ; his wild steps
 Goad onward, throw the bloody cable forth,
 That having sent this band of graceful sons,
 Slain by their father's arm, adown the gulf
 Of Acheron, th' effects of Juno's wrath
 And mine, he may experience ; for the gods
 Would be mere things of no account, but great
 Would be the power of man, if he escaped
 Unpunished.

FIEND. I from noble parents spring,
 Night is my mother ; and that blood which streamed
 From the foul wound of Ouranus, my sire :

CHOR. Thou city, groan ; thy choicest flower,
The son of Jove, is cropped : O Greece,
Thy benefactor's fatal hour
Impends. To thee for ever lost,
Assailed by that infernal pest,
The dauntless chief, deprived of peace,
Shall feel his agonizing breast
With horrible distraction tossed.
Hence in her brazen chariot went
The raging fiend, on mischief bent ;
She urges with a scorpion goad
Her steeds along th' ethereal road.
That hundred-headed child of Night,
With all those hissing snakes around,
From her envenomed eyeballs bright
The Gorgon thus directs the wound.
Soon changed by Heaven's supreme decree,
Is man's short-lived felicity.
Ye infants, soon shall ye expire,
Slain by your own distracted sire.
Ah me ! thy son, without delay,
Shall be left childless, mighty Jove ;
For on his tortured soul shall prey
Yon fiend, and by the powers above
Vengeance commissioned to destroy.
O mansion erst the scene of joy !
To form a prelude to this dance,
Neither the cheering timbrel's sound,
Nor sportive Menades advance ;
Here human gore shall stream around,
Instead of that refreshing juice,
Which Bacchus' purple grapes produce.
Away, ye children, danger's nigh,
For he who wakes this hostile strain,
Traces your footsteps as ye fly ;
Nor will the fiend with fruitless rage,
A war beneath those mansions wage.
Alas ! we sink o'erwhelmed with woe,
My tears shall never cease to flow.
I wail the grandsire hoar with age,
The mother too who bore that train
Of lovely children, but in vain.
Lo, what a tempest shakes the wall,
And makes th' uprooted mansion fall !
What mean'st thou, frantic son of Jove ?
The hellish uproar thou dost raise,
Filling the palace with amaze,
Is such as vexed the realms above,

Till issuing with victorious might,
 Pallas invincible in fight
 The huge Enceladus oppressed,
 And piled all Ætna on his breast.

MESSENGER, CHORUS.

MES. O ye whose heads are whitened o'er with age !

CHOR. Why dost thou call me with so loud a voice ?

MES. Atrocious are the mischiefs which have happened
 Within the palace.

CHOR. I need now call in
 No other seer. The boys are slain. Ah me !

MES. Indulge your groans, for such events as these
 Demand them.

CHOR. By a foe, e'en by the hand
 Of their own sire, in whom that foe they found.

MES. No tongue can utter woes beyond what we
 Have suffered.

CHOR. What account hast thou to give
 Of the dire fate the father on his sons
 Inflicted ? Sent by the avenging gods,
 Say why such mischiefs visited this house,
 And how the children miserably fell.

MES. To purify the house were victims brought
 Before Jove's altar, after Hercules
 Had slain and cast the monarch of this land
 Forth from these doors. Beside the victor stood
 His band of graceful children, with his sire
 And Megara. The sacred vase was borne
 Around the altar : from ill-omened words
 We all abstained. But while Alcmena's son
 In his right hand a kindled torch sustained,
 Ready to dip it in the lustral water,
 He made a silent stand ; on this delay
 The children steadfastly observed their sire,
 But he no longer was the same ; his eyes
 Were seized with strong convulsions, from their fibres
 Blood started forth, his bearded cheeks with foam
 Were covered : he midst bursts of laughter wild
 Cried : " Wherefore need I kindle, O my father,
 The fire for sacrifice, ere I have slain
 Eurystheus, in a double toil engaged,
 When I at once might better finish all ?
 Soon as I hither bring Eurystheus' head,
 These hands which reek already with the gore
 Of Lycus, will I cleanse. Pour forth those waters
 Upon the ground, and cast your urns away.
 Who brings my bow, my club ? I to Mycene
 Will go : let spades and levers be prepared,

That I from their foundations may o'erturn
Those walls which with the plummet and the line
The Cyclops reared." Then eager to depart,
Although he had no chariot, yet he talked
As if he had one, fancying that he mounted
The seat, and with his hand as with a thong
Drove the ideal steeds. His servants laughed,
And at the same time trembled; till one cried
(As on each other they with eager eyes
Were gazing), "Doth my master sport with us,
Or is he frantic?" Meanwhile through the palace
Backward and forward he with hasty step
Was walking: but no sooner did he reach
That spacious hall, where at the genial board
The men are wont t' assemble, than he said
That he was come to Nisus' ancient city,
And to th' imperial dome: and on the floor,
As if reclining at the genial board,
Bade us set forth the banquet. But the pause
Which intervened was short, ere he exclaimed,
That he was traversing the Isthmian rocks
O'ergrown with woods; then casting off his mantle
He strove though there was no antagonist
With whom to strive, proclaimed himself the victor,
The name of that imaginary foe
Announcing, over whom he had prevailed:
But 'gainst Eurystheus he anon did utter
Menaces the most horrible, and talk
As if he at Mycene had been present.
His father strove to hold his vigorous arm,
And said to him; "What mean you, O my son?
What wanderings into distant realms are these?
Hath not the blood of him you have just slain
Distracted you?" Then for Eurystheus' sire
Mistaking his own father, as he strove
To touch his hand, repelled the trembling suppliant:
Against his sons, the quiver and the bow,
Thinking to slay the children of Eurystheus,
He next made ready: they with terror smitten
Ran different ways; the first beneath the robes
Of his unhappy mother skulked; a second
Flew to the shade the lofty column formed:
Under the altar quivering like a bird,
The last concealed himself: their mother cried,
"What mean'st thou, O thou father, would'st thou slay
Thy sons?" Aphitryon too, that aged man,
And all the servants shrieked. But round the pillar
The boy pursuing, he at length turned short,
And meeting him, as foot to foot they stood,

Transfixed his liver with a deadly shaft ;
 Supine he fell, and with his streaming gore
 Distained the sculptured pillars, at whose base
 He breathed his last. But, with a shout, Alcides
 Uttered these boasts : " One of Eurystheus' brood
 Slain by this arm, for the inveterate hate
 His father bore me, to atone, here lies
 A breathless corse." Against another then,
 Who to the basis of the altar fled,
 And hoped to 'scape unseen, he bent his bow ;
 But ere he gave the wound, the wretched youth
 Fell at his father's knees, stretched forth his hands
 To touch his chin, or twine around his neck,
 And cried : " O spare my life, my dearest sire,
 Yours, I am yours indeed ; nor will you slay
 Eurystheus' son." But he with glaring eyes
 Looked like a Gorgon, while the boy pressed on
 So close, he had no scope to aim the shaft,
 But as the smith the glowing anvil smites,
 Full on his auburn tresses he discharged
 The ponderous mace, the crashing bones gave way.
 Scarce had he slain the second, when he ran
 To butcher his third son o'er both their corpses :
 But the unhappy mother in her arms
 Caught up, into an inner chamber bore
 The child, and closed the doors : but he, as if
 He had indeed been at the Cyclops' city,
 With levers from their hinges forced them, pierced
 His wife and offspring with a single shaft,
 And then to slay his aged father rushed
 With speed impetuous : but a spectre came,
 Which to our eyes the awful semblance bore
 Of Pallas brandishing her pointed spear,
 And threw a rocky fragment at the breast
 Of Hercules, which checked his murderous frenzy,
 And plunged him into sleep. Upon the ground
 Headlong he fell, where 'midst the ruins lay,
 Rent from its pedestal a broken column :
 But rallying from our flight, we, by his sire
 Assisted, to the pillar bound him fast
 With thongs, that on his wakening from this trance
 He might commit no more atrocious deeds.
 There doth he taste an inauspicious sleep,
 First having slain his children and his consort.
 I know no mortal more completely wretched.

[Exit MESSENGER.]

CHOR. There was a murder in the Argive land
 Most wondrous and unparalleled through Greece
 In days of yore, which the confederate daughters

Of Danaus perpetrated ; but their crimes
 By the dire fate of Progne's only son
 Were far surpassed. I of a bloody deed
 Now speak which they committed, they whose voice
 Equals the Muses' choir ; but thou who spring'st
 From Jove himself, hast in thy frenzy slain
 All thy three sons ; for them what groans, what tears,
 What invocations to the shades beneath,
 Or songs shall I prepare to soothe the rage
 Of grisly Pluto ? Shivered on the ground
 The portals of that lofty mansion view,
 Behold the corpses of the children stretcht
 Before their miserable sire, whose senses,
 Since he hath slain them, in profoundest sleep
 Are buried. Mark those knotty cords around
 The brawny limbs of Hercules, entwined
 And to the columns in the palace fixed.
 But old Amphytrion, like a bird who wails
 Over its callow brood, with tardy step
 Comes hither in the bitterness of grief.

AMPHITRYON, CHORUS.

*The Palace gates thrown open, discover HERCULES stretched on
 the ground and sleeping.*

AMP. Ye aged Thebans, will ye not be silent,
 Will ye not suffer him dissolved in sleep
 His miseries to forget ?

CHOR. These tears, these groans,
 To you, O venerable man, I pay,
 To those slain children, and the chief renowned
 For his victorious conflicts.

AMP. Farther still
 Retire ; forbear, forbear those clamorous sounds,
 Lest his repose ye break, and from a trance
 The sleeper rouse.

CHOR. How dreadful was this slaughter !

AMP. Ha ! ha ! begone, for he in wild confusion
 Is starting up. Why will ye not lament,
 Ye aged men, in a more gentle tone ?
 Lest roused from sleep he burst his chains, destroy
 The city, smite his sire, and with the ground
 Lay these proud mansions level.

CHOR. This I hold
 Impossible.

AMP. Be silent, I will mark
 Whether he breathe : O let me place my ear
 Still closer.

CHOR. Sleeps he ?

AMP. An accursed repose,
 Alas ! he tastes, who hath his consort slain,
 And slain his sons with that resounding bow.

CHOR. Now wail.

AMP. I wail those children's fate.

CHOR.

Your son,

Alas ! old man, our equal pity claims.

AMP. Observe strict silence, for again he rises
 And turns around : I will conceal myself
 Beneath that roof.

CHOR. Be of good cheer : night seals
 The eyelids of your son.

AMP. Mark, mark me well,
 I am so wretched that without reluctance
 I can bid life adieu : but if he kill
 Me too who am his father, guilt on guilt
 Shall he accumulate, and join the stings
 Of parricide to those which from the Furies
 Who haunt him, he already doth endure.

CHOR. Better you then had died, when you prepared
 T' avenge the slaughtered brothers of Alcmena,
 And stormed the fortress of the Taphian isle.

AMP. Fly, leave the palace instantly ; avoid
 That frantic man, who from his sleep is roused,
 For adding soon fresh slaughter to the past,
 With Bacchanalian transport shall he range
 Through Cadmus' city.

CHOR. Why hast thou, O Jove,
 Hated thy son so bitterly, and plunged him
 Into this sea of troubles ?

HER. [*waking.*] Ha ! I breathe,
 And view each wonted object, air, and earth,
 And these bright solar beams. Into what storm,
 What dreadful perturbation of the soul
 Have I been plunged ! all heated I transpire,
 Not from my lungs, but from my feverish heart.
 Behold me ! wherefore am I bound with chains,
 Like a disabled ship towed into haven,
 And by this youthful chest and nervous arm
 Joined to a broken pillar ? Here I sit
 Contiguous to the corpses of the slain ;
 My winged shafts lie scattered on the ground,
 With that unerring bow which erst I bore
 In war to guard me, and with care pre-erved.
 Sent by Eurystheus, am I then arrived
 A second time at the drear shades beneath ?
 Neither the rock of Sisyphus, nor Pluto,
 Nor Ceres' sceptred daughter, do I see.
 I sure am stricken senseless with amazement,

And know not where I am. But ho ! what friend
Is near, or at a distance, who will come
To give me information ? For each object
Which I was erst acquainted with seems strange.

AMP. Shall I approach this scene of my afflictions
Ye aged men ?

CHOR. I will attend your steps,
Nor meanly in calamity betray you.

HER. Why dost thou weep, my sire, and veil those
eyes,
Retiring far from thy beloved son ?

AMP. My son—for though unhappy, you are mine.

HER. But what calamity do I endure
That causes thee to shed these tears ?

AMP. Your woes
Are such, that any god, if he endured
The same, would groan.

HER. This hath a dreadful sound :
But you, my fortunes have not yet explained.

AMP. Because if you your senses have recovered,
Yourself behold them.

HER. Tell me what thou mean'st—
If to my charge thou lay'st some recent crime.

AMP. If you no longer to the powers of hell
Are subjected, the truth will I unfold.

HER. Alas ! how darkly thou again allud'st
To what my soul suspects.

AMP. Your looks I watch
To see if reason wholly be restored.

HER. I recollect not that I e'er was frantic.

AMP. [*to the CHORUS.*]
Shall I unbind the shackles of my son,
Or how must we proceed ?

HER. Say who was he
That bound me ? for with scorn have I been treated.

AMP. Thus much of your afflictions may you know :
Forbear all farther questions.

HER. Is thy silence
Sufficient then to teach me what I wish
To learn ?

AMP. O Jove, dost thou behold the curses
Hurled on thy son from envious Juno's throne ?

HER. What dire effects of her inveterate rage
Have I endured ?

AMP. Of that vindictive goddess
No longer think : but to your own afflictions
Attend.

HER. Alas ! I utterly am ruined !
What farther ill wouldst thou disclose ?

AMP. See there
The corpses of your murdered children lie.
HER. Alas ! what dreadful objects strike these eyes !
AMP. My son, against your progeny you waged
An inauspicious war.

HER. Why talk of war ?
Who slew them ?

AMP. You, your arrows, and the cause
Of all these mischiefs, that remorseless goddess.

HER. What mean'st thou, or what crime have I committed,
My father, O thou messenger of ill ?

AMP. By frenzy urged. But you such questions ask,
As I with grief must answer.

HER. Have I murdered
My consort also ?

AMP. All these deeds of horror
That single arm did perpetrate.

HER. Alas !
A cloud of griefs surrounds me.

AMP. For this cause
Your fortunes I lament.

HER. Have I demolished
My own house too, with Bacchanalian rage
Inspired ?

AMP. The whole of what I know amounts
To this, that you are most completely wretched.

HER. Where did this fatal madness seize me first ?

AMP. As round the altar, you, a flaming brand,
To expiate the foul murder which distains
Your hands, were bearing.

HER. Ah ! why lengthen out
A guilty life, when of my dearest children
I am become the murderer ? Why delay
To leap from the high rock, or with a sword
Transpierce this bosom, on myself their blood
Avenging ? or t' avert that infamy
Which waits me, shall I rush into the flames ?
But Theseus comes to bar these desperate counsels,
My kinsman and my friend ; in a true light
To him shall I appear, and the pollution
I have incurred by slaying my own sons
Will be conspicuous to my dearest comrade.
What shall I do ? or where can I find out
A solitude impervious to my woes ?
On rapid wings, O could I mount, or plunge
Into the nether regions of the earth ?
Give me a veil to darken o'er my head.
For 'tis with shame I think on the offence
Caused by this deed : but to myself alone

Ascribing the defilement of their blood,
I wish not to contaminate the guiltless.

THESEUS, AMPHITRYON, HERCULES, CHORUS.

THE. An armed squadron of Athenian youths
I hither bring, who near Asopus' stream
Are stationed to assist your son in battle.
For to the city of Erectheus' race
A rumour came, that Lycus, having seized
The sceptre of this land, is waging war
'Gainst you. O aged man, I to repay
The benefits which Hercules conferred
On me, whom from the dreary shades beneath
In safety he redeemed, on your behalf
Attend, if of this arm, or of my troops,
Ye need the help. But, ha, what means the floor
With weltering corpses heaped? hath my design
Proved ineffectual? am I then arrived
Too late to remedy the dreadful mischiefs
Which have already ta'en effect? who slew
Those children, or whose consort was the dame
Whom I behold? for where the boys are laid,
No signs appear of any battle fought:
But sure I of some other recent ill
Now make discovery.

AMP. O thou goddess, throned
Upon that hill where verdant olives spring.

THE. Why speak you to me in this piteous tone,
And with such prelude?

AMP. Grievous are the ills
Which we endure through Heaven's severe behest.

THE. What boys are they o'er whose remains you weep?

AMP. Them did my miserable son beget,
And when begotten slay, this impious murder
He dared to perpetrate.

THE. Express yourself
In more auspicious terms.

AMP. I wish t' obey
Th' injunctions thou hast given.

THE. What dreadful words
Are these which you have uttered?

AMP. In a moment
Were we undone.

THE. What mean you, what hath happened?

AMP. This frenzy seized him sprinkled with the venom,
Which from the hundred-headed hydra flowed.

THE. Such Juno's wrath. But who, O aged man,
Stands 'mong the dead?

AMP. My son, my valiant son,
Inured to many toils, who in that war
Where earth's gigantic brood were slain, advanced
Among the gods to the Phlegræan field
Armed with his buckler.

THE. Ah, what mighty chief
Was e'er so wretched?

AMP. Scarcely shalt thou know
A man with greater labours vexed, and doomed
To wander through more regions.

THE. But why veils he
Beneath that robe his miserable head?

AMP. Because thy presence, friendship's sacred ties
Added to those of kindred, and the gore
Of his slain children, fill his soul with shame.

THE. I with his griefs am come to sympathize;
Uncover him.

AMP. That garment from your eyes
Remove, display your visage to the sun.
It ill becomes my dignity to weep:
Yet I a suppliant strive to touch your beard,
Your knees, your hand, and shed these hoary tears.
O curb your soul, my son, whose fierceness equals
That of the lion, else 'twill hurry you
To bloody impious rage, and make you add
Mischiefs to mischiefs.

THE. Ho! on thee I call,
On thee, who to that seat of misery seem'st
Fast riveted; permit thy friends to see
Thy face: for darkness hath no cloud so black
As to conceal thy woes. Why dost thou wave
Thy hand and point to those whom thou hast slain,
Lest by this converse I pollute myself?
I am not loth to share thy woes; I erst
Was happy (which my soul is ever bound
To recollect with gratitude) when thou
From hell's loathed gloom, the mansion of the dead,
Didst safely bear me to the realms of light.
For I abhor th' attachment of those friends
Which time impairs, him too who would enjoy
Their better fortunes, but refuse to sail
In the same bark with those who prove unblest.
Rise up, unveil thy miserable head
And look on me. A noble mind sustains
Without reluctance what the gods inflict.

HER. Did you, O Theseus, see me slay my children?

THE. I heard, and now behold the ills thou speak'st of.

HER. Then why didst thou uncover to the sun
My guilty head?

THE. Why not? canst thou, a man,
Pollute the gods?

HER. Avaunt, O wretch, avaunt,
For I am all contagion.

THE. To a friend
No mischief from his friend can be transmitted.

HER. Your conduct I applaud, nor will deny
That I have served you.

THE. I who erst received
Those favours at thy hands, now pity thee.

HER. I am indeed an object of your pity,
From having slain my sons.

THE. For thee I weep,
Because to me thou heretofore wert kind
When vexed by other ills.

HER. Did you e'er meet
With those who were more wretched?

THE. Thy afflictions
Are of such giant bulk, that they to heaven
Reach from this nether world.

HER. Hence am I ready
For instant death.

THE. Canst thou suppose the gods
Regard thy threats?

HER. Self-willed are they and cruel,
And I defy the gods.

THE. Restrain thy tongue,
Lest thou by uttering such presumptuous words
Increase thy sufferings.

HER. I with woes am fraught
Already, nor remains there space for more.

THE. But what design'st thou? whither art thou borne
With frantic rage?

HER. In death will I return
To those abodes beneath, whence late I came.

THE. Thou speak'st the language of a vulgar man.

HER. Exempt from all calamity yourself,
On me these admonitions you bestow.

THE. Are these fit words for Hercules to use,
Who many toils endured?

HER. I had not suffered
Thus much, if any bounds had circumscribed
My labours.

THE. Benefactor of mankind,
And their great friend?

HER. From them no aid I find;
But Juno triumphs.

THE. Greece will not permit thee
To perish unregarded.

Uttering a voice indignant, will forbid me
 To touch its surface, ocean, o'er its waves,
 And every river, o'er its streams, to pass.
 I shall be like Ixion then, with chains
 Fixed to the wheel. 'Twere better that no Greek
 With whom I in my happier days conversed
 Should see me more. What motive can I have
 For living? or to me of what avail
 Were it to keep possession of this useless
 And this unholy being? flushed with joy,
 Let Jove's illustrious consort, in the dance,
 Strike with her sandals the resplendent floor
 Of high Olympus: for she now hath gained
 Her utmost wish, and from his basis torn
 The first of Grecian warriors. Who can pray
 To such a goddess, who, with envy stung,
 Because Jove loved a woman, hath destroyed
 The benefactors of the Grecian realm,
 Those blameless objects of her hate?

THE.

This mischief

Springs from no god except the wife of Jove.
 Well dost thou judge, in saying that 'tis easier
 To give thee wholesome counsel, than endure
 Such agonies. But no man 'scapes unwounded
 By fortune, and no god; unless the songs
 Of ancient bards mislead. Have not the gods
 Among themselves formed lawless marriages?
 Have they not bound in ignominious chains
 Their fathers, to obtain a throne? In heaven
 Yet dwell they, and bear up beneath the load
 Of all their crimes. But what canst thou allege,
 If thou, frail mortal as thou art, those ills
 Immoderately bewail'st to which the gods
 Without reluctance yield? from Thebes retire,
 Since thus the laws ordain; and follow me
 To Pallas' city: when thy hands are there
 Cleansed from pollution, I to thee will give
 A palace, and with thee divide my wealth.
 The presents which the citizens to me
 Appropriated, when twice seven blooming victims
 I by the slaughter of the Cretan bull
 Redeemed, on thee will I bestow. For portions
 Of land are through the realm to me assigned:
 These, while thou liv'st henceforth shall by thy name
 Be called: but after death, when to the shades
 Of Pluto thou descend'st, with sacrifice
 And with the sculptured tomb, shall Athens grace
 Thy memory. For her citizens have gained
 This fairest wreath from every Grecian state,

By yielding succour to the virtuous man
Their glories are augmented : and to thee
Will I repay with gratitude the kindness
Which thou deserv'st for saving me ; for thou
Hast need of friends at present : but no friend
Is wanted when the gods confer renown ;
For, if he wills, Jove's aid is all-sufficient.

HER. You hold a language foreign to my griefs.
But I suppose not that the gods delight
In lawless nuptials, that their hands are bound
With galling chains, nor did I e'er believe,
Nor can I be convinced, that one bears rule
Over another. For a deity
If he be truly such, can stand in need
Of no support. But by some lying bard
Those miserable fables were devised.
Although I am most wretched, yet I thought
I might be charged with cowardice for leaving
These realms of light. For he who bears not up
'Gainst adverse fortune, never can withstand
The weapon of his foe. I am resolved
To wait for death with firmness : to your city
Meantime will I retreat, and am most grateful
For your unnumbered gifts. Unnumbered labours
Have I been erst acquainted with ; from none
Did I e'er shrink, these eyes did never stream
With tears, nor thought I that I e'er should come
To such a pitch of meanness as to weep :
But now, it seems, must Fortune be obeyed.
I am content. Thou, O my aged sire,
Behold'st my exile, thou in me behold'st
The murderer of my children : to the tomb
Consign their corpses with funereal pomp,
And o'er them shed the tributary tear :
For me the laws allow not to perform
This office. Let their mother, e'en in death,
Clasp to her breast, and in her arms sustain,
Our wretched offspring, whom in evil hour
I slew reluctant. But when thou with earth
Hast covered them, thy residence still keep
Here in this city, miserably indeed,
Yet on thy soul lay this constraint, to bear
With me the woes which I most deeply feel.
The very sire, ye children, who begot,
Murdered you ; no advantage ye derive
From what this arm by all my labours gained,
And from your father's triumphs no renown.
Have not I slain thee too who didst preserve
My bed inviolate, and o'er my house
Long watch with patient care ? Ah me ! my wife,

My sons: but how much more to be lamented
 Am I myself, from them for ever torn?
 Ye melancholy joys of kisses lavished
 On their remains, and ye ~~my~~ loathed companions,
 The weapons which I still retain, but doubt
 Whether to keep or dash them to the ground;
 For they, while at my side they hang, will seem
 To utter these reproachful words: "With us
 Thy consort and thy children hast thou slain,
 Yet thou the very instruments preserv'st
 Which were their murderers." After such a charge
 Can I still bear them? what can I allege?
 But stripping off those arms with which through Greece
 I have achieved full many glorious deeds,
 Shall I expose myself to those who hate me,
 And die ignobly? I must not abandon
 But keep them still, though sorrowing. Aid me, Theseus,
 In this one enterprise; to Argos go
 And for your friend obtain the great reward
 Promised for dragging from the shades of hell
 That execrable hound: lest if by you
 Deserted, I through grief for my slain children
 Should come to some calamitous end. Thou realm
 Of Cadmus, and ye citizens of Thebes,
 With tresses shorn, in concert weep; the tomb
 Of my slain children visit, there bewail,
 In one funereal dirge, the dead, and me;
 For smitten with the same dire scourge of fate
 By Juno, we all perish.

THE. Hapless man,
 Arise; enough of tears.

HER. I cannot rise,
 These limbs are now grown stiff.

THE. Calamity
 Subdues the valiant.

HER. Would I were a stone,
 Insensible to sufferings!

THE. Cease these plaints;
 And to the friend who comes to serve thee, give
 Thy hand.

HER. But let me not wipe off the blood
 Upon your garments.

THE. Wipe it off, nor scruple,
 For I object not.

HER. Of my sons bereft,
 In you the likeness of a son I find.

THE. Fling round my neck thine arm: I'll lead the way.

HER. A pair of friends: though one of us be wretched.
 Such, O my aged father, is the man
 We ought to make a friend.

THE. His native realm
Produces an illustrious progeny.

HER. Turn me around, that I may see my sons.

THE. Hoping such philtre may thy griefs appease.

HER. This earnestly I wish for, and would clasp
My father to this bosom.

AMP. Here, lo, here !

For what my son desires, to me is grateful.

THE. Of all the labours thou didst erst achieve,
Hast thou thus lost the memory ?

HER. All those ills
Were less severe than what I now experience.

THE. Should any one behold thee grown unmanly,
He could not praise thee.

HER. Though to you I seem
Degraded to an abject life, I trust
That I my former courage shall resume.

THE. Where now is the illustrious Hercules ?

HER. What had you been, if still you in the shades
Had miserably dwelt ?

THE. Then sunk my courage
Beneath the meanest of the human race.

HER. Why then persist in saying that my woes
Have quite subdued me ?

THE. Onward !

HER. Good old man,
Farewell.

AMP. Farewell too, O my son.

HER. My children
Inter as I directed.

AMP. O, my son,
But who will bury me ?

HER. I.

AMP. When will you
Come hither ?

HER. After thou hast for my children
Performed that pious office.

AMP. How ?

HER. I'll fetch thee
From Thebes to Athens.—Bear into the palace
My children's corpses which pollute the ground.
But as for me, who have disgraced and plunged
My house in ruin, I will follow Theseus,
Towed like a battered skiff. Whoe'er prefers
Wealth or dominion to a steadfast friend,
Judges amiss.

CHOR. Most wretched, drowned in tears,
Reft of our great protector, we depart.

THE CHILDREN OF HERCULES.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

IOLAUS.
COPREUS.
CHORUS OF ATHENIAN
OLD MEN.

DEMOPHOON.
MACARIA.
ALCMENA.
MESSENGER.

EURYSTHEUS.

SCENE.—BEFORE THE ALTAR OF JUPITER, IN THE FORUM AT
MARATHON, A CITY IN THE ATHENIAN DOMINIONS.

IOLAUS.

LONG have I held this sentiment : the just
Are born the streams of bounty to diffuse
On all around them ; while the man whose soul
Is warped by interest, useless in the State,
Untractable and harsh to every friend,
Lives only for himself ; in words alone
This doctrine I imbibed not. Through a sense
Of virtuous shame and reverence for my kindred
When I in peace at Argos might have dwelt,
I singly shared the toils of Hercules,
While he on earth remained ; but now he dwells
In heaven, I guard his children, though protection
Be what I need myself. For when their sire
Forsook this nether world, Eurystheus strove
Immediately to slay us ; but I 'scaped
From that oppressor's fangs, and though to me
Lost is my country, I have saved my life.
But we poor vagabonds, from city fly
To some fresh city, ever forced to change
Our dwelling ; for Eurystheus deems it meet
To add this wrong to former wrongs, he sends
His heralds wheresoe'er he hears we settle,
And claims and drives us forth from every land ;
No slight resentment from the Argive realm
Against our friends denouncing, he reminds them
Of his own prosperous fortunes ; when they see

My weakness, and these little ones bereft
 Of their great father, to superior might
 They crouch, and force the suppliant to depart.
 But with the exiled race of Hercules
 A voluntary exile, I partake
 Their evil fortunes, steadfastly resolved
 Not to betray them; by malignant tongues
 It never shall be said, "Oh, mark these orphans!
 Since their sire's death their kinsman Iolaus
 Protects them not." But, exiled from all Greece,
 On reaching Marathon and the domain
 Subject to the same rulers, here we sit
 Before the altars of the gods, and sue
 For their assistance. In this region dwell
 Two sons of Theseus, I am told, by lot
 Who portion out this realm, they from Pandion
 Descend, and to these children are allied.
 We therefore undertook our present journey
 To the Athenian realm; two aged guides
 Conduct the hapless wanderers; my attention
 Is to the boys devoted; but Alcmena,
 Entering the adjacent temple, in her arms
 Tenderly clasps the female progeny
 Of her departed son. Amid the crowd
 We fear to introduce these tender virgins,
 Or place them at the altars of the gods.
 But Hyllus and his brothers, more mature
 In years, inquire in what far distant land
 A fortress for our future residence
 We yet can find, if we from these domains
 By force should be expelled. My sons, come hither,
 Cling to this garment; for to us I see
 Eurystheus' herald coming, by whose hate,
 We wanderers, banished from each friendly realm,
 Are still pursued. Thou, execrable miscreant,
 Perish thyself, and perish he who sent thee;
 For to the noble father of these children
 Oft hath that tongue enjoined severest toils.

COPREUS, IOLAUS.

COP. What, think'st thou unmolested to enjoy
 This pleasant seat, and have thy vagrant steps
 Entered at length a city prompt to fight
 Thy battles? for the man who will prefer
 Thy feeble arm to that of great Eurystheus,
 Exists not. Hence! why in these useless toils
 Dost thou persist? thou must return to Argos
 Where they have doomed thee to be stoned.

IOL. Not thus :
For in this altar shall I find protection,
And this free country on whose soil we tread.

COP. Wilt thou constrain me then to have recourse
To violence ?

IOL. With forceful hand, nor me
Nor these poor children shalt thou hence expel.

COP. Ere long shalt thou perceive that thou hast uttered
Erroneous prophesies.

IOL. This ne'er shall be
Long as I live.

COP. Depart, for I will seize them
'Gainst thy consent, and to Eurystheus' power
Surrender up, for they to him belong.

IOL. Aid me, ye ancient citizens of Athens,
For we, though suppliants, forcibly are torn
E'en from Jove's public altar, and the wreaths
Twined round our sacred branches are polluted ;
Shame to your city, insult to the gods.

CHORUS, IOLAUS, COPREUS.

CHOR. What clamorous voices from yon altars rise ?
What mischiefs are impending ?

IOL. See a man
Burdened with age, wretch that I am ! lie prostrate.

CHOR. Who threw thee down ? what execrable hand——

IOL. 'Tis he, O stranger, he who to your gods
Yielding no reverence, strives with impious force
E'en now, to drag me from this hallowed seat
Before Jove's altar.

CHOR. He ! But from what land
Cam'st thou, old man, to this confederate state
Formed of four cities ? From the distant coast
Of steep Eubœa did ye ply your oars ?

IOL. The life I lead, O stranger, is not that
Of vagrant islanders ; but in your realm
From famed Mycene's bulwarks I arrive.

CHOR. Among thy countrymen, old man, what name
Thou bear'st, inform me.

IOL. Ye perchance knew somewhat
Of Iolaus, great Alcides' comrade,
A name not quite unnoticed by renown.

CHOR. I formerly have heard of him : but say
Who is the father of that infant race,
Whom with thy arm thou guid'st ?

IOL. These are the sons
Of Hercules, O strangers, they, to you,
And to your city, humble suppliants come.

CHOR. On what account, inform me ; to demand
An audience of the state ?

IOL. That to their foes
They may not be surrendered up, nor torn
Forcibly from the altars of your gods,
And carried back to Argos.

COP. But thy lords
Who bear rule over thee, and hither trace
Thy steps, will ne'er be satisfied with this.

CHOR. O stranger, 'tis our duty to revere
The suppliants of the gods : with forceful hand
Shall no man drag thee from this holy spot,
This seat of the immortal powers ; dread justice
Shall guard thee from the wrong.

COP. Out of your land
The vagrant subjects of Eurystheus drive,
As I admonish ; and this hand shall use
No violence.

CHOR. How impious is that city
Which disregards the helpless stranger's prayer !

COP. 'Twere best to interfere not in these broils,
And to adopt some more expedient counsels.

CHOR. You, therefore, to the monarch of this realm
Should have declared your errand, ere thus far
You had proceeded : but with brutal force
These strangers from the altars of the gods
Presume not to convey, and to this land
Of freedom yield due reverence.

COP. But what king
Rules this domain and city ?

CHOR. Theseus' son,
Renowned Demophoon.

COP. Better I with him
This contest could decide : for all I yet
Have spoken, is but a mere waste of words.

CHOR. Behold, he hither comes in haste, and with him,
To hear this cause, his brother Acamas.

DEMOPHOON, IOLAUS, COPREUS, CHORUS.

DEM. Since by thy speed, old man, thou hast outstripped
Thy juniors, and already reached the shrine
Of Jove, inform me what event hath caused
This multitude t' assemble.

CHOR. There the sons
Of Hercules in suppliant posture sit,
And with their wreaths, as you behold, O king,
Adorn the altar ; that is Iolaus,
The faithful comrade of their valiant sire.

DEM. How needed their distress these clamorous shrieks ?

CHOR. [*turning towards COPREUS.*]
 He raised the uproar, when by force he strove
 To bear them hence, and on his knees, to earth
 Threw the old man, till I for pity wept

DEM. Although he in the habit which he wears
 Adopts the mode of Greece, such deeds as these
 Speak the barbarian. But without delay
 On thee it is incumbent now to tell me
 The country whence thou cam'st.

COP. I am an Argive ;
 Thus far to solve your question : but from whence
 I come, and on what errand, will I add ;
 Mycene's king, Eurystheus, sends me hither
 To fetch these vagrants home : yet I, O stranger,
 Will with abundant justice, in my actions,
 As well as words, proceed ; myself an Argive,
 I bear away these Argives, I but seize
 The fugitives who from my native land
 Escaped, when by the laws which there prevail
 They were ordained to bleed. We have a right,
 Because we are the rulers of the city,
 To execute the sentence we enact
 'Gainst our own subjects. To the sacred hearths
 Of many other states when they repaired,
 We urged the self-same reasons, and none ventured
 To be the authors of their own destruction.
 But haply they in you may have perceived
 A foolish tenderness, and hither come,
 Desperate themselves, you also to involve
 In the same perils, whether they succeed
 Or fail in the emprise : for they no hope
 Can cherish, while you yet retain your reason,
 That you alone, in all the wide extent
 Of Greece, whose various regions they have traversed,
 Should pity those calamities which rise
 But from their own imprudence. Now compare
 Th' alternative proposed ; by sheltering them
 In these dominions, or allowing us
 To bear them hence, what gain may you expect ?
 Side but with us, these benefits are yours :
 Eurystheus' self, and Argos' numerous troops,
 Will aid this city with their utmost might ;
 But if, by their seducing language moved,
 Ye harbour groundless pity for their woes,
 Arms must decide the strife. Nor vainly think
 We will desist till we have fully tried
 The temper of our swords. But what excuse
 Have ye to plead ? Of what domains bereft
 Are ye provoked to wage a desperate war

With the Tirynthian Argives? What allies
 Will aid you? What pretext can ye allege
 To claim funereal honours for the slain?
 The curses of your city will await
 Such conduct; for the sake of that old man,
 Whom I may justly call a tomb, a shadow,
 And those unfriended children, should you step
 Into the yawning gulf. Suppose the best
 Which possibly can happen, that a prospect
 Of future good hence rises; distant hopes
 Fall short of present gain. In riper years
 Ill can these youths be qualified to fight
 Against the Argive host (if this elate
 Your soul with hope), and ere that wished event
 There is a length of intermediate time
 In which ye may be ruined; but comply
 With my advice; on me no gift bestow,
 Let me but take what to ourselves belongs,
 Mycene shall be yours. But oh, forbear
 To act as ye are wont, nor form a league
 With those of no account, when mightier friends
 May be procured.

DEM. Who can decide a cause
 Or ascertain its merits till he hear
 Both sides distinctly?

IOL. In your land, O king,
 This great advantage, freedom of reply
 To the malignant charge against me urged,
 I find, and no man, as from other cities,
 Shall drive me hence. But we have nothing left
 For which it now behoves us to contend
 With him, nor aught, since that decree hath passed,
 To do with Argos; from our native land
 We are cast forth. In this distressful state,
 How can he drag us back again with justice
 As subjects of Mycene, to that realm
 Which hath already banished us? We there
 Are only foreigners. But why should he
 Whom Argos dooms to exile, by all Greece
 Be also exiled? Not by Athens sure;
 For ne'er will Athens from its blest domains
 Expel the race of Hercules, appalled
 By Argos' menaced wrath. For neither Trachis,
 Nor is that city of Achaia here,
 Whence thou by boasting of the might of Argos
 In words like those which thou hast uttered now,
 These suppliants didst unjustly drive away
 Though seated at the altars. If thy threats
 Here too prevail, no longer shall we find

Freedom, not e'en in Athens ; but I know
 Full well the generous temper of its sons,
 And rather would they die. For to the brave
 Shame is a load which renders life most hateful.
 Enough of Athens—for immoderate praise
 Becomes invidious ; I remember too
 How oft I have been heretofore distressed
 By overstrained encomiums. But on you
 How greatly 'tis incumbent to protect
 These children will I show, since o'er this land
 You rule ; for Pitheus was the son of Pelops.
 From Pitheus Æthra sprung, from Æthra Theseus
 Your father ; from your ancestors to those
 Of your unhappy suppliants I proceed ;
 Alcides was the son of thundering Jove
 And of Alcmena ; from Lysidice,
 Daughter of Pelops, did Alcmena spring,
 One common grandsire gave your grandame birth,
 And theirs ; so near in blood are you to them ;
 But, O Demophoon, what beyond the ties
 Of family you to these children owe
 Will I inform you, and relate how erst
 With Theseus in one bark I sailed, and bore
 Their father's shield, when we that belt, the cause
 Of dreadful slaughter, sought ; and from the caves
 Of Pluto, Hercules led back your sire.
 This truth all Greece attests. They in return
 From you implore this boon, that to their foes
 They may not be surrendered up, nor torn
 By force from these your tutelary gods,
 And banished from this realm. For to yourself
 'Twere infamous and baneful to your city
 Should suppliants, exiles, sprung from ancestors
 The same with yours (ah, mi-erable me !
 Behold, behold them !) with a forceful arm
 Be dragged away. But to your hands and beard,
 Lifting these hallowed branches, I entreat you
 Slight not Alcides' children, undertake
 Their cause ; and, oh, to them become a kinsman,
 Become a friend, a father, brother, lord,
 For better were it to admit these claims,
 Than suffer them to fall beneath the rage
 Of Argive tyrants.

CHOR. I with pity heard
 Their woes, O king, but now I clearly see
 How noble birth to adverse fortune yields ;
 For though they spring from an illustrious sire,
 Yet meet they with afflictions they deserve not.

DEM. Three powerful motives urge me, while I view

The misery which attends you, not to spurn
 These strangers ; first dread Jove, before whose altars
 You with these children sit ; next kindred ties,
 And services performed in ancient days,
 Give them a claim to such relief from me
 As from their godlike father mine obtained ;
 And last of all that infamy which most
 I ought to loathe ; for if I should permit
 A foreigner this altar to despoil,
 I in a land of freedom shall no longer
 Appear to dwell, but to surrender up,
 Through fear, the suppliants to their Argive lords,
 In this extreme of danger. Would to heaven
 You had arrived with happier auspices ;
 But tremble not lest any brutal hand
 Should from this hallowed altar force away
 You and the children. Therefore go thou back
 To Argos, and this message to Eurystheus
 Deliver ; tell him too if there be aught
 Which 'gainst our guests he can allege, the laws
 Are open ; but thou shalt not drag them hence.

COP. Not if I prove that it is just, and bring
 Prevailing reasons ?

DEM. How can it be just
 To drive away the suppliant ?

COP. Hence no shame
 Shall light on me, but ruin on your head.

DEM. Should I permit thee to convey them hence
 In me 'twere base indeed.

COP. Let them be banished
 From your domains, and I elsewhere will seize them.

DEM. Thou fool, who deem'st thyself more wise than
 Jove !

COP. All villains may, it seems, take refuge here.

DEM. This altar of the gods, to all affords
 A sure asylum.

COP. In a different light,
 This to Mycene's rulers will appear.

DEM. Am not I then the monarch of this realm ?

COP. Offer no wrong to them, if you are wise.

DEM. Do ye then suffer wrong when I refuse
 To violate the temples of the gods ?

COP. I would not have you enter on a war
 Against the Argives.

DEM. Equally inclined
 Am I to peace, yet will not I yield up
 These suppliants.

COP. Hence am I resolved to drag
 Those who belong to me.

DEM. Thou then to Argos
Shalt not with ease return.

COP. Soon will I make
Th' experiment and know.

DEM. If thou presume
To touch them, thou immediately shalt rue it.

COP. I by the gods conjure you not to strike
A herald.

DEM. Strike I will, unless that herald
Learn to behave discreetly.

CHOR. Go. And you,
O king, forbear to touch him.

COP. I retire :
For weak in combat is a single arm.
But I again shall hither come, and bring
A host of Argives armed with brazen spears :
Unnumbered warriors wait for my return.
The king himself, Eurystheus, is their chief ;
He on the borders of Alcahous' realm
Waits for an answer. He in glittering mail,
Soon as he hears your arrogant reply,
To you, your subjects, this devoted realm,
And all its wasted forests will appear,
For we in vain at Argos should possess
A band so numerous of heroic youths,
If we chastised not your assuming pride. [*Exit COPREUS.*]

DEM. Away, detested miscreant ; for I fear not
Thy Argos : and thou ne'er, by dragging hence
These suppliants, shalt disgrace me : for this city
As an appendage to the Argive realm
I hold not, but its freedom will maintain.

CHOR. 'Tis time each sage precaution to exert,
Ere to the confines of this land advance
The troops of Argos : for Mycene's wrath
Is terrible in combat, and more fierce
Than heretofore will they invade us now.
For to exaggerate facts beyond the truth
Is every herald's custom. To his king,
How many specious tales do you suppose
Of the atrocious insults he endured,
He will relate, and add how he the loss
Of life endangered ?

IOL. To the sons devolve
No honours which exceed the being born
Of an illustrious and heroic sire,
And wedding into virtuous families.
But on that man no praise will I bestow,
Who by his lusts impelled, among the wicked
A nuptial union forms ; hence to his sons

Disgrace, instead of pleasure, he bequeaths.
 For noble birth repels adversity
 Better than abject parentage. When sinking
 Under the utmost pressure of our woes,
 We find these friends and kinsmen, who alone
 Amid the populous extent of Greece
 Stand forth in our behalf. Ye generous youths,
 Now give them your right hands, and in return
 Take those of your protectors : O my sons,
 Draw near : we have made trial of our friends.
 If ye again behold your native walls,
 Possess the self-same mansions, and the honours
 Which your illustrious father erst enjoyed ;
 These deem your saviours and your friends, nor wield
 Against their fostering land the hostile spear.
 On your remembrance let these benefits
 Be ever stamped, and hold this city dear ;
 For they deserve your reverence, who from us
 Repel so great a nation, such a swarm
 Of fierce Pelasgian troops : and, though they see
 Our poverty and exile, have refused
 To yield us up, or banish from their realm.
 Both while I live, and after the cold grave
 Receives me at the destined hour, my friend,
 I with loud voice your merits will applaud,
 Approaching mighty Thesus, and my words
 Shall soothe your father's ear when I recount
 With what humanity you have received us,
 And how protected the defenceless sons
 Of Hercules : by your illustrious birth
 Distinguished, you the glories of your sire
 Through Greece maintain : sprung from a noble lineage,
 Yet are you one among that chosen few
 Who in no instance deviate from the virtues
 Of your great ancestry : although 'mid thousands
 Scarce is a single instance to be found
 Of those who emulate their father's worth.

CHOR. This country, in a just and honest cause,
 Is ever prompt to succour the distressed.
 Hence in its friends' behalf hath it sustained
 Unnumbered toils, and now another conflict
 I see impending.

DEM. Rightly hast thou spoken,
 And in such toils I feel a conscious pride.
 These benefits shall never be forgotten ;
 But an assembly of the citizens
 I instantly will summon, and arrange
 A numerous squadron, to receive the onset
 Of fierce Mycene's host, first sending spies

To meet them, lest they unawares assail us.
 For the bold warrior, who without delay
 Goes forth to battle, keeps the foe aloof.
 I also will collect the seers, and slay
 The victims; but do you, old man, meanwhile
 Enter the palace with these children, leaving
 Jove's altar: for my menial train are there,
 Who will with fond solicitude attend you,
 Although I am not present: but go in.

IOL. I will not leave the altar; on this seat
 We suppliants will remain, and pray to Jove,
 That prosperous fortunes may attend your city.
 But when you from this conflict are with glory
 Released, we to your palace will repair;
 Nor are the gods, who war on our behalf,
 O king, inferior to the gods of Argos.
 For o'er that city, Jove's majestic consort,
 Juno, but here Minerva doth preside.
 This I maintain, that nought ensures success
 Beyond the aid of mightier deities,
 Nor will imperial Pallas be subdued. [*Exit DEMOPHOON.*]

CHORUS.

ODE.

I.

Boast as thou wilt, and urge thy proud demand,
 This nation disregards thy ire,
 Thou stranger from the Argive land.
 Nor can thy sounding words control
 The steadfast purpose of my soul:
 Great Athens, by her lovely choir
 Distinguished, shall unstained preserve
 Her ancient glory, nor from virtue swerve;
 But thou, devoid of wisdom, dost obey
 The son of Sthenelus, the tyrant's impious sway,

II

Who com'st amidst an independent state,
 In nought inferior to the strength
 Of Argos, and with brutal hate
 Dar'st, though a foreigner, to seize
 The exiles, who our deities
 Implore, and in these realms at length
 From their distress obtain a shield:
 Thou e'en to sceptred monarchs will not yield,
 Yet no just plea thy subtle tongue hath found.
 How can such conduct warp the man whose judgment's
 sound?

III.

Peace is the object of my dear delight :
 But thou, O tyrant, thou whose breast
 Well may I deem by frenzy is possest,
 If 'gainst this city thou exert thy might,
 Pant'st after trophies which thou ne'er shalt gain.
 Bearing targe and brazen lance
 Others with equal arms advance.
 O thou, who fondly seek'st th' embattled plain,
 Shake not these turrets, spare the haunt
 Of every gentle grace.—Thou wretch, avault.

DEMOPHOON, IOLAUS, CHORUS.

IOL. Why com'st thou hither, O my son, with eyes
 Expressive of affliction ? from the foe
 What recent information canst thou give ?
 Do they delay their march, are they at hand,
 Or bring'st thou any tidings ? for the threats
 That herald uttered sure will be accomplished.
 Blest in the favour of the gods, the tyrant
 Exults, I know, and arrogantly deems
 That he o'er Athens shall prevail ; but Jove
 Chastises the presumptuous.

DEM. Argos comes
 With numerous squadrons, and its king Eurystheus,
 Myself beheld him. It behoves the man
 Who claims the merit of an able chief,
 Not to depend upon his spies alone
 To mark the foe's approach. But with his host
 He hath not yet invaded these domains,
 But halting on yon mountain's topmost ridge
 Observes (I from conjecture speak) the road
 By which he may lead forth his troops to battle,
 And where he in this realm with greatest safety
 May station them. Already have I made
 Each preparation to repel their onset.
 The city is in arms, the victims stand
 Before the altars, with their blood t' appease
 The wrath of every god, and due lustrations
 Are sprinkled by the seers, that o'er our foes
 We may obtain a triumph, and preserve
 This country. Every prophet who expounds
 The oracles, convening, have I searched
 Into each sage response of ancient times,
 Or public or concealed, on which depends
 The welfare of the realm. In all beside
 Differ Heaven's mandates : but one dread behest

Runs through the several auspices, to Ceres
 They bid me sacrifice some blooming maid
 Who from a nobler sire derives her birth.
 Zeal have I shown abundant in your cause,
 But will not slay my daughter, nor constrain
 Any Athenian citizen to make
 Such an abhorred oblation: for the man
 Exists not, who is so devoid of reason,
 As willingly to yield his children up
 With his own hands. But what afflicts me most
 Is this: tumultuous crowds appear; some cry,
 'Tis just that we the foreign suppliants aid,
 But others blame my folly. If no means
 Can be devised to satisfy them all,
 Soon will a storm of civil war arise.
 See thou to this, and think of some expedient,
 How ye and how this country may be saved,
 Without the citizens' calumnious tongues
 My fame assailing. For I rule not here
 With boundless power, like a barbarian king;
 Let but my deeds be just, and in return
 Shall I experience justice.

CHOR.

Will not Jove

Suffer this city to exert its courage,
 And aid these hapless strangers as we wish?

IOL. Our situation, O my sons, resembles
 That of the mariners, who having 'scaped
 The storm's relentless fury, when in sight
 Of land, are from the coast by adverse winds
 Driven back into the deep. Thus from this realm
 Just as we reach the shore, like shipwrecked men,
 Are we expelled. O inauspicious Hope,
 Why didst thou soothe me with ideal joy,
 Although it was ordained that thou should'st leave
 Thy favours incomplete? The king deserves
 At least to be excused, if he consent not
 To slay his subjects' daughters; to this city
 My praise is due, and if the gods would place me
 In the same prosperous fortunes, from my soul
 Your benefits should never be effaced.
 But now, alas! no counsel can I give
 To you, my children. Whither shall we turn?
 What god have we neglected? To what land
 Have we not fled for shelter? We must perish,
 We shall be yielded up. My being doomed
 To die, I heed but for this cause alone,
 That by my death I shall afford delight
 To our perfidious foes. But, O my sons,
 For you I weep, I pity you, I pity

Alcmena, aged mother of your sire,
 Oh, most unhappy in a life too long !
 I too am wretched, who unnumbered toils
 Have fruitlessly endured ; it was ordained,
 It was ordained, alas ! that we should fall
 Into the hands of our relentless foes,
 And meet a shameful, miserable death.
 Know you, what still remains for you to do,
 On my behalf ? For all my hopes of saving
 The children are not vanished. In their stead
 Me to the Argive host surrender up,
 O king, and rush not into needless danger,
 Yet save these children. To retain a love
 Of life becomes me not ; I yield it up
 Without regret. It is Eurystheus' wish
 The rather to seize me, and to expose
 To infamy, because I was the comrade
 Of Hercules ; for frenzy hath possessed
 His soul. The wise man, e'en in those he hates,
 Had rather find discretion than a want
 Of understanding ; for a foe endued
 With sense will pay due reverence to the vanquished.

CHOR. Forbear, old man, thus hastily to blame
 This city ; for to us though it might prove
 More advantageous, yet to our disgrace
 Would it redound, should we betray our guests.

DEM. A generous, but impracticable, scheme
 Is that thou hast proposed : for Argos' king
 In quest of thee no squadrons hither leads.
 What profit to Eurystheus from the death
 Of one so old as thou art could arise ?
 He wants to murder *these* : for to their foes
 The rising blossoms of a noble race,
 To whom the memory of their father's wrongs
 Is present, must be dreadful : for all this
 He cannot but foresee. But if thou know
 Of any other counsel more expedient,
 Adopt it ; for my soul hath been perplexed,
 Since that oracular response I heard
 Which fills me with unwelcome apprehensions.

[*Exit* DEMOPHOON.]

MACARIA, IOLAUS, CHORUS.

MAC. Deem not that I, O strangers, am too bold
 Because I from my chamber venture forth ;
 This is my first request : for silence, joined
 With modesty and a domestic life,
 Is woman's best accomplishment. I heard
 Your groans, O Iolaus, and advanced

Though not appointed by our house to act
As their ambassadress ; in some degree
Yet am I qualified for such an office,
I have so great an interest in the weal
Of these my brothers ; on my own account
I also wish to hear if any ill,
Added to those you have already suffered,
Torture your soul.

IOL. Not now for the first time,
On thee, O daughter, most of all the children
Of Hercules my praise can I bestow :
But our ill-fated house, just as it seemed
Emerging from its past disgraces, sinks
Afresh into inextricable ruin.
The king informs us, that the seers, whose voice
Expounds the will of heaven, have signified
No bull nor heifer, but some blooming maid
Who from a noble sire derives her birth,
Must be the victim, if we would redeem
The city and ourselves from utter ruin ;
Here then are we perplexed : for his own children
He says he will not sacrifice, nor those
Of any of his subjects. Though to me
Indeed he speaks not plainly, in some sort
He intimates, that if we by no means
Can extricate ourselves from these distresses,
We must find out some other land to flee to,
For he this realm would from destruction save.

MAC. May we indulge the hope of our escape
Upon these terms ?

IOL. These only : in all else
With prosperous fortunes crowned.

MAC. No longer dread
The spear of Argos, for myself, old man,
Am ready, ere they doom me to be slain,
And here stand forth a voluntary victim.
For what could we allege on our behalf,
If Athens condescend to undergo
Dangers so great, while we who have imposed
These toils on others, though within our reach
Lie all the means of being saved, yet shrink
From death ? Not thus : we should provoke the laugh
Of universal scorn, if, with loud groans,
We suppliants, at the altars of the gods,
Should take our seats, and prove devoid of courage,
From that illustrious father though we spring.
How can the virtuous reconcile such conduct ?
This to our glory would forsooth redound
(O may it never happen !) when this city

Is taken, should we fall into the hands
 Of our triumphant foes, when after all
 Some noble maid reluctant must be dragged
 To Pluto's loathed embrace. But from these realms
 Cast forth, should I become an abject vagrant,
 Must I not blush when any one inquires,
 "Why came ye hither with your suppliant branches
 Too fond of life? Retreat from these domains,
 For we no aid to cowards will afford."
 But if when these are dead, my single life
 Be saved, I cannot entertain a hope
 That I shall e'er be happy: through this motive
 Have caused full many to betray their friends.
 For who with a deserted maid will join,
 Or in the bonds of wedlock, or desire
 That I to him a race of sons should bear?
 I therefore hold it better far to die,
 Than to endure, without deserving them,
 Such foul indignities, as can seem light
 To her alone, who, from a noble race
 Like mine, descends not: to the scene of death
 Conduct, with garlands crown me, and prepare
 If ye think fit, th' initiatory rites;
 Ye hence the foe shall conquer: for this soul
 Shrinks not with mean reluctance. I engage
 For these my brothers, and myself, to bleed
 A willing victim; for with ease detached
 From life, I have imbibed this best of lessons,
 To die with firmness in a glorious cause.

CHOR. Alas! what language shall I find, t' express
 My admiration of the lofty speech
 I from this virgin hear, who for her brothers
 Resolves to die? What tongue can utter words
 More truly generous; or what man surpass
 Such deeds as these?

IOL. Thou art no spurious child,
 But from the godlike seed of Hercules,
 O daughter, dost indeed derive thy birth.
 Although thy words are such as cannot shame,
 Thy fate afflicts me. Yet will I propose
 What may with greater justice be performed.
 Together call the sisters of this maid,
 And to atone for the whole race, let her
 On whom th' impartial lot shall fall, be slain;
 But without such decision 'tis not just
 That thou should'st die.

MAC. I will not die as chance
 The lot dispenses; for I hence should forfeit
 All merit; name not such a scheme, old man.

If me ye will accept, and of my zeal
 Avail yourselves, I gladly yield up life
 Upon these terms, but stoop not to constraint.

IOL. The speech thou now hast uttered soars beyond
 What thou at first didst say, though that was noble :
 But thou thy former courage dost surpass
 By this fresh instance of exalted courage,
 The merit of thy former words, by words
 More meritorious. Daughter, I command not,
 Nor yet oppose thy death : for thou by dying
 Wilt serve thy brothers.

MAC. You in cautious terms
 Command me : fear not, lest on my account
 You should contract pollution : for to die
 Is my free choice. But follow me, old man,
 For in your arms would I expire : attend,
 And o'er my body cast the decent veil :
 To dreadful slaughter dauntless I go forth,
 Because I from that father spring, whose name
 With pride I utter.

IOL. At the hour of death
 I cannot stand beside thee.

MAC. Grant but this,
 That when I breathe my last, I may be tended
 By women, not by men.

IOL. It shall be thus,
 O miserable virgin : for in me
 'Twere base, if I neglected any rite
 That decency enjoins, for many reasons ;
 Because thy soul is great, because 'tis just,
 And of all women I have ever seen,
 Because thou art most wretched. But from these
 And from thy aged kinsman, if thou wish
 For aught, to me thy last behests address.

MAC. Adieu, my venerable friend, adieu !
 Instruct these boys in every branch of wisdom,
 And make them like yourself, they can attain
 No higher pitch ; strive to protect them still,
 And for their sake that valued life prolong ;
 Your children we, to you our nurture owe.
 Me you behold, mature for bridal joys,
 Dying to save them. But may ye, my band
 Of brothers who are here, be blest, and gain
 All those advantages, which to procure
 For you, the falcion shall transpierce my breast.
 Revere this good old man, revere Alcmena
 Your father's aged mother, and these strangers.
 Should ye be ever rescued from your woes,
 Should gracious Heaven permit you to revisit

Your native land, forget not to inter,
 With such magnificence as I deserve,
 Your benefactress, for I have not proved
 Deficient in attention to your welfare,
 But die to save our family. To me
 These monumental honours shall suffice
 Instead of children, or the virgin state,
 If there be aught amid the realms beneath,
 But 'tis my wish there may not : for if grief
 On us frail mortals also there attend,
 I know not whither any one can turn :
 For by the wise hath death been ever deemed
 The most effectual cure for every ill.

IOL. O thou, distinguished by thy lofty soul,
 Be well assured thy glory shall outshine
 That of all other women ; both in life
 And death, shalt thou be honoured by thy friends.
 But ah, farewell ! for with ill-omened words
 I tremble lest we should provoke the goddess,
 Dread Proserpine, to whom thou now art sacred.

[*Exit* MACARIA.]

My sons I perish : grief unnerves my frame ;
 Support and place me in the hallowed seat :
 And, O my dearest children, o'er my face
 Extend this garment : for I am not pleased
 With what is done : yet, had not Heaven's response
 Found this completion, we must all have died ;
 For we must then have suffered greater ills
 Than these, which are already most severe.

CHORUS.

ODE.

In just proportion, as the gods ordain,
 Is bliss diffused through life's short span,
 Or sorrow portioned out to man :
 No favoured house can still maintain
 From age to age its prosperous state,
 For swift are the vicissitudes of fate,
 Who now assails pride's towering crest,
 Now makes the drooping exile blest.
 From destiny we cannot fly ;
 No wisdom can her shafts repel ;
 But he who vainly dares her power defy
 Compassed with endless toils shall dwell.
 Ask not from Heaven with impious prayer,
 Blessings it cannot grant to man,
 Nor waste in misery life's short span
 O'erwhelmed by querulous de-pair.

The nymph goes forth to meet a noble death,
 Her brothers and this land to save,
 And fame, with tributary breath
 Shall sound her praises in the grave.
 For dauntless virtue finds a way
 Through labours which her progress would delay.
 Such deeds as these, her father grace,
 And add fresh splendour to her race,
 But if with reverential awe thou shed
 Over the virtuous dead
 A tear of pity, in that tear I'll join,
 Inspired with sentiments like thine.

SERVANT, IOLAUS, CHORUS.

SER. Ye children, hail ! but where is Iolaus,
 That aged man ; and hath your grandame left
 Her seat before the altar ?

IOL. Here am I,
 If aught my presence can avail.

SER. On earth
 Why art thou stretched, what means that downcast look ?

IOL. Domestic cares have harrowed up my soul.

SER. Lift up thy head, arise.

IOL. I am grown old,
 And all my strength is vanished.

SER. But to thee
 I bring most joyful tidings.

IOL. Who art thou ?
 Where have I seen thee ? I remember not.

SER. Hyllus' attendant, canst thou not distinguish
 These features ?

IOL. O my friend, art thou arrived
 To snatch me from despair ?

SER. Most certainly :
 Moreover the intelligence I bring
 Will make thee happy.

IOL. Thee I call, come forth,
 Alcmena, mother of a noble son,
 And listen to these acceptable tidings :
 Full long thy soul, for those who now approach,
 Was torn with grief, lest they should ne'er return.

ALCMENA, SERVANT, IOLAUS, CHORUS.

ALC. Whence with your voice resounds this echoing dome,
 O Iolaus, is another herald
 From Argos come, who forcibly assails you ?
 My strength indeed is small, yet be assured
 Of this, presumptuous stranger, while I live
 Thou shalt not bear them hence. May I no more

Be deemed the mother of that godlike son,
When I submit to this. But if thou dare
To touch the children, with two aged foes
Ignobly wilt thou strive.

IOL. Be of good cheer,
Thou hoary matron, banish these alarms ;
No herald with a hostile message comes
From Argos.

ALC. Why then raised you that loud voice,
The harbinger of fear ?

IOL. That from the temple
Thou might'st come forth, and join us.

ALC. What you mean
I comprehend not. Who is this ?

IOL. He tells us
Thy grandson marches hither.

ALC. Hail, O thou
Who bear'st these welcome tidings ? but what brings him
To these domains ? Where is he ? What affairs
Prevented him from coming hither with thee,
To fill my soul with transport ?

SER. He now marshals
The forces which attend him.

ALC. In this conference
Am I no longer then allowed to join ?

IOL. Thou art : but 'tis my business to inquire
Into these matters.

SER. Which of his transactions
Say art thou most solicitous to know ?

IOL. The number of the troops he leads ?

SER. Is great,
I cannot count them.

IOL. The Athenian chiefs
Are sure apprized of this.

SER. They are apprized,
And the left wing is formed.

IOL. Then the whole host
Arrayed in arms is ready for the battle.

SER. The victims to a distance from the ranks
Already are removed.

IOL. But at what distance
Is the encampment of the Argive warriors ?

SER. So near that we their leader can distinguish.

IOL. What is he doing ; marshalling our foes ?

SER. This we conjecture : for I could not hear
His voice : but I must go ; for I my lord
Will not abandon when he nobly braves
The dangers of the field.

IOL. I too with thee

Will join him; for the same are our intentions,
As honour bids us, to assist our friends.

SER. Unwisely hast thou spoken.

IOL.

With my friends

Shall not I then the stubborn conflict share?

SER. That strength which erst was thine is now no more.

IOL. Can I not pierce their shields?

SER.

Thou may'st : but first,

More likely, fall thyself.

IOL.

No foe will dare

To meet me face to face.

SER.

By thy mere looks,

With that debilitated arm, no wound

Canst thou inflict.

IOL.

My presence in the field

Will to our troops give courage, and augment

Their number.

SER.

Of small service to thy friends

Will thy appearance prove.

IOL.

Detain me not :

I for some glorious action am prepared.

SER. Thou hast the will to act, but not the power

IOL. I will not be reproached for loitering here,

Say what thou wilt beside.

SER.

But without arms

How wilt thou face yon warriors sheathed in mail?

IOL. The various implements of war are lodged

Beneath these roofs; with freedom will I use,

And if I live, return them; if I die,

The god will not demand them back again.

Go then into the temple, and reach down

Those martial trappings from the golden nails

On which they hang, and bring them to me swiftly.

For this were infamous, while some are fighting.

If others loiter slothfully behind.

[Exit SERVANT.]

CHOR. Time hath not yet debased that lofty soul

'Tis vigorous, though thy body be decayed.

Why should'st thou enter on these fruitless toils,

Which only injure thee, and to our city

Can be of little service? on thy age

Should'st thou reflect, and lay aside attempts

That are impossible, for by no arts

The long-lost force of youth canst thou regain.

ALC. What schemes are these? distempered in your mind,

Me and my children mean you to abandon?

IOL. The battle is man's province : to thy care

Them I consign.

ALC.

But if you die, what means

Have I of being saved?

To face the dangers of th' embattled field :
 Too apt in our ideas to unite
 Valour with wealth, yet to the prosperous man
 Superior wisdom falsely we ascribe.

[*Exit* IOLAUS and SERVANT.

CHORUS.

ODE.

I. 1.

O fostering Earth, resplendent Moon,
 Who gladd'st the dreary shades of night,
 And thou, enthroned at broadest noon,
 Hyperion, 'midst exhaustless light,
 To me propitious tidings bring,
 Raise to the skies a festive sound,
 And waft the gladsome notes around,
 Till, from the palace of our king,
 They echo through Minerva's fane :
 My house, my country, to maintain
 Against the ruthless spoiler's pride,
 Menaced because this realm extends
 Protection to its suppliant friends,
 I with the sword our contest will decide.

I. 2.

Although there seem just cause for dread,
 When cities like Mycene blest,
 Whose triumphs fame hath widely spread
 Enter this region to invest
 Our bulwarks, harbouring ruthless hate.
 Think, O my country, think what shame,
 Should we reject the suppliant's claim
 Appalled by Argos' haughty state.
 Resistless Jove shall aid the spear
 I brandish unappalled by fear ;
 The tribute of eternal praise
 From all that breathe, to him is due :
 Nor magnified by our weak view
 Shall men above the gods their trophies raise.

II. 1.

Descend with venerable mien,
 O thou our guardian and our queen,
 For on thy fostering soil we stand,
 These walls were reared by thy command,

Drive from our menaced gates the lawless host,
 Suppress that Argive tyrant's boast ;
 For if by you unaided, is this hand
 Too weak their fury to withstand.

II. 2.

Thee, O Minerva, we adore,
 Thy altar ever streams with gore :
 We on each moon's concluding day
 To thee our public homage pay ;
 Through every fane harmonious numbers sound,
 Sweet minstrelsy then breathes around,
 And th' echoing hills their nightly dance repeat
 As the nymphs move with agile feet.

SERVANT, ALCMENA, CHORUS.

SER. O royal dame, the message that to you
 I bring, is both concise, and what reflects
 On me abundant glory to relate,
 In fight have we prevailed, and trophies reared
 On which the armour of your foes is hung.

ALC. This day hath brought thee hither, O my friend,
 Thy freedom for such tidings to receive :
 But one anxiety there still remains
 To which thou leav'st me subject ; much I fear
 For the important lives of those I love.

SER. They live, and have obtained from all the host
 The greatest fame.

ALC. And Iolaus too,
 My aged friend ?

SER. Yet more, he hath performed
 Through the peculiar favour of the gods
 Exploits most memorable.

ALC. What glorious deed
 Hath he achieved in fight ?

SER. From an old man,
 He is grown young again.

ALC. Thou speak'st of things
 Most wonderful. But first, how fought our friends
 With such success, I wish thee to inform me.

SER. All that hath passed, at once will I relate
 When, to each other in the field opposed,
 We had arranged both armies, and spread forth
 The van of battle to its full extent,
 Hyllus alighting from his chariot, stood
 In the midway 'twixt either host, and cried :
 "Thou leader of the Argive troops, who com'st
 With hostile fury to invade this land,
 Thy interests recommend what I propose,

Nor can Mycene suffer from the loss
If thou deprive her of a single warrior ;
Therefore with me encounter hand to hand,
And if thou slay me, seize and bear away
The sons of Hercules ; but if thou die,
My palace and hereditary rank
Permit me to enjoy." The troops assented,
And praised what he had spoken as the means
Of finishing their labours, and a proof
Of his exalted courage. But Eurystheus
Unmoved by reverence for th' assembled host
Who heard the challenge, and with terror smitten,
Forgot the general's part, nor dared to face
The lifted spear, but acted like a dastard :
Yet he who was thus destitute of courage
Came to enslave the sons of Hercules.
Hyllus again retreated to his rank ;
The prophets too, when they perceived no peace
Could be effected by a single combat,
Without delay the blooming virgin slew,
Auspicious victim, from whose pallid lips
Her trembling spirit fled. The lofty car
Some mounted, o'er their sides while others flung
Their bucklers to protect them. To his host,
Meantime the king of Athens, in a strain
Worthy of his exalted courage, spoke :
" Ye citizens, the land to which ye owe
Your nourishment and birth, now claims your aid."
Equally loth to sully the renown
Of Argos and Mycene, in like terms
The foe besought his partners of the war
Their utmost vigour to exert. No sooner
Had the loud signal by Etruria's trumpet
Been given, than they in thickest battle joined.
Think with what crash their brazen shields resounded,
What groans and intermingled shouts were heard !
First through our lines the host of Argos burst,
And in their turn gave way : then foot to foot,
And man to man opposed, in stubborn conflict
We all persisted : multitudes were slain ;
But in this language either chief his troops
Encouraged : " O ye citizens of Athens,
O ye who till the fruitful Argive field,
Will ye not from your native land repel
The foul disgrace ?" But with our utmost efforts
Scarce could we put to flight the Argive host.
When Iolaus saw young Hyllus break
The ranks of battle, he with lifted hands
Entreated him to place him in his car,

Then seized the reins, and onward in pursuit
 Of the swift coursers of Eurystheus drove.
 As to the sequel ; from report alone
 Let others speak, I tell what I have seen :
 While through Pallênê's streets he passed, where rise
 Minerva's altars, soon as he descried
 The chariot of Eurystheus, he a prayer
 Addressed to blooming Hebe, and to Jove,
 That for that single day he might recover
 The pristine vigour of his youth, and punish
 His foes as they deserve. You now shall hear
 What a miraculous event ensued ;
 Two stars 'bove Iolaus' chariot stood,
 And overshadowed it with gloomy clouds,
 Which, by the wise 'tis said, were Hercules
 Your son, and blooming Hebe : from that mist
 Which veiled the skies, the chief grown young again,
 Displayed his vigorous arms, and near the rocks
 Of Scyron, seized Eurystheus in his car.
 Binding his hands with chains, he hither brings
 The Argive tyrant, a distinguished prize,
 Who once was happy ; but on all mankind
 Loudly inculcates by his present fortunes
 This lesson : not too rashly to ascribe
 Felicity to him who in appearance
 Is prosperous, but to wait till we behold
 His close of life ; for fortune day by day
 Doth waver.

CHOR. Thou great author of success,
 O Jove, at length am I allowed to view
 The day, by which my terrors are dispelled.

ALC. 'Twas late indeed, when thou, O Jove, didst look
 On my afflictions ; yet am I to thee
 Most grateful for the kindness thou hast shown me.
 And though I erst believed not that my son
 Dwells with the gods, I clearly know it now.
 Now, O my children, ye from all your toils
 Shall be set free, and of Eurystheus, doomed
 With shame to perish, burst the galling yoke,
 Behold your father's city, the rich fields
 Of your inheritance again possess,
 And sacrifice to your paternal gods,
 From whom excluded, in a foreign land
 Ye led a wandering miserable life.
 But with what sage design yet undisclosed,
 Hath Iolaus spared Eurystheus' life,
 Inform me : for to us it seems unwise
 Not to avenge our wrongs when we have caught
 Our enemies.

SER. He through respect to you
 Hath acted thus, that you might see the tyrant
 Vanquished, and rendered subject to your power,
 Not by his own consent, but in the yoke
 Bound by necessity ; for he was loth
 To come into your presence, ere he bleed,
 And suffer as he merits. But farewell,
 O venerable matron, and remember
 The promise you first made when I began
 These tidings, and, oh, set me free: for nought
 But truth should from ingenuous lips proceed.

[Exit SERVANT.]

CHORUS.

ODE.

I. 1.

To me the choral song is sweet,
 When the shrill flute and genial banquet meet,
 If Venus also grace the festive board :
 I taste a more refined delight
 Now I behold my friends (transporting sight !)
 To unexpected happiness restored.
 For in this nether world, eventful Fate,
 And Saturn's offspring Time, full many a change create.

I. 2.

Follow the plain and beaten way,
 From Justice, O my country, never stray,
 Nor cease the powers immortal to revere.
 To heights scarce short of frenzy rise
 The errors of that mortal, who denies
 Assent to truths confirmed by proofs so clear.
 Jove's power by signal judgments is descried,
 Oit as his vengeance blasts the towering crest of pride.

II. 1.

In heavenly mansions with the blest,
 Thy son, O venerable dame, doth rest ;
 He hath confuted those invidious tales,
 That to loathed Pluto's house he came
 Soon as he perished in that dreadful flame :
 He under roofs of burnished gold regales,
 On the soft couch of lovely Hebe placed ;
 Them two, both sprung from Jove, O Hymen, thou hast
 graced.

II. 2.

Events, which strike man's wondering eyes,
 From a variety of causes rise.
 For fame relates how Pallas saved the sire,
 And from her city far renowned,
 Her race, protection have the children found;
 She hath suppressed th' o'erweening tyrant's ire,
 Whose violence no laws could ere control;
 Curse on such boundless pride, that fever of the soul.

MESSENGER, EURYSTHEUS, ALCMENA, CHORUS.

MES. Your eyes indeed behold, O royal dame,
 Yet shall this tongue declare that we have brought
 Eurytheus hither, unexpected sight,
 Reverse of fortune his presumptuous soul
 Foresaw not, this oppressor little deemed
 That he should ever fall into your hands,
 When from Mycene, by the Cyclops' toil
 Erected, he those squadrons led, and hoped
 With pride o'erweening to lay Athens waste;
 But Heaven our situation hath reversed:
 And therefore with exulting Hyllus joins
 The valiant Iolaus, in erecting
 Trophies to Jove the author of our conquest.
 But they to you commanded me to lead
 This captive, wishing to delight your soul:
 For 'tis most grateful to behold a foe
 Fall'n from the height of gay prosperity.

ALC. Com'st thou, detested wretch? at length hath Justice
 O'ertaken thee? First hither turn thy head,
 And dare to face thine enemies: for, dwindled
 Into a vassal, thou no longer rul'st.
 Art thou the man (for I would know the truth)
 Who didst presume to heap unnumbered wrongs,
 Thou author of all mischief, on my son
 While yet he lived, wherever now resides
 His dauntless spirit? For in what one instance
 Didst thou not injure him? At thy command,
 Alive he travelled to th' infernal shades;
 Thou sent'st, and didst commission him to slay
 Hydras and lions. Various other mischiefs,
 Which were by thee contrived, I mention not,
 For an attempt to speak of them at large
 Would be full tedious. Nor was it enough
 For thee to venture on these wrongs alone,
 But thou, moreover, from each Grecian state
 Me and these children hast expelled, though seated
 As suppliants at the altars of the gods,

Confounding those whose locks are grey through age
With tender infants. But thou here hast found
Those who were men indeed, and a free city
Which feared thee not. Thou wretchedly shalt perish,
And pay this bitter usury to atone
For all thy crimes, whose number is so great
That it were just thou more than once shouldst die.

MES. You must not kill him.

ALC. Then have we in vain
Taken him captive. But what law forbids
His being slain?

MES. The rulers of this land
Consent not.

ALC. Is it not by them esteemed
A glorious action to despatch our foes?

MES. Not such as they have seized alive in battle.

ALC. Is Hyllus satisfied with this decree?

MES. He, in my judgment, will forsooth act rightly,
If he oppose what Athens shall enjoin.

ALC. The captive tyrant ill deserves to live,
Or longer view the sun.

MES. In this first instance
They did amiss, when by their swords he died not.

ALC. Is it not just that he should suffer still?

MES. He who will slay him is not to be found.

ALC. What shall I say if some adventurous hand——

MES. If you do this, you will incur great censure.

ALC. I love this city, I confess : but no man,
Since he is fall'n into my power, shall force
This prisoner from me : let them call me bold
And more presumptuous than becomes a woman,
I am resolved to execute my purpose.

MES. Full well I know the hatred which you bear
To this unhappy man is terrible,
And such as merits pardon.

EUR. Be convinced
Of this, O woman, that I cannot flatter,
Nor to preserve this wretched life say aught,
Whence they may brand me with a dastard's name.
For I with much reluctance undertook
This contest ; near in blood am I to thee,
And of that race whence sprung thy son Alcides.
But whether I consented, or was loth,
Me Juno caused by her immortal power
To harbour this dire frenzy in my breast.
Since I became his foe, since I resolved
Upon this strife, much mischief I devised,
And brooded o'er it many a tedious night,
That after I had wearied out and slain

Those I abhorred, I might no longer lead
 A life of fear : for well I knew thy son
 Was no mere cipher, but a man indeed :
 Though strong my hate, on him will I confer
 The praise he merits from his valiant deeds.
 But after he was dead, was I not forced,
 Because I was a foe to these his sons,
 And knew what bitter enmity 'gainst me
 They from their sire inherited, to leave
 No stone unturned, to slay, to banish them,
 And plot their ruin ? Could I have succeeded
 In these designs, my throne had stood secure.
 If thou my prosperous station hadst obtained,
 Wouldst thou not have attempted to hunt down
 The lion's whelps, instead of suffering them
 At Argos unmolested to reside ?
 Thou canst prevail on no man to give credit
 To such assertions : therefore, since my foes
 Forbore to slay me, when prepared to lose
 My life in battle, by the laws of Greece,
 If I now die, my blood will fix a stain
 Of lasting guilt on him who murders me.
 This city hath discreetly spared my life,
 More influenced by its reverence for the gods
 Than by the hatred which to me it bears.
 My answer to the charges thou hast urged
 Against me, having heard, esteem me now
 A suppliant, and though wretched, still a king,
 For such is my condition : though to die
 I wish not, yet can I without regret
 Surrender up my life.

CHOR. To you, Alcmena,
 A little wholesome counsel would I give,
 This captive monarch to release, since such
 The pleasure of the city.

ALC. If he die,
 And to the mandates of th' Athenian realm
 I still submit, what mischief can ensue ?

CHOR. 'Twere best of all. But how can these two things
 Be reconciled ?

ALC. I will inform you how
 This may with ease be done. I, to his friends,
 When slain will yield him up, and with this land
 Comply in the disposal of his corse :
 But he shall die to sate my just revenge.

EUR. Destroy me if thou wilt ; to thee I sue not :
 But on this city, since it spared my life
 Through pious reverence, and forbore to slay me,
 Will I bestow an ancient oracle

Of Phœbus, which in future times shall prove
 More advantageous than ye now suppose ;
 For after death, so have the Fates decreed,
 My corse shall ye inter before the temple
 Of the Pallenian maid : to you a friend
 And guardian of your city, shall I rest
 Beneath this soil for ever ; but a foe
 To those who spring from this detested race
 When with their armies they invade this land
 Requiting with ingratitude your kindness :
 Such strangers ye protect. But thus forewarned,
 Why came I hither ? Through a fond belief
 That Juno was with far superior power
 To each oracular response endued,
 And that my cause she ne'er would have betrayed.
 On me waste no libations, nor let gore
 Be poured forth on the spot of my interment,
 For I to punish these their impious deeds,
 Will cause them with dishonour to return :
 From me shall ye receive a double gain,
 For you I will assist, and prove to them
 Most baneful e'en in death.

ALC.

Why are ye loth

To slay this man, if what ye hear be true,
 That welfare to this city hence will spring,
 And your prosperity ? For he points out
 The safest road. Alive he is a foe,
 But after he is dead will prove a friend.
 Ye servants bear him hence, and to the dogs
 Cast forth without delay his breathless corse :
 Think not, presumptuous wretch, that thou shalt live
 Again t' expel me from my native land.

CHOR. With this am I well pleased. My followers, go.
 For hence in our king's sight shall we stand guiltless.

R H E S U S.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

CHORUS OF TROJAN
SENTINELS.
HECTOR.
ÆNEAS.
DOLON.
A SHEPHERD.
RHESUS.

ULYSSES.
DIOMEDE.
PARIS.
MINERVA.
THE MUSE.
THE CHARIOTEER OF
RHESUS.

SCENE.—BEFORE HECTOR'S TENT AT THE GATES OF TROY.

CHORUS, HECTOR.

CHOR. Let some swift sentinel to Hector's tent
Go and inquire if any messenger
Be yet arrived, who recent tidings bears
From those, who during the fourth nightly watch
Are by the host deputed. On your arm
Sustain your head, unfold those low'ring eyelids,
And from your lowly couch of withered leaves,
O Hector, rise, for it is time to listen.

HEC. Who comes? art thou a friend? pronounce the watch-
word.

Who are ye, that by night approach my bed?
Speak out.

CHOR. We guard the camp.

HEC. Why com'st thou hither
With this tumultuous haste?

CHOR. Be of good cheer.

HEC. I am. Hast thou discovered in the camp
This night some treachery?

CHOR. None.

HEC. Why then deserting
The post where thou art stationed, dost thou rouse
The troops, unless thou through this midnight gloom
Bring some important tidings? know'st thou not
That near the Argive host we under arms
Take our repose.

CHOR. Prepare your brave allies :
 Go to their chambers, bid them wield the spear,
 Rouse them from slumber, and despatch your friends
 To your own troop ; caparison the steeds.
 Who bears the swift alarm to Pantheus' son ?
 Who to Europa's offspring, Lycia's chief ?
 Where are the priests who should inspect the victims ?
 Who leads the light-armed squadron to the field ?
 And where are Phrygia's archers ? Let each bow
 Be strung.

HEC. Thy tidings are in part alarming,
 In part thou giv'st us courage, though thou speak
 Nought plainly. By the terrifying scourge
 Of Pan hast thou been smitten, that thou leav'st
 Thy station to alarm the host ? Explain
 These clamorous sounds. What tidings shall I say
 Thou bring'st ? Thy words are many, but their drift
 I comprehend not.

CHOR. All night long, O Hector,
 The Grecian camp hath kindled fires, the torches
 Amid their fleet are blazing, and the host
 Tumultuous rush to Agamemnon's tent,
 At midnight calling on the king t' assemble
 A council : for the sailors never yet
 Were thus alarmed. But I, because I fear
 What may ensue, these tidings hither bring,
 Lest you should charge me with a breach of duty.

HEC. Full seasonably thou com'st, although thou speak
 Words fraught with terror : for these dastards hope
 They in their barks shall from this shore escape
 Ere I discover them : their kindled fires
 Prove this suspicion. Thou, O partial Jove,
 Hast robbed me of my triumph, like the prey
 Torn from the lion, ere I have destroyed
 With this avenging spear the Grecian host.
 Had not the sun withdrawn his radiant beams,
 I the successful battle had prolonged
 Till I had burnt their ships, and hewn a way
 Through their encampments, and in slaughter drenched
 My bloody hand. I would have fought by night
 And taken my advantage of the gales
 Sent by auspicious fortune : but the wise,
 And seers who knew the will of Heaven, advised me
 To wait but till to-morrow's dawn appeared,
 And then sweep every Grecian from the land.
 But now no longer will they stay to prove
 The truth of what my prophets have foretold :
 For cowards in the midnight gloom are brave.
 Instantly therefore through the host proclaim

These orders : " Take up arms, and rouse from sleep ; "
Pierced through the back as to the ships he flies,
So shall full many a dastard with his gore
Distain the steep ascent ; the rest fast bound
In galling chains shall learn to till our fields.

CHOR. O Hector, ere you learn the real fact,
You are too hasty : for we know not yet
That they are flying.

HEC. Wherefore then by night
Are those fires kindled through the Grecian camp ?

CHOR. I am not certain, though my soul full strongly
Suspects the cause.

HEC. If thou fear this, thou tremblest
At a mere shadow.

CHOR. Such a light ne'er blazed
Before among the foes.

HEC. Nor such defeat
In battle, did they e'er till now experience.

CHOR. This have you done ; look now to what remains.

HEC. I give this short direction : take up arms
Against the foe.

CHOR. Behold ! Æneas comes :
Sure, from his haste, some tidings, which deserve
His friends' attentive ear, the warrior brings.

ÆNEAS, HECTOR, CHORUS.

ÆNE. What mean the watch, O Hector, who by night
Were to their stations in the camp assigned,
That they, with terror smitten, at your chamber
In a nocturnal council have assembled ?
And why is the whole army thus in motion ?

HEC. Put on thy arms, Æneas.

ÆNE. What hath happened ?
Are you informed that in this midnight gloom
The foe hath formed some stratagem ?

HEC. They fly !
They mount their ships.

ÆNE. What proof have you of this ?

HEC. All night their torches blaze ; to me they seem
As if they would not wait to-morrow's dawn :
But, kindling fires upon their lofty decks,
They sure fly homeward from this hostile land.

ÆNE. But why, if it be thus, prepare your troops
For battle ?

HEC. As they mount the deck, this spear
Shall overtake the dastards ; I their flight
Will harass : for 'twere base, and prejudicial
As well as base, when Heaven delivers up

The foe into our hands, to suffer those
Who wronged us to escape without a conflict.

ÆNE. Ah ! would to Heaven you equally stood foremost
In wisdom, as in courage : but one man
By bounteous Nature never was endued
With knowledge universal : various gifts
Doth she dispense, to you the warrior's palm,
To others sapient counsels : now you hear
Their torches blaze, you thence infer the Greeks
Are flying, and would lead the troops by night
Over the trenches : but when you have passed
The yawning fosse, should you perceive the foes
Instead of flying from the land, resist,
With dauntless courage, your protended spear,
If you are vanquished, to these sheltering walls
You never can return : for in their flight
How shall the troops o'er slanting palisades
Escape, or, how the charioteer direct
Over the narrow bridge his crashing wheels ?
If you prevail, you have a foe at hand,
The son of Peleus, from your flaming torches
Who will protect the fleet, nor suffer you
Utterly to destroy the Grecian host
As you expect ; for he is brave. Our troops
Let us then leave to rest from martial toils,
And sleep beside their shields. That we despatch
Amid the foe some voluntary spy,
Is my advice : if they prepare for flight,
Let us assail the Greeks ; but if those fires
Are kindled to ensnare us, having learned
The enemy's intentions, let us hold
A second council on this great emprise.
Illustrious chief, I have declared my thoughts.

CHORUS.

I.

These counsels I approve : thy wayward scheme,
O Hector, change, and think the same :
For perilous commands I deem,
Given by the headstrong chief, deserve our blame.
Why send not to the fleet a spy,
Who may approach the trenches, and descry
With what intent our foes upon the strand
Have kindled many a flaming brand ?

HEC. Ye have prevailed, because ye all concur
In one opinion : but depart, prepare
Thy fellow-soldiers, for perhaps the host

May by the rumours of our nightly council
 Be put in motion. I will send a spy
 Among the Greeks ; and if we learn what schemes
 They have devised, the whole of my intentions
 To thee will I immediately reveal
 In person. With confusion and dismay
 But if the foe precipitate their flight,
 Give ear, and follow where the clanging trump
 Summons thee forth, for then I cannot wait,
 But will this night attack the Grecian host,
 Storm their entrenchments, and destroy their fleet.

ÆNE. Despatch the messenger without delay.

For you now think discreetly, and in me
 Shall find, when needed, in your bold emprise
 A firm associate.

[Exit ÆNEAS.]

HEC. What brave Trojan, present.
 At this our conference, as a spy will go
 T' explore the Grecian navy ? to this land
 What generous benefactor will arise ?
 Who answers ? for I singly cannot serve
 The cause of Troy and its confederate bands
 In every station.

DOL. For my native realm,
 Facing this danger, to the fleet of Greece
 I as a spy will go ; and when I've searched
 Into the progress of our foes, return :
 But I on these conditions undertake
 The toilsome enterprise——

HEC. Thou well deserv'st
 Thy name, and to thy country art a friend,
 O Dolon ; for this day thy father's house,
 Which is already noble, thou exalt'st
 With double fame.

DOL. I therefore ought to strive :
 But after all my labours let me reap
 A suitable reward. If gain arise
 From the performance of the task enjoined,
 We feel a twofold joy.

HEC. This were but just :
 I contradict thee not : name thy reward ;
 Choose what thou wilt, except the rank I bear.

DOL. Your rich domains I wish not to possess.

HEC. To thee a daughter of imperial Priam
 In marriage shall be given.

DOL. With my superiors
 I will not wed.

HEC. Abundant gold is ours,
 If thou prefer this stipend.

DOL. My own house

With wealth is furnished, I am far remote
From want.

HEC. What then dost thou desire that Troy
Contains?

DOL. When you have conquered the proud Greeks,
Promise to give me——

HEC. I will give thee all
That thou canst ask, except my royal captives.

DOL. Slay them ; I seek not to withhold your arm
From cutting off the vanquished Menelaus.

HEC. Is it thy wish, Oileus' son to thee
Should be consigned?

DOL. The hands of princes, nurtured
Effeminately, are not formed to till
The stubborn soil.

HEC. From which of all the Greeks
Taken alive wouldst thou receive his ransom?

DOL. Already have I told you, that at home
I have abundant riches.

HEC. Thou shalt choose
Among our spoils.

DOL. For offerings let them hang
High in the temples of the gods.

HEC. What gift
Greater than these canst thou from me require?

DOL. Achilles' steeds : for when I stake my life
On Fortune's die, 'twere reasonable to strive
For such an object as deserves my toils.

HEC. Although thou in thy wishes to possess
Those steeds hast interfered with me : for sprung
From an immortal race themselves immortal
They bear Pelides through the ranks of war,
Neptune, 'tis said, the king of ocean, tamed them
And gave to Peleus : I, who prompted thee
To this emprise, will not bely thy hopes,
But to adorn thy noble father's house,
On thee Achilles' generous steeds bestow.

DOL. This claims my gratitude : if I succeed,
My courage will for me obtain a palm,
Such as no Phrygian ever won before :
Nor should you envy me, for joys unnumbered
And the first station in the realm, are yours.

[Exit HECTOR.

CHORUS.

II.

The danger's great, but great rewards allure
Thee, generous youth, t' assert thy claim,
Thrice blest if thou the gift procure,
Yet will thy toils deserve immortal fame:

Hither come with nightly speed,
The enterprising chief to lead

Through mazes undiscovered by our foes ;
 Aid thy loved Dardanian line,
 For matchless strength was ever thine,
 Constructed by thy hand Troy's ancient bulwarks rose.

I. 2.

Speed Dolon's journey to the Grecian fleet,
 Let him espy th' entrenchments of their host ;
 Again in triumph from the stormy coast
 Conduct the warrior to his native seat ;
 May he mount that chariot drawn
 By steeds that browsed the Phthian lawn
 When our brave lord, the Mars of Greece, hath slain ;
 Coursers of unrivalled speed,
 Which erst to Eacus' seed
 To Peleus, Neptune gave who rules the billowy main.

II. 1.

His country, his paternal walls, to save,
 The generous youth explores the anchored fleet :
 From me such worth shall due encomiums meet.
 How few with hardy bosoms stem the wave,
 When Hyperion veils his face,
 And cities tremble on their base !
 At this dread crisis Phrygian heroes rise,
 Mysian chiefs, uncurbed by fear,
 Brandish with nervous arm the spear ,
 Curst be the lying tongue that slanders my allies.

II. 2.

In savage guise now Dolon stalks arrayed,
 With step adventurous o'er the hostile ground :
 What Grecian chief shall feel the deadly wound,
 While the wolf's hide conceals his glittering blade ?
 Weltering first in crimson gore,
 May Menelaus rise no more ;
 Next may the victor, Agamemnon's head
 Bear to Helen, stung with grief
 At her affinity to that famed chief
 Who in a thousand ships to Troy his squadrons led.

A SHEPHERD, HECTOR, CHORUS.

SHEP. Most gracious monarch, may I ever greet
 My lords with tidings such as now I bring !

HEC. Full oft misapprehension clouds the soul
 Of simple rustics : to thy lord in arms
 Thou of thy fleecy charge art come to speak

At this unseemly crisis : know'st thou not
My mansion, or the palace of my sire ?
There ought'st thou to relate how fare thy flock.

SHEP. We shepherds are, I own, a simple race,
Yet my intelligence deserves attention.

HEC. Such fortunes as befall the fold, to me
Relate not, for I carry in this hand
The battle and the spear.

SHEP. I too am come
Such tidings to unfold ; for a brave chief,
Your friend, the leader of a numerous host,
Marches to fight the battles of this realm.

HEC. But from what country ?

SHEP. Thrace, and he is called
The son of Strymon.

HEC. Didst thou say, that Rhesus
Hath entered Ilion's fields ?

SHEP. You comprehend me,
And have anticipated half my speech.

HEC. Why doth he travel over Ida's hill,
Deserting that broad path where loaded wains
With ease might move ?

SHEP. I have no certain knowledge ;

Yet may we form conjectures ; 'tis a scheme
Most prudent, with his host to march by night
Because he hears the plain with hostile bands
Is covered : but us rustics he alarmed,
Who dwell on Ida's mount, the ancient seat
Of Ilion's first inhabitants, by night

When through that wood, the haunt of savage beasts
The warrior trod : for with a mighty shout
The Thracian host rushed on, but we, our flocks,
With terror smitten, to the summit drove,
Lest any Greek should come to seize the prey.

And waste your crowded stalls : till we discovered
Voices so different from the Hellenian tribes,
That we no longer feared them. I advanced,

And in the Thracian language made inquiry
Of the king's vanguard, as they moved along
To explore a passage for the host, what name
Their leader bore, sprung from what noble sire,

To Ilion's walls he came, the friend of Priam.
When I had heard each circumstance I wished
To know, I for a time stood motionless,

And saw majestic Rhesus, like a god,
High in his chariot, drawn by Thracian steeds
Whiter than snow, a golden beam confined

Their necks, and o'er his shoulders hung a shield
Adorned with sculptures wrought in massive gold :

Like that which in Minerva's Ægis flames,
 Bound on the courser's front, a brazen Gorgon
 Tinkled incessant with alarming sound.
 The numbers of an army so immense
 I cannot calculate; the horse were many,
 Many the ranks of troops with bucklers armed,
 And archers; and a countless multitude,
 Like infantry in Thracian vests arrayed
 Brought up the rear. Such is th' ally who comes
 On Troy's behalf to combat; nor by flight,
 Nor by withstanding his protended spear,
 Can Pelcus' son escape him.

CHOR. When the gods
 Are to a realm propitious, each event
 Is easily converted into bliss.

HEC. Since I in battle prosper, and since Jove
 Is on our side, I shall have many friends;
 But those we need not who in former time
 Our toils partook not, with malignant blast
 When on the sails of Ilion Mars had breathed.
 Rhesus hath shown too plainly what a friend
 He is to Troy, for to the feast he comes,
 Yet was he absent when the hunters seized
 Their prey, nor did he share the toils of war.

CHOR. You justly scorn such friends; yet, O receive
 Those who would aid the city.

HEC. We who long
 Have guarded Ilion can defend it now.

CHOR. Are you persuaded you have gained already
 A triumph o'er the foes?

HEC. I am persuaded,
 And when to-morrow's sun the heaven ascends
 This shall be proved.

CHOR. Beware of what may happen;
 Jove oft o'erthrows the prosperous.

HEC. I abhor
 These tardy succours.

SHEP. O, my lord, 'twere odious,
 Should you reject with scorn the proffered aid
 Of our allies: the sight of such a host
 Will strike the foe with terror.

CHOR. Since he comes
 But as a guest, not partner in the war,
 Let him approach your hospitable board,
 For little thanks are due from Priam's sons
 To such confederates.

HEC. Prudent are thy counsels,
 Thou too hast rightly judged: and in compliance
 With what the messenger hath said, let Rhesus

Refulgent in his golden arms draw near,
For Ilion shall receive him as her friend.

[*Exit* SHEPHERD.

CHORUS.

ODE.

I. 1.

Daughter of Jove, forbear to wreak
Impending vengeance, though the tongue,
O Nemesis, its boastful strain prolong :
I the free dictates of my soul will speak.
Thou com'st, brave son of that illustrious spring,
Thou com'st thrice welcome to our social hall :
At length doth thy Pierian mother bring
Her favoured child, while ling'ring in his fall,
Adorned by many a bridge, thee with paternal call

I. 2.

Doth Strymon summon to the field : of yore
When he the tuneful Muse addressed,
A gliding stream he sought her snowy breast.
Thee, lovely youth, the yielding goddess bore :
To us thou com'st a tutelary power
Yoking thy coursers to the fervid car :
O Phrygia ! O my country ! at this hour
Hastes thy deliverer glittering from afar,
Him may'st thou call thy Jove, thy thunderbolt of war.

II. 1.

While swiftly glides th' unheeded day,
Again shall Troy without control
Chant the young loves, and o'er the foaming bowl
The sportive contest urge 'midst banquets gay ;
But Atreus' sons desponding cross the wave,
And sail from Ilion to the Spartan strand.
Accomplish what thy friends foretold, O save
These menaced walls by thy victorious hand,
Return with laurels crowned, and bless thy native land.

II. 2.

To dazzle fierce Pelides' sight,
Before him wave thy golden shield
Obliquely raised, that meteor of the field,
Vault from thy chariot with unrivalled might,
And brandish with each dexterous hand a lance ;
Whoever strives with thee shall ne'er return
To Argive fanes, and join Saturnia's dance,
He by the spear of Thrace in combat slain,
Shall lie a breathless corse on Troy's exulting plain.

Hail, mighty chief! ye Thracian realms, the mien
 Of him ye bore speaks his exalted rank.
 Observe those nervous limbs with plated gold
 Incased, and hearken to those tinkling chairs
 Which on his shield are hung. A god, O Troy,
 E'en Mars himself, from Strymon's current sprung,
 And from the Muse, brings this auspicious gale.

RHESUS, HECTOR, CHORUS.

RHE. Thou brave descendant of a noble sire,
 Lord of this realm, O Hector, I accost thee
 After a tedious absence, and rejoice
 In thy success, for to the turrets reared
 By Greece, thou now lay'st siege, and I am come
 With thee those hostile bulwarks to o'erthrow,
 And burn their fleet.

HEC. Son of the tuneful Muse,
 And Thracian Strymon's stream, I ever love
 To speak the truth, for I am not a man
 Versed in duplicity; long, long ago,
 Should you have come to succour Troy, nor suffered,
 Far as on you depended, by our foes
 This city to be ta'en. You cannot say
 That uninvited by your friends you came not,
 Because you marked not our distress. What heralds,
 What embassies to you did Phrygia send,
 Beseeching you, the city to protect,
 What sumptuous presents did she not bestow?
 But you, our kinsman, who derive your birth
 From a barbarian stem, to Greece betrayed
 Us, a barbarian nation, though from ruling
 Over a petty state, by this right arm
 I raised you to the wide-extended throne,
 When round Pangæum and Pæonia's realm
 Rushing upon the hardiest Thracian troops
 I broke their ranks of battle, and subdued
 The people to your empire: but you spurn
 My benefits, nor come with speed to succour
 Your friends in their distress. Though they who spring not
 From the same ancestors, observed our summons;
 Of whom full many in yon field of death
 Have tombs heaped o'er them, a most glorious proof
 Of faith unshaken; others under arms
 Their chariots mount, and steadfastly endure
 The wintry blasts, the parching flames of heaven,
 Nor on a gay convivial couch reclined
 Like you, O Rhesus, drain the frequent bowl.
 That you may know I yet can stand alone,

Such conduct I resent ; this to your face
I speak.

RHE. I also am the same : my language
Is plain and honest ; I am not a man
Of mean duplicity. My soul was tortured
With greater anguish far than thou couldst feel,
Because I was not present in this land ;
But Scythia's tribes who near our confines dwell
Made war against me just as I to Troy
Was journeying ; I had reached the Euxine shore
To sail with Thracia's host, the Scythian blood
There stained our spears, and my brave troops expired
'Midst intermingled slaughter : this event
Hindered my reaching Troy, and aiding thee
In battle. Having conquered them, and taken
For hostages their children, them I bound
To pay me annual tribute ; with my fleet
Then crossed the Hellespont, and marched on foot
Through various realms, nor, as thou proudly say'st,
Drained the intoxicating bowl, nor slept
Beneath a gilded roof, but to such blasts
As cover with thick ice the Thracian wave,
Or through Pæonia howl, was I exposed
Wrapped in this mantle many a sleepless night.
But I, though late, am in due season come :
For this is the tenth year since thou hast waged
An ineffectual war, day after day
By thee is idly lavished, while the die
Of battle 'twixt the Argive host and thine
Spins doubtful ere it fall. But it for me
Will be sufficient that the sun once mount
The heavens, while I their bulwarks storm, invade
Their fleet, and slay the Greeks. To my own home
I the next day from Ilion will return,
Thy toils soon ending : let no Trojan bear
A shield : for with this spear will I subdue
The boasters, though 'twas late ere I arrived.

CHOR. My soul this language doth approve,
Such friends as thou art sent by Jove,
But humbly I that god beseech,
To pardon thy presumptuous speech.
The navy launched from Argos' strand,
Though freighted with a daring band,
Neither in former times, nor now
Contained a chief more brave than thou.
How shall Achilles' self withstand,
Or Ajax meet, thy vengeful hand ?
O may the morn with orient ray
Exhibit that auspicious day,

When thou the victor's prize shalt gain
And dye with crimson gore the plain.

RHE. Soon with exploits like these will I atone
For my long absence : but, with due submission
To Nemesis, I speak ; when from the foe
We have delivered this beleaguered city
And seized their spoils for offerings to the gods ;
With thee to Argos will I go, invade,
And ravage with victorious arms, all Greece,
To teach them in their turn what 'tis to suffer.

HEC. Could I escape from the impending stroke,
And with that safety which we erst enjoyed
These walls inhabit, I to Heaven should pay
Full many a grateful vow : but as for Argos,
As for the Grecian states, to lay them waste
By arms were far less easy than you speak of.

RHE. Is it not said the bravest chiefs of Greece
Came hither ?

HEC. Them I hold not in contempt,
But long have kept at bay.

RHE. When these are slain,
We therefore each obstruction have removed.

HEC. Forbear to think of distant prospects now,
While our immediate interests lie neglected.

RHE. Art thou so tame as to endure such wrongs
Without retorting them ?

HEC. While I maintain
What I possess, my empire is sufficient.
But freely take your choice, or in the left
Or the right wing, or centre of our host
Display your shield, and range your troops around.

RHE. I singly will encounter all our foes,
O Hector ; but if thou esteem it base
Not to assist me when I burn their fleet,
Because thou hast already toiled so long,
Oppose me to Achilles in the front
Of battle.

HEC. We at him no spear must aim.

RHE. Yet was I told he sailed for Troy.

HEC. He sailed,
And still is here, but angry with the chiefs,
Refuses to assist them.

RHE. In the camp
Of Greece, say who is second in renown ?

HEC. Ajax, I deem, and Tydeus' son are equal
To any ; but most fluent in his speech,
And with sufficient fortitude inspired,
Is that Ulysses, from whom Troy hath suffered
Insults the most atrocious ; for by night,

Entering Minerva's fane, he stole her image,
And bore it to the Grecian fleet: disguised
In tattered vest, that vile impostor next
Entered the gates, and cursed the Argive host,
Sent as a spy to Ilion; having slain
The sentinels, he through the gates escaped,
And in some fraudulent scheme is ever found:
At the Thymbraean temple is he stationed
Hard by our ramparts, we in him contend
With a most grievous pest.

RHE. The valiant man
Is never mean enough to slay his foes
By stealth, he loves to meet them face to face;
But, as for him, the recreant chief thou nam'st,
Who lurking with a thievish purpose frames
These dark contrivances, as through the gates
I sally forth to combat, I will seize him;
Driven through his back, my spear shall leave the miscreant
Food for the vultures, for the impious robber
Who spoils the temples of the gods deserves
No better fate.

HEC. Now choose, for it is night,
The spot for an encampment: I will show you
A separate quarter where your troops must sleep.
But mark me well, Apollo is the watchword;
In case of an emergency, announce
This signal to the Thracian host.

[Exit RHESUS.

Extend
The watch beyond the lines, and there receive
Dolon our spy, who sallied forth t' explore
The navy of our foes; if he be safe
He, by this time, the trenches must approach.

[Exit HECIOR.

CHORUS.

1.

Who comes this rampart to defend?
The times assigned us sentinels is o'er;
Yon fading constellation shines no more
Now the seven Pleiades the heaven ascend.
In ether view the eagle glide.
Wake! what means this long delay?
Rise and watch; now dawns the day:
Saw ye the moon diffuse her radiance wide?
Aurora is at hand: but at the gate
(For Dolon sure returns) what faithful guard shall wait?
SEMICHOR. To whom did the first watch belong?
SEMICHOR. 'Tis said
Choræbus, son of Mygdon, is their chief.

SEMICHOR. Who in his room was stationed?

SEMICHOR. The Pæonians

Called from their tent Cilicia's hardy troops.

SEMICHOR. The Mysians summoned us.

SEMICHOR. Haste, let us seek

The fifth division of the watch, and rouse
Lycia's brave warriors as by lot ordained.

CHORUS.

II.

Hark ! couched on her ill-omened nest,
Fell murderess of her son, in varied strains
Near Simois' banks the nightingale complains :
What sounds melodious heave her throbbing breast !

The flocks on Ida wont to feed
Still browse o'er that airy height,
Soothing the cold ear of night,

Hark to the murmurs of the pastoral reed.
Sleep on our closing eyelids gently steals ;
Sweet are its dews when morn her earliest dawn reveals.

SEMICHOR. But wherefore doth not he draw near whom

Hector

Sent to explore the fleet ?

SEMICHOR. He hath so long

Been absent that I tremble.

SEMICHOR. If he fell

Into some ambush, and is slain, we soon
Shall have sufficient cause for fear.

SEMICHOR. But haste,

Rouse Lycia's warriors as by lot ordained. [*Exit* CHORUS.]

ULYSSES, DIOMEDE.

ULY. Heard'st thou, O Diomed, the sound of arms,
Or in these ears did empty murmurs ring ?

DIO. No ; but the steely trappings which are linked
To yonder chariots, rattled, and I too
With vain alarm was seized, till I perceived
The coursers, who their clanging harness shook.

ULY. Beware, lest in this gloom of night thou stumble
Upon the sentinels.

DIO. Though in the dark
We tread, I with such caution will direct
My steps as not to err.

ULY. But, should'st thou wake them,
Thou know'st the watchword of their host.

DIO. I know

It is Apollo ; this I heard from Dolon.

ULY. Ha ! I perceive our foes have left these chambers.

DIO. Here, Dolon told us, is the tent of Hector :
'Gainst him I wield this javelin.

ULY. What hath happened ?
Is the whole squadron too elsewhere removed ?

DIO. Perchance they too 'gainst us may have contrived
Some stratagem.

ULY. For Hector now is brave
Since he hath conquered.

DIO. How shall we proceed ?
For in this chamber him we cannot find,
And all our hopes are vanished.

ULY. To the fleet
Let us in haste return : for him some god
Protects, and crowns him with triumphant wreaths :
We must not strive 'gainst Fortune's dread behests.

DIO. Then to Æneas will we go, or Paris
That Phrygian most abhorred, and with our swords
Lop off their heads.

ULY. But how, in darkness wrapt,
Canst thou direct thy passage through the troops,
To slay them without danger ?

DIO. Yet 'twere base,
Back to the Grecian fleet should we return,
No fresh exploit performing 'gainst the foe.

ULY. What means this language ? hast thou not performed
A great exploit ? have we not slain the spy
Who to our navy went, and are not these
The spoils of Dolon ? how canst thou expect
To spread a general havoc through their troops ?
Comply ; let us retire : may Fortune speed
Our progress homeward.

MINERVA, ULYSSES, DIOMEDE.

MIN. With affliction stung,
Why from the Trojan camp do ye retire ?
Although the gods forbid you to destroy
Hector or Paris, heard ye not that Rhesus,
A mighty chief, with numerous troops is come
To Troy ? If he outlives this night, nor Ajax,
Nor can Achilles hinder him from wasting
The camp of Greece, demolishing your walls,
And forcing a wide passage through your gates
With his victorious spear : him slay, and all
Is yours ; but go not to the couch of Hector,
Nor hope to leave that chief a weltering trunk,
For he must perish by another hand.

ULY. Dread goddess, O Minerva, I distinguished
Thy well-known voice : for midst unnumbered toils
Thou ever dost support me : but, oh say,

Where sleeps the mighty warrior thou hast named,
And in what part of the barbarian host
Have they assigned his station?

MIN. Near at hand,
And separate from the Phrygian troops, he lies;
Hector hath placed him just without the lines
Till morn arise; conspicuous in the gloom
Of night, and close beside their sleeping lord,
Yoked to the car his Thracian coursers stand,
White as the glossy plumage of the swan:
Them bear away when ye have slain their lord,
A glorious prize, for the whole world can boast
No car beside drawn by such beauteous steeds.

ULY. Either do thou, O Diomed, transpierce
The Thracian soldiers, or to me consign
That task; meanwhile seize thou the steeds.

DIO. To slay
The foe be mine; do you the coursers guide,
For you are practised in each nicer art,
And quick of apprehension. To each man
Should that peculiar station be assigned
In which he can be useful.

MIN. But to us
Paris I see is coming, who hath heard
A doubtful rumour from the watch, that foes
Enter the trenches.

DIO. Hath he any comrade,
Or marches he alone?

MIN. Alone he seems
To go to Hector's chamber, to announce
That there are foes discovered in the camp.

DIO. Is it not first ordained that he shall die?

MIN. You can no more, the Destinies forbid:
For Hector must not perish by your hand;
But haste to him on whom ye came to wreak
Fate's dreadful purposes: myself meanwhile
Assuming Venus' form, who 'midst the toils
Of battle by her tutelary care
Protects him, will with empty words detain
Paris your foe. Thus much have I declared:
Yet he, whom you must smite, though near at hand,
Nor knows, nor hears, the words which I have uttered.

[*Exeunt ULYSSES and DIOMEDE.*]

PARIS, MINERVA.

PAR. General and brother, Hector, thee I call:
Yet sleep'st thou? doth not this important hour
Demand thy vigilance? some foes approach,
Robbers or spies.

MIN. Be of good cheer ; for Venus
Protects you : I in all your battles feel
An interest, mindful of the prize I gained
Favoured by you, and am for ever grateful :
Now to the host of Ilion I conduct
Your noble Thracian friend, who from the Muse,
Harmonious goddess, and from Strymon springs.

PAR. To Troy and me thou ever art a friend.
In thy behalf when I that judgment gave,
I boast that for this city I obtained
The greatest treasure life affords. But hither,
Hearing an indistinct account, I come ;
For 'mong the guards there hath prevailed a rumour,
That Grecian spies have entered Ilion's walls :
Though the astonished messenger who bore
These tidings, saw them not himself, nor knows
Who saw them : I on this account am going
To Hector's tent.

MIN. Fear nought ; for in the camp
No new event hath happened. To arrange
The Thracian troops is Hector gone.

PAR. Thy words
Are most persuasive, and to them I yield
Implicit credence. From all fears released,
I to my former station will return.

MIN. Go and depend upon my guardian care
To see my faithful votaries ever blest ;
For you in me shall find a zealous friend. [Exit PARIS.

ULYSSES, DIOMEDE, MINERVA.

MIN. But now to you, my real friends, I speak.
Son of Laertes, O conceal your sword,
For we have slain the Thracian chief, and seized
His coursers, but our foes have ta'en th' alarm
And rush upon you, therefore fly with speed,
Fly to the naval ramparts. Why delay
To save your lives when hostile throngs approach ?

[Exit MINERVA.

CHORUS, ULYSSES, DIOMEDE.

CHOR. Come on, strike, strike, destroy. Who marches
yonder ?
Look, look, 'tis him I mean ! these are the robbers
Who in the dead of night alarmed our host.
Hither, my friends, haste hither ; I have seized them.
What answer mak'st thou ? tell me whence thou cam'st,
And who thou art.

ULY. No right hast thou to know ;
Insult me, and this instant thou shalt die.

CHOR. Wilt thou not, ere this lance transpierce thy breast,
Repeat the watchword?

ULY. That thou soon shalt hear;
Be satisfied.

1st SEMICHOR. Come on, my friends, strike! strike!

2nd SEMICHOR. Hast thou slain Rhesus?

ULY. I have slain the man
Who would have murdered thee : forbear.

1st SEMICHOR.

I will not.

2nd SEMICHOR. Forbear to slay a friend.

1st SEMICHOR.

Pronounce the watchword.

ULY. Apollo.

2nd SEMICHOR. Thou art right ; let not a spear
Be lifted up against him.

1st SEMICHOR. Know'st thou whither
Those men are gone ?

2nd SEMICHOR. We saw not.

1st SEMICHOR. Follow close
Their steps, or we must call aloud for aid.

2nd SEMICHOR. Yet were it most unseemly to disturb
Our valiant comrades with our nightly fears.

[*Exeunt* ULYSSES and DIOMEDE.]

CHORUS.

ODE.

I.

What chief is he, who moved along ;
What daring plunderer fleet and strong,
Shall boast he 'scaped my vengeful hand?
How overtake his rapid flight?

To whom compare him, who by night,
With dauntless step passed through our armed band
And slumbering guards? doth he reside

In Thessaly, near ocean's boisterous tide

In Locris, or those islands scattered o'er

The waves? whence comes he to this fell debate?

What power supreme doth he adore?

1st SEMICHOR. Was this Ulysses' enterprise, or whose?

2nd SEMICHOR. If we may form our judgment from the past,
Who but Ulysses——

1st SEMICHOR. Think'st thou that it was?

2nd SEMICHOR. Why not?

1st SEMICHOR.

He is an enterprising foe.

2nd SEMICHOR. What bravery? whom do you applaud?

1st SEMICHOR.

Ulysses.

2nd SEMICHOR. Praise not the treacherous weapon of a
robber,

CHORUS.

II.

He entered Ilion once before,
 With foam his eyes were covered o'er,
 In tatters hung his squalid vest ;
 He artfully concealed his sword,
 And sued for fragments from our board ;
 Shorn was his head, and like a beggar dressed ;
 He cursed with simulated hate
 Th' Atrides, rulers of the Grecian state.
 May just revenge his forfeit life demand :
 Would he had perished as his crimes deserve,
 Before he reached the Phrygian land.

1st SEMICHOR. Whether this deed was by Ulysses wrought
 It matters not, I shrink with fear, for Hector
 Will to us guards impute the blame.

2nd SEMICHOR. What charge
 Can he allege ?

1st SEMICHOR. He will suspect.

2nd SEMICHOR. Why shrink
 With terror ?

1st SEMICHOR. 'Twixt our ranks they passed.

2nd SEMICHOR.

Who passed ?

1st SEMICHOR. They, who this night have entered Phrygia's
 camp.

CHARIOTEER OF RHESUS, CHORUS.

CHA. Alas ! intolerable stroke of fate !

1st SEMICHOR. Be silent.

2nd SEMICHOR. Rouse ! for some one may have fallen
 Into the snare.

CHA. O dire calamity
 Of Troy's allies, the Thracians !

1st SEMICHOR. Who is he
 That groans ?

CHA. Ah ! wretched me, and O thou king
 Of Thrace, who in an evil hour beheld'st
 Accursed Ilion ; what an end of life
 Was thine !

CHOR. But which of our allies art thou ?
 For o'er these eyes the gloom of night is spread,
 And I discern thee not.

CHA. Where shall I find
 Some of the Trojan chiefs ? beneath his shield
 O where doth Hector taste the charms of sleep ?
 To which of Ilion's leaders shall I tell
 All we have suffered ? and what wounds unseen

Some stranger hath on us with ruthless hand
 Inflicted? but he vanished and hath heaped
 Conspicuous sorrows on the Thracian realm.

CHOR. Some terrible disaster to the troops
 Of Thrace it seems hath happened, if aright
 I comprehend what I from him have heard.

CHA. Our host is utterly destroyed, our king
 Hath been despatched by some foul secret stroke.
 How am I tortured by a deadly wound,
 Yet know not to what cause I must impute
 My perishing! 'Twas by the Fates ordained,
 That I, and Rhesus, who to Ilion led
 Auxiliar troops, ingloriously should bleed.

CHOR. He in no riddle hath expressed the tale
 Of our misfortunes; he asserts too clearly
 That our allies are slain.

CHA. We are most wretched,
 And to our wretchedness have joined disgrace,
 A twofold evil. For, to die with glory,
 If glory must be purchased at the expense
 Of life, is very bitterness I deem
 To him who bleeds (for what can make amends
 For such a loss as life); but to the living
 Is he the source of pride, from him his house
 Derives renown. But we, alas! like fools,
 Ignobly perish. Hector in the camp
 No sooner fixed our station, and pronounced
 The watchword, than we slept upon the plain,
 O'ercome with toil; no sentinels were stationed
 To watch our troops by night, nor were our arms
 Duly arranged, and to the harnessed steeds
 Hung no alarm bell; for our monarch heard
 That ye had proved victorious, and with ruin
 Threatened the Grecian fleet. Immersed we lay
 In luckless slumber; till disturbed in mind
 I started up, and with a liberal hand
 Measured the coursers' food, resolved betimes
 To yoke them for the battle. I beheld
 Two men, who, in the midnight darkness, walked
 Around our camp; but when I moved, they fled,
 And disappeared immediately; with threats
 I bade them keep aloot: 'twas my conjecture
 That robbers, some of our own countrymen,
 Approached: they answered not, nor know I more.
 Returning to my tent, again I slept,
 And forms tremendous hovered in my dream.
 For near my royal master, as I stood,
 I saw two visionary wolves ascend
 'Those coursers' backs which I was wont to guide,

Oft lashing with their tails they forced them on,
Indignant breathing as they champed the bit,
And struggling with dismay ; but in attempting
To drive away these ravenous beasts, I woke,
Roused by the terrors of the night, and heard,
Soon as I raised my head, expiring groans ;
The tepid current of my master's blood,
Yet gasping in the agonies of death,
Besprinkled me. As from the couch I leaped
Unarmed, and sought for weapons, some strong warrior
Smote with his sword my ribs ; the ghastly wound
Displayed his might : prostrate I sunk to earth.
Bearing the steeds away, and glittering car,
They by the swiftness of their feet escaped,
Tortured with pain, too faint to stand, I know
Too well the dire calamity these eyes
Beheld ; but cannot say, or through what means,
Or by the hand of whom, my lord was slain :
Yet can I guess that by our friends we suffer.

CHOR. O charioteer of Thracia's wretched king,
Be well assured this deed was by our foes
Committed. For lo ! Hector's self, apprized
Of this calamity, draws near ; he feels
Such anguish as he ought for thy disasters.

HECTOR, CHARIOTEER OF RHESUS, CHORUS.

HEC. O ye accursed authors of this mischief,
How did those spies, who by the foe were sent
Thus, to your infamy, escape, and spread
Dire havoc through the host ; both as they entered
And as they left the camp ? Yet, unmolested,
Ye suffered them to pass. Who should be punished
But you ? for you, I say, were stationed here
To watch the camp ; but they without a wound
Are vanished, laughing at the Phrygian troops
For their unmanly cowardice, and me
Their leader. Be assured, by Jove I swear,
All-gracious father, or the scourge or death
Shall wait you for such guilt, else deem that Hector
Is but a thing of nought, a very coward.

CHOR. Great is, alas ! my danger, mighty prince,
The foe stole in while I to you conveyed
Those tidings, that the Greeks around their ships
Had kindled fires : through all the live-long night
These watchful eyes have ne'er been sealed by sleep.
By Simois' holy fountain I conjure you,
My royal lord, impute no blame to me,
For I am wholly guiltless. If you learn
That in my deeds or words I have offended,

Plunge me alive beneath earth's deepest vault ;
I ask no mercy.

CHA. Why dost thou upbraid
These for the guilt ? by plausible harangues
Wouldst thou impose on thy barbarian friends ;
O thou barbarian, thou the bloody deed
Didst perpetrate ; nor can our slaughtered comrades,
Nor we who linger pierced with ghastly wounds,
Admit that 'twas another. There requires
A long and subtle speech to make me think
Thou didst not basely murder thy allies,
Because the beauty of our steeds attracted
Thy admiration, and on their account
Hast thou slain those who at thy earnest prayer
Landed on Ilion's shore ; they came, they died.
With greater decency than thou observ'st,
Who dost assassinate thy friends, did Paris
The rites of hospitality infringe.
Pretend not that some Grecian came unseen
And smote us. Who subdued the Phrygian host,
Who reached our quarters unobserved by Hector ?
Thou with the Trojan army wert before us ;
But who was wounded, who among thy troops
Expired, when through their ranks as thou pretend'st
The foe to us advanced ? But I was wounded,
And they, whom a more grievous ill o'ertook,
No more behold the sun. To be explicit,
I charge no Greek : what foe could come by night
And find out Rhesus' tent, unless some god
Had told the murderers, for they sure knew nought
Of his arrival ? therefore all this mischief
Must be thy sole contrivance.

HEC. Our allies
Have long assisted us since first the Greeks
This realm invaded ; and I never heard
They to my charge imputed any crime.
Could I begin with thee ? by such desire
For beauteous steeds may I be never seized,
As to induce me to destroy my friends.
Ulysses was the author of this deed.
What Greek could have accomplished or contrived
Such an exploit, but he ? Him much I fear :
My soul is also troubled lest he light
On Dolon too, and slay him, for 'tis long
Since he went forth, nor doth he yet return.

CHA. I know not that Ulysses whom thou nam'st,
Nor did a foe inflict this ghastly wound.

HEC. Therefore retain, since thus to thee it seems,
Thy own opinion.

CHA. O my native land,
Might I but die in thee!

HEC. Thou shalt not die :
For of the dead the number is sufficient.

CHA. Rest of my lord, but whither shall I turn ?

HEC. Thou in my house shalt careful treatment find,
And healing balsams.

CHA. Shall the ruthless hands
Of murderers dress my wounds ?

HEC. He will not cease
Alleging the same charge.

CHA. Perdition seize
The author of this bloody deed ! my tongue
Has fixed no charge, as thou pretend'st, on thee ;
But Justice knows.

HEC. Conduct him to my palace
With speed, that we may 'scape his clamorous plaints.
But you must go, and to the citizens
Proclaim, acquainting Priam, and the elders
Who sit in council, first, that I direct
The bodies of the slain shall be interred
With due respect beside the public road.

[Exit CHARIOTEER, supported by one of
HECTOR'S Attendants.

CHOR. Why from the summit of exalted bliss
Into fresh woes hath some malignant god
Plunged Troy, why caused this sad reverse of fortune ?

The MUSE appears in the air, HECTOR, CHORUS.

CHOR. High o'er our heads what deity, O king,
Is hovering ? in her hands a recent corse
She bears : I shudder at the dreadful sight.

MUSE. Ye Trojans, mark me well : for I a Muse
Who by the wise am worshipped, hither come,
One of the nine famed sisters, having seen
The wretched fate of this my dearest son,
Who by the foe was slain : but he who smote
The generous youth, Ulysses, that dissembler,
At length shall suffer as his crimes deserve.

ODE.

I.

Parental anguish rends my breast,
For thee my son, my son, I grieve,
Thy mother sinks with woes oppressed.
Why didst thou take this road, why leave
Thy home, and march to Ilion's gate,
Where death did thy arrival wait ?

Oft with maternal zeal I strove
 Thy luckless courage to restrain,
 And oft thy sire opposed in vain.
 But now with ineffectual love,
 My dearest son, thee now no more,
 Thee, O my son, must I deplore.

CHOR. As far as bosoms, by no kindred ties
 United, can partake a mother's grief,
 Do I bewail thy son's untimely fate.

MUSE.

II.

On him your tenfold vengeance shed
 From Oeneus who derives his birth,
 Smite base Ulysses' perjured head,
 Ye fiends who desolate the earth ;
 Through them with agonizing pain
 I mourn my valiant offspring slain ;
 May Helen too partake their doom,
 Who from her bridal mansions fled,
 And sought th' adulterer's Phrygian bed ;
 For thou in Troy art to the tomb
 By her consigned ; and many a state
 Bewails its bravest warriors' fate.

Much while on earth, and since thy murmuring ghost
 Was plunged in Orcus' dreary mansions more,
 O offspring of Philammon, didst thou wound
 My soul : that arrogance which caused thy ruin,
 That contest with Pieria's choir, gave birth
 To this unhappy youth : for having passed
 The rapid current, with incautious step
 Approaching Strymon's genial bed, we mounted
 Pangæum's summit, for its golden mines
 Distinguished ; each melodious instrument
 Around us in full concert breathed ; our strife
 Was there decided with the Thracian minstrel ;
 That Thamyris who dared blaspheme our art,
 We of his eyes deprived. But since I bore
 Thee, O my son, through deference for my sisters,
 And for my own reputed chastity,
 Thee to the watery mansions of thy sire
 I sent ; and Strymon, to no human care,
 But to the nymphs who haunt his limpid founts,
 For nurture did consign thee ; from those virgins
 When, O my dearest son, thou hadst received
 The best of educations, thou becam'st
 Monarch of Thrace, the first of men. I felt

No boding apprehensions of thy death ;
 By thee, while marshalled on thy native ground,
 Athirst for blood the dauntless squadrons moved.
 But thee I cautioned, for I knew thy fate,
 That thou to Troy shouldst never go ; but thee
 Th' ambassadors of Hector and the Senate,
 By oft repeated messages, persuaded
 To come to the assistance of thy friends.
 Yet think not, O Minerva, thou sole cause
 Of my son's fate, that thou these watchful eyes
 Hast 'scaped ; Ulysses and the son of Tydeus
 Were not the authors of this bloody deed,
 Although they gave the wound. We sister Muses
 Honour thy city, in thy land we dwell.
 Orpheus, the kinsman of this hapless youth
 Whom thou hast slain, dark mysteries did unfold ;
 And by Apollo, and our sister choir,
 Thy venerable citizen Musæus
 Was taught to soar beyond each warbled strain
 Of pristine melody : but in return
 For all these favours, bearing in my arms
 My son, I utter this funereal dirge ;
 But I no other minstrel will employ.

CHOR. Falsely the wounded Thracian charioteer
 Charged us with a conspiracy to slay him.

HEC. Full well I knew, there needed not a seer
 T' inform me, that he perished by the arts
 Of Ithacus. But was it not my duty
 When I my country saw by Grecian troops
 Besieged, to send forth heralds to my friends,
 Requesting them to aid us ? I did send,
 And Rhesus came, by gratitude constrained,
 Illustrious partner of my toils. His death
 Lamenting, will I raise a tomb to grace
 The corse of my ally, and o'er the flame
 Strew tissue'd vests : for with confederate arms
 Dauntless he came, though piteous was his death.

MUSE. They shall not plunge him in the yawning grave,
 Such vows will I address to Pluto's bride,
 Daughter of fruitful Ceres, to release
 His ghost from the drear shades beneath : she owes
 To Orpheus' friends such honours. But henceforth,
 Dead as it were to me, will he no more
 Behold the sun, we ne'er must meet again,
 Nor shall he see his mother, but shall lie
 Concealed beneath the caverns of that land
 With silver mines abounding, from a man
 Exalted to a god, restored to life,
 The priest of Bacchus, and of him who dwells

Beneath Pangeum's rock, a god adored
 By those who haunt his orgies. But ere long
 To yonder goddess of the briny waves
 Shall I bear doleful tidings : for by fate
 It is decreed, her offspring too shall die ;
 But first our sisterhood, in choral plaints,
 Will sing of thee, O Rhesus, and hereafter
 Achilles, son of Thetis, shall demand
 Our elegiac strains, not she who slew
 Thee, hapless youth, Minerva, can redeem him ;
 Such an inevitable shaft is stored
 In Phœbus' quiver. O ye pangs that rend
 A mother's breast, ye toils the lot of man ;
 They who behold you in your real light
 Will live without a progeny, nor mourn
 With hopeless anguish o'er their children's tomb.

[*Exit the MUSE.*]

CHOR. To bury the deceased with honours due,
 Will be his mother's care : but if, O Hector,
 Thou mean'st to execute some great emprise,
 'Tis now the time : for morn already dawns.

HEC. Go, and this instant bid our comrades arm,
 Harness the steeds : but while ye in these toils
 Are busied, ye the signal must await,
 Th' Etrurian trumpet's clangour ; for I trust
 I first shall o'er the Grecian host prevail,
 Shall storm their ramparts, and then burn their fleet,
 And that Hyperion's orient beams will bring
 A day of freedom to Troy's valiant race.

CHOR. Obey the monarch : clad in glittering mail
 Let us go forth, and his behests proclaim
 To our associates ; for that god who fights
 Our battles, haply will bestow success.

THE TROJAN CAPTIVES.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

NEPTUNE.
MINERVA.
HECUBA.
CHORUS OF CAPTIVE
TROJAN DAMES.

TALTHYBIUS.
CASSANDRA.
ANDROMACHE.
MENELAUS.
HELEN.

SCENE.—BEFORE THE ENTRANCE OF AGAMEMNON'S TENT
IN THE GRECIAN CAMP NEAR TROY.

NEPTUNE.

FROM the *Ægean* deep, in mazy dance
Where *Nereus'* daughters glide with agile feet,
I Neptune hither come. For round the fields
Of *Ilion*, since *Apollo* and myself
With symmetry exact reared many a tower
Hewn from the solid rock ; the love I bore
The city where my *Phrygian* votaries dwelt,
Laid waste by Greece, where smoke e'en now ascends
The heavens, hath ne'er been rooted from this breast,
For on *Parnassus* bred, the *Phocian* chief
Epeus, by *Minerva's* arts inspired,
Framed with a skilful hand, and through the gates
Sent that accursed machine, the horse which teemed
With ambushed javelins. Through forsaken groves,
Through the polluted temples of the gods,
Flow tides of crimson slaughter ; at the base
Of altars sacred to *Hercæan Jove*,
Fell hoary *Priam*. But huge heaps of gold
And *Phrygian* plunder, to the fleet of Greece
Are sent : the leaders of the host that sacked
This city, wait but for a prosperous breeze,
That after ten years absence they their wives
And children may with joy behold. Subdued
By *Juno*, *Argive* goddess, and *Minerva*,
Who leagued in *Phrygia's* overthrow, I leave

Troy the renowned, and my demolished shrines.
 For when pernicious solitude extends
 O'er cities her inexorable sway,
 Abandoned are the temples of the gods,
 None comes to worship there. Scamander's banks
 Re-echo many a shriek of captive dames
 Distributed by lot ; th' Arcadians, some,
 Some the Thessalians gain, and some the sons
 Of Theseus leaders of th' Athenian troops :
 But they whom chance distributes not, remain
 Beneath yon roof selected by the chiefs
 Of the confederate army. Justly deemed
 A captive, among them is Spartan Helen :
 And if the stranger wishes to behold
 That wretched woman, Hecuba lies stretched
 Before the gate, full many are her tears,
 And her afflictions many : at the tomb
 Of stern Achilles her unhappy daughter
 Polyxena died wretchedly, her lord
 The royal Priam, and her sons are slain,
 That spotless virgin too whom from his shrine
 Apollo with prophetic gifts inspired,
 Cassandra, spurning every sacred rite,
 Did Agamemnon violently drag
 To his adulterous bed. But, O farewell,
 Thou city prosperous once ; ye splendid towers,
 Had not Minerva's self ordained your fall,
 Ye still on your firm basis might remain.

MINERVA, NEPTUNE.

MIN. May I accost the god who to my sire
 In blood is nearest, mighty, through high Heaven
 Revered, and lay aside our ancient hate ?

NEP. 'Tis well, thou royal maid : an interview
 'Twixt those of the same house, is to the soul
 An efficacious philtre.

MIN. I applaud
 Those who are temperate in their wrath, and bring
 Such arguments, O monarch, as affect
 Both you and me.

NEP. From all th' assembled gods
 Some new commission bear'st thou, or from Jove,
 Or what celestial power ?

MIN. From none of these.
 But in the cause of Troy, whose fields we tread,
 I to your aid betake me, and would join
 Our common strength.

NEP. Hast thou then laid aside

Thy former hate, to pity Troy, consumed
By the relentless flames ?

MIN. First, thither turn
Your views : to me will you unfold your counsels,
And aid the schemes I would effect ?

NEP. With joy :
But I meanwhile would thy designs explore,
Whether thou com'st on the behalf of Greece,
Or Troy.

MIN. The Trojans, erst my foes, I wish
To cheer, and to embitter the return
Of the victorious Grecian host.

NEP. What means
This change of temper ? to excess thou hat'st
And lov'st at random.

MIN. Know you not the insult
Which hath been shown to me, and to my temple ?

NEP. I know that Ajax violently tore
Cassandra thence.

MIN. Yet by the Greeks unpunished
He 'scaped, and e'en uncensured.

NEP. Though the Greeks
O'erthrew Troy's walls through thy auxiliar might——

MIN. And for this very cause will I conspire
With you to punish them.

NEP. I am prepared
For any enterprise thou wilt. What mean'st thou ?

MIN. Their journey home I am resolved to make
Most inauspicious.

NEP. While they yet remain
Upon the shore, or 'midst the briny waves ?

MIN. As to their homes from Ilion's coast they sail.
For Jove will send down rain, immoderate hail,
And pitchy blasts of air : he promises
To give me too his thunderbolts to smite
The Greeks and fire their ships ; but join your aid,
Cause the Ægean deep with threefold waves,
And ocean's whirlpools horribly to rage,
Fill with their courses the unfathomed caves
Beneath Eubœa's rocks, that Greece may learn
My shrines to reverence, nor provoke the gods.

NEP. It shall be done : there need not many words
To recommend thy suit. My storms shall rouse
Th' Ægean deep ; the shores of Myconè,
Scyros with Lemnos, all the Delian rocks,
And steep Caphareus with full many a corse
Will I o'erspread. But mount Olympus' height,
And from the Thunderer's hand his flaming shafts
Receiving, mark when the devoted host

Of Greece weigh anchor. Frantic is the man
 Who dares to lay the peopled city waste,
 Temples with tombs profaning, and bereaves
 Of their inhabitants those sacred vaults
 Where sleep the dead ; at length shall vengeance smite
 That hardened miscreant in his bold career. [Exeunt.]

The Scene opens, and discovers HECUBA on a couch.

HEC. Arise, thou wretch, and from the dust uplift
 Thy drooping head ; though Ilion be no more,
 And thou a queen no longer, yet endure
 With patience Fortune's change, and as the tide
 Or as capricious Fortune wills, direct
 Thy sails, nor turn against the dashing wave
 Life's stubborn prow, for chance must guide thy voyage.
 Alas ! for what but groans belongs to me
 Whose country, children, husband, are no more ?
 Oh, mighty splendour of my sires, now pent
 In a small tomb, how art thou found a thing
 Of no account ! What portion of my woes
 Shall I suppress, or what describe, how frame
 A plaintive strain ? Now fixed on this hard couch,
 Wretch that I am, are my unwieldy limbs.
 Ah me ! my head, my temples, ah, my side !
 Oh, how I wish to turn, and to stretch forth
 These joints ! My tears shall never cease to flow,
 For like the Muse's lyre, th' affecting tale
 Of their calamities consoles the wretched.
 Ye prows of those swift barks which to the coast
 Of fated Ilion, from the Grecian ports
 Adventurous launched amid the purple wave,
 Accompanied by inauspicious pæans
 From pipes, and the shrill flute's enlivening voice,
 While from the mast devolved the twisted cordage
 By Egypt first devised, ye to the bay
 Of Troy did follow Menelaus' wife,
 Helen, abhorred adult'ress, who disgraced
 Castor her brother, and Eurotas' stream :
 She murdered Priam, sire of fifty sons,
 And me the wretched Hecuba hath plunged
 Into this misery. Here, alas ! I sit
 In my loathed prison, Agamemnon's tent ;
 From princely mansions dragged, an aged slave,
 My hoary tresses shorn, this head deformed
 With baldness. But, alas ! ye hapless wives
 Of Ilion's dauntless warriors, blooming maids,
 And brides affianced in an evil hour,
 Together let us weep, for Ilion's smoke
 Ascends the skies. Like the maternal bird,

Who wails her callow brood, I now commence
A strain far different from what erst was heard
When I on mighty Priam's sceptred state
Proudly relying, led the Phrygian dance
Before the hallowed temples of the gods.

[She rises, and comes forth from the tent.]

SEMICHORUS, HECUBA.

SEMICHOR. O Hecuba, what mean these clamorous notes,
These shrieks of woe? for from the vaulted roof
Thy plaints re-echoing smite my distant ear,
And fresh alarms seize every Phrygian dame
Who in these tents enslaved deplores her fate.

HEC. E'en now, my daughter, at the Grecian fleet
Th' exulting sailors ply their oars.

SEMICHOR. Ah me!
What mean they? will they instantly convey me
Far from my ruined country?

HEC. By conjecture
Alone am I acquainted with our doom.

SEMICHOR. Soon shall we hear this sentence: "From
these doors
Come forth ye Trojan captives, for the Greeks
Are now preparing to return."

HEC. O cease,
My friends, nor from her chambers hither bring
Cassandra, frantic prophetess, defiled
By Argive ruffians, for the sight of her
Would but increase my griefs.

SEMICHOR. Troy, wretched Troy,
Thou art no more, they to whom fate ordains
No longer on thy fostering soil to dwell
Are wretched, both the living and the slain.

CHORUS, HECUBA.

CHOR. Trembling I come from Agamemnon's tent,
Of thee my royal mistress to inquire
Whether the Greeks have doomed me to be slain,
And whether yet along the poop arranged
The mariners prepare to ply their oars.

HEC. Deprived of sleep through horror, O my daughter,
I hither came: but on the road I see
A Grecian herald.

CHOR. Tell me to what lord
Am wretched I consigned.

HEC. E'en now the lot
Is casting to decide your fate.

CHOR. What chief
To Argos, or to Phthia, me shall bear,
Or to some island, sorrowing, far from Troy?

HEC. To whom shall wretched I, and in what land
 Become a slave, decrepit like the drone
 Through age, mere semblance of a pallid corse,
 Or flitting spectre from the realms beneath?
 Shall I be stationed or to watch the door,
 Or tend the children of a haughty lord,
 Erst placed at Troy in rank supreme?

CHOR. Alas !

HEC. With what loud complaints dost thou revive thy woes !

CHOR. I never more through Ida's loom shall dart
 The shuttle, nor behold a blooming race
 Of children, in those lighter tasks employed
 Which suit the young and beauteous, to the couch
 Of some illustrious Greek conveyed, the joys
 Which night and fortune yields are lost to me ;
 Or filled with water, from Pirene's spring
 Shall I be doomed to bear the ponderous urn.

HEC. O could we reach the famed and happy realm
 Of Theseus, distant from Eurotas' tide,
 And curst Therapne's gates, where I should meet
 Perfidious Helen, and remain a slave
 To Menelaus, who demolished Troy.

CHOR. By fame's loud voice I am informed, the vale
 Of Peneus, at Olympus base, abounds
 With wealth and plenteous fruitage.

HEC. This I make
 My second option, next the blest domain
 Of Theseus.

CHOR. I am told that Vulcan's realm
 Of Ætna, opposite Phœnicia's coast
 The mother of Sicilian hills, is famed
 For palms obtained by valour. Through the realm
 Adjacent, bordering on th' Ionian deep,
 Crathis the bright, for auburn hair renowned,
 The tribute of its holy current pours,
 And scatters blessings o'er a martial land.
 But lo, with hasty step a herald comes
 Bearing some message from the Grecian host !
 What is his errand ? for we now are slaves
 To you proud rulers of the Doric realm.

TALTHYBIUS, HECUBA, CHORUS.

TAL. O Hecuba, full oft, you know, to Troy
 I, as their herald, by the Grecian host
 Have been despatched ; you cannot be a stranger
 To me, Talthybius, who to you, and all,
 One message bring.

HEC. This, this, my dearest friends,
 Is what I long have feared.

TAL. The lots are cast
Already, if your terrors thence arose.

HEC. Alas, to what Thessalian city saidst thou,
Or to the Phthian, or the Theban realm
Shall we be carried?

TAL. To a separate lord
Hath each of you distinctly been assigned.

HEC. To whom, alas, to whom am I allotted?
What Phrygian dames do happier fortunes wait?

TAL. I know; but be distinct in your inquiries,
Nor ask at once a multitude of questions.

HEC. Say who by lot hath gained my wretched daughter
Cassandra?

TAL. Her the royal Agamemnon
His chosen prize hath taken.

HEC. As a slave
To tend his Spartan wife? ah, me!

TAL. No slave,
But concubine.

HEC. What, Phœbus' votive maid,
To whom the god with golden tresses gave
This privilege, that she should pass her life
In celibacy?

TAL. With the shafts of love
Hath the prophetic nymph transpierced his breast.

HEC. My daughter, cast the sacred keys away,
And rend the garlands thou with pride didst wear.

TAL. Is it not great for captives to ascend
The regal couch?

HEC. But where is she whom late
Ye took away, and whither have ye borne
That daughter?

TAL. Speak you of Polyxena,
Or for whom else would you inquire?

HEC. On whom
Hath chance bestowed her?

TAL. At Achilles' tomb
It is decreed that she shall minister.

HEC. Wretch that I am! for his sepulchral rites
Have I then borne a priestess? but what law
Is this, what Grecian usage, O my friend?

TAL. Esteem your daughter happy; for with her
All now is well.

HEC. What saidst thou? doth she live?

TAL. 'Tis her peculiar fate to be released
From all affliction.

HEC. But, alas! what fortune
Attends the warlike Hector's captive wife,
How fares it with the lost Andromache?

TAL. Her to Achilles' son hath from the band
Of captives chosen.

HEC. As to me who need
For a third foot, the staff which in these hands
I hold, whose head is whitened o'er with age,
To whom am I a slave?

TAL. By lot the king
Of Ithaca Ulysses hath obtained you.

HEC. Alas! alas! let your shorn temples feel
The frequent blow; rend your discoloured cheeks.
Ah me! I am allotted for a slave
To a detestable and treacherous man,
Sworn foe of justice, to that lawless viper,
With double tongue confounding all, 'twixt friends
Exciting bitter hate. Ye Trojan dames,
O shed the sympathizing tear: I sink
Beneath the pressure of relentless fate.

CHOR. Thy doom, O queen, thou know'st: but to what chief,
Hellenian or Achaian, I belong
Inform me.

TAL. Peace! Conduct Cassandra hither
With speed, ye guards, into our general's hands
When I his captive have delivered up,
That we the rest may portion out. Why gleams
That blazing torch within? would Ilion's dames
Their chambers fire? what mean they? doomed to leave
This land, and to be borne to Argive shores,
Are they resolved to perish in the flames?
The soul, inspired with an unbounded love
Of freedom, ill sustains such woes. Burst open
The doors, lest, to their honour and the shame
Of Greece, on me the censure fall.

HEC. They kindle
No conflagration, but, with frantic step,
My daughter, lo! Cassandra rushes hither.

CASSANDRA, TALTHYBIUS, HECUBA, CHORUS.

CAS. Avaunt! the sacred flame I bring
With reverential awe profound,
And wave the kindled torch around,
O Hymen, thou benignant king.
The bridegroom comes with jocund pride,
I too am styled a happy bride,
My name through Argos' streets shall ring,
O Hymen, thou benignant king!
While thou attend'st my father's bier,
O Hecuba, with many a tear,
While Ilion's ramparts overthrown
From thee demand th' incessant groan,

Ere the bright sun withhold his ray,
 E'en in the glaring front of day,
 I bid the nuptial incense blaze
 To thee, O Hymen, thee whose power
 Invoking at her bridal hour
 The bashful virgin comes. Yon maze
 Encircling, 'mid the choral dance,
 As ancient usage bids, advance,
 And in thy hand a flaming pine,
 O mother, brandish. God of wine,
 Thy shouting votaries hither bring,
 As if in Ilion thou hadst found
 Old Priam still a happy king.
 Range that holy group around,
 O Phœbus, in thy laureate mead,
 Thy temple, shall the victim bleed.
 Let Hymen, Hymen, Hymen, sound.
 My mother, for the dance prepare,
 Vault nimbly, and our revels share.
 At Hymen's shrine, my friends, prolong
 Your vows, awake th' ecstatic song ;
 In honour of my bridal day,
 Chant, Phrygian nymphs, the choral lay,
 And celebrate the chief whom fate
 Ordains to be Cassandra's mate.

CHOR. Wilt thou not stop the princess, lest she rush
 With frantic step amid the Grecian host ?

HÆC. O Vulcan, wont to light the bridal torch,
 Now dost thou brandish an accursed flame ;
 My soul foresaw not this. Alas ! my daughter,
 I little thought, that 'midst the din of arms,
 Or while we crouch beneath the Argive spear,
 Thou couldst have celebrated such espousals.
 Give me the torch, for while with frantic speed
 Thou rushest on, it trembles in thy hand.
 Nor yet have thy afflictions, O my daughter,
 Brought back thy wandering reason, thou remain'st
 Disordered as before. Ye Trojan dames,
 Remove yon blazing pines, and in the stead
 Of these her bridal songs let tears express
 The anguish of your souls.

CAS. O mother, place
 A laureate wreath on my victorious brow,
 Exulting lead me to the monarch's bed.
 And if for thee too slowly I advance,
 Drag me along by force ; for I am now
 No more the spouse of Phœbus ; but that king
 Of Greece, famed Agamemnon, shall in me
 Take to his arms a bride more inauspicious

Than even Helen's self: him will I smite,
And lay his palace waste, in great revenge
For my slain sire and brothers. But I cease
These menaces, and speak not of the axe
Which shall smite me and others, or the conflict
My wedlock shall produce, whence by the hands
Of her own son a mother shall be slain,
And th' overthrow of Atreus' guilty house.
This city will I prove to have been happier
Than the victorious Greeks (for though the gods
Inspire, I curb the transports of my soul),
Who for one single woman, to regain
The beauteous Helen only, wasted lives
Unnumbered. Their wise leader, in the cause
Of those he hated, slew whom most he loved;
He to his brother yielded up his daughter,
Joy of his house, for that vile woman's sake,
Who with her own consent, and not by force,
Was borne away. But at Scamander's banks
When they arrived, they died, though not by exile
Torn from their country, or their native towers:
But them who in embattled fields were slain
Their children saw not, nor in decent shroud
Were they enwrapped by their loved consorts' hands,
But lie deserted on a foreign coast:
Their sorrows also who remained at home
Are similar; in widowhood forlorn
Some die; and others, of their own brave sons
Deprived, breed up the children of a stranger;
Nor at their slighted tombs is blood poured forth
To drench the thirsty ground. Their host deserves
Praises like these. 'Tis better not to speak
Of what is infamous, nor shall my Muse
Record the shameful tale. But, first and greatest
Of glories, in their country's cause expired
The Trojans; the remains of those who fell
In battle, by their friends borne home, obtained
Sepulchral honours in their native soil,
That duteous office kindred hands performed:
While every Phrygian who escaped the sword
Still with his wife and children did reside,
Joy to the Greeks unknown. Now hear the fate
Of Hector, him whom thou bewail'st, esteemed
The bravest of our heroes, by the Greeks
Landing on Ilion's coast the warrior fell;
In their own country had the foe remained,
His valour ne'er had been displayed: but Paris
Wedded the daughter of imperial Jove,
In her possessing an illustrious bride.

It is the wise man's duty to avoid
 Perilous war. After the die is cast,
 He who undaunted meets the fatal stroke,
 Adds to his native city fair renown;
 But the last moments of a coward shame
 The land which gave him birth. Forbear to weep,
 My mother, for thy ruined country's fate;
 Weep not because thou seest thy daughter borne
 To Agamemnon's bed, for by these spousals
 Our most inveterate foes shall I destroy.

CHOR. How sweetly 'midst the sorrows of thy house
 Thou smil'st ! ere long perchance wilt thou afford
 A melancholy instance that thy strains
 Are void of truth.

TAL. Had not Apollo fired
 E'en to distraction thy perverted soul,
 Thou on my honoured leader, ere he quit
 The shores of Ilion, shouldst not unavenged
 Pour forth these omens. But, alas ! the great,
 And they who in th' opinion of mankind
 Are wise, in no respect excel the vulgar.
 For the dread chieftain of the Grecian host,
 The son of Atreus, loves with boundless passion
 This damsel frantic as the Maenades.
 Myself am poor, yet would not I accept
 A wife like her. Since thou hast lost thy reason,
 I to the winds consign thy bitter taunts
 'Gainst Argos, with the praises thou bestow'st
 On Troy. Thou bride of Agamemnon, come,
 Follow me to the fleet. But when Ulysses
 Would bear you hence, O Hecuba, obey
 The summons, you are destined to attend
 A queen called virtuous by all those who come
 To Ilion.

CAS. Arrogant, detested slave !
 All heralds are like thee, the public scorn,
 Crouching with abject deference to some king
 Or city. Say'st thou, "To Ulysses' house
 My mother shall be borne ?" Of what account
 Were then the oracles Apollo gave
 Uttered by me his priestess, which declare,
 "She here shall die ?" I spare the shameful tale.
 He knows not, the unhappy Ithacus,
 What evils yet await him, in the tears
 Of me and every captive Phrygian maid,
 While he exults, and deems our misery gain.
 Ten more long years elapsed beyond the term
 Spent in besieging Ilion, he alone
 Shall reach his country ; witness thou who dwell'st

'Midst ocean's straits tempestuous, dire Charybdis,
 Ye mountains where on human victims feast
 The Cyclops, with Ligurian Circe's isle,
 Whose wand transforms to swine, the billowy deep,
 Covered with shipwrecks, the bewitching Lotus,
 The sacred Oxen of the Sun, whose flesh
 Destined to utter a tremendous voice
 The banquet shall embitter : he at length,
 In a few words his history to comprise,
 Alive must travel to the shades beneath,
 And hardly 'scaping from a watery grave
 In his own house find evils numberless.
 But why do I recount Ulysses' toils ?
 Lead on, that I the sooner in the realms
 Of Pluto, with that bridegroom may consummate
 My nuptials. Ruthless miscreant as thou art,
 Thou in the tomb ignobly shalt be plunged
 At midnight ; nor shall the auspicious beams
 Of day illumine thy funereal rites,
 O leader of the Grecian host, who deem'st
 That thou a mighty conquest hast achieved.
 Near to my lord's remains, and in that vale,
 Where down a precipice the torrent foams,
 My corse shall to the hungry wolves be thrown,
 The corse of Phœbus' priestess. O ye wreaths
 Of him whom best of all the gods I loved,
 Adieu, ye symbols of my holy office,
 I leave those feasts the scenes of past delight,
 Torn from my brows avaunt, for I retain
 My chastity unsullied still ; the winds
 To thee shall waft them, O prophetic king.
 Where is your general's bark, which I am doomed
 'I' ascend ? the rising breezes shall unfurl
 Your sails this instant ; for in me ye bear
 One of the three Eumenides from Troy.
 Farewell, my mother, weep not for my fate,
 O my dear country, my heroic brothers,
 And aged father, in the realms beneath,
 Ere long shall ye receive me : but victorious
 Will I descend among the mighty dead,
 When I have laid th' accursed mansions waste
 Of our destroyers, Atreus' impious sons.

[Exeunt CASSANDRA and TALTHYBIUS.]

CHOR. Attendants of the aged Hecuba,
 Behold ye not your mistress, how she falls
 Upon the pavement speechless ? Why neglect
 To prop her sinking frame ! Ye slothful nymphs,
 Raise up this woman, whom a weight of years
 Bows to the dust.

HEC. Away, and on this spot
Allow me, courteous damsels, to remain :
No longer welcome as in happier days
Are your kind offices ; this humble posture,
This fall best suits my present lowly state,
Best suits what I already have endured
And still am doomed to suffer. O ye gods,
In you I call upon no firm allies,
Yet sure 'tis decent to invoke the gods
When we by adverse fortune are oppress.
First, therefore, all the blessings I enjoyed
Would I recount, hence shall my woes demand
The greater pity. Born to regal state,
And with a mighty king in wedlock joined,
A race of valiant sons did I produce ;
I speak not of their numbers, but the noblest
Among the Phrygian youths, such as no Trojan,
Nor Grecian, nor barbarian dame could boast :
Them saw I fall beneath the hostile spear,
And at their tomb these tresses cut : their sire,
The venerable Priam, I bewailed not,
From being told of his calamitous fate
By others, but these eyes beheld him slain,
E'en at the altar of Hercæan Jove,
And Ilion taken. I those blooming maids
Have also lost, whom with maternal love
I nurtured for some noble husband's bed ;
They from these arms are torn : nor can I hope
Or to be seen by them, or e'er to see
My children more. But last of all, to crown
My woes, an aged slave, shall I be borne
To Greece ; and in such tasks will they employ me
As are most grievous in the wane of life ;
Me, who am Hector's mother, at the door
Stationed to keep the keys, or knead the bread,
And on the pavement stretch my withered limbs,
Which erst reposed upon a regal couch,
And in such tattered vestments, as belie
My former rank, enwrap my wasted frame.
Wretch that I am, who, through one woman's nuptials,
Have borne, and am hereafter doomed to bear,
Such dreadful ills. O my unhappy daughter,
Cassandra, whom the gods have rendered frantic,
With what sad omens hath thy virgin zone
Been loosed ! and where, Polyxena, art thou,
O virgin most unfortunate ? but none
Of all my numerous progeny, or male
Or female, comes to aid their wretched mother.
Why, therefore, would ye lift me up ? what room

Is there for hope? me who with tender foot
 Paced through the streets of Troy, but now a slave,
 Drag from the palace to the rushy mat
 And stony pillow, that where'er I fall
 There may I die, through many, many tears
 Exhausted. Of the prosperous and the great
 Pronounce none happy till the hour of death.

CHORUS.

ODE.

I.

Prepare, O Muse, prepare a song
 Expressive of the fall of Troy;
 The sympathetic dirge prolong
 And banish every note of joy.
 I with loud voice of Ilion's fate will speak,
 Sing how the foe our ramparts stormed
 Through the machine their treachery formed,
 The vehicle of many a daring Greek,
 Who burst like thunder from that wooden steed,
 With gorgeous trappings graced, in mimic state,
 Concealing armed bands, which passed the Scæan gate,
 They whom such semblance could mislead,
 The unsuspecting crowd,
 As on Troy's citadel they stood,
 Exclaimed; "Henceforth our toils shall cease,
 Come on, and to Minerva's fane convey
 This holy image, pledge of peace."
 What veteran paused? what youth but led the way?
 Enlivening songs breathed round in notes so sweet,
 That gladly they received the pestilential cheat.

II.

Then did all Phrygia's race combine
 Through their devoted gates to bear,
 Enclosed in the stupendous pine
 The fraud of Greece, that latent snare,
 To glut Minerva with Dardanian blood,
 To pacify th' immortal maid,
 They the huge mass with ropes conveyed:
 Thus the tall bark, into the briny flood
 Too ponderous to be borne, is rolled along:
 Till they had lodged it in th' ill-omened fane
 Of her to whom we owe our ruined country's bane.
 After their toil and festive song,
 The cloud-wrapped evening spread
 Her veil o'er each devoted head,
 Shrill Phrygian voices did resound,

And Libya's flutes accompanied the choir,
 While nymphs high vaulting from the ground,
 Mixed their applauses with the chorded lyre,
 And from each hearth the flames with radiance bright,
 While heedless warriors slept, dispelled the shades of night.

III.

Then o'er the genial board, to her who reigns
 In woodland heights, Diana, child of Jove,
 I waked the choral strains.
 But soon there flew a dismal sound
 Pergamus' wide streets around:
 The shrieking infant fondly strove
 To grasp the border of a mother's vest,
 And with uplifted hands its little fears expressed:
 Mars from his ambush by Minerva's aid
 Conspicuous issued and the fray began,
 Thick gore adown our altars ran,
 And many a slaughtered youth was laid
 A headless trunk on the disfigured bed,
 That Greece might shine with laureate wreaths arrayed,
 By Troy while fruitless tears are shed.

ANDROMACHE, HECUBA, CHORUS.

CHOR. Seest thou, Andromache, O queen, this way
 Advancing, wasted in a foreign car?
 Eager to cling to the maternal breast
 Close follows her beloved Astyanax,
 The son of Hector.

HEC. Whither art thou borne,
 O wretched woman, on a chariot placed
 'Midst Hector's brazen armour, and those spoils
 From captive Phrygian chiefs in combat torn,
 With which Achilles' son from Ilion's siege
 Triumphant, will the Phthian temples grace?

AND. Our Grecian masters drag me hence.

HEC. Alas!

AND. Why with your groans my anguish strive t' assuage?

HEC. Oh!

AND. I by griefs am compassed——

HEC. Mighty Jove!

AND. And dread vicissitudes of fate.

HEC. My children.

AND. We once were blest.

HEC. Now are those prosperous days
 No more; and Ilion is no more.

AND. Most wretched!

HEC. My noble sons.

AND. Alas!

HEC. Alas my—— Woes.
AND.

HEC. O piteous fortune——

AND. Of the city—— Wrapt
HEC.

In smoke.

AND. Return, my husband, O return,

HEC. In clamorous accents thou invok'st my son,
Whom Pluto's realms detain, unhappy woman.

AND. Thy consort's tutelary power.

HEC. And thou,

Whose courage long withstood the Grecian host,
Thou aged father of our numerous race,
Lead me, O Priam, to the shades beneath.

AND. Presumptuous are such wishes.

HEC. We endure

These grievous woes.

CHOR. While ruin overwhelms
Our city, for on sorrows have been heaped
Fresh sorrows, through the will of angry Heaven,
Since in an evil hour thy son was snatched
From Pluto, who, determined to avenge
Those execrable nuptials, with the ground
Hath levelled Pergamus' beleaguered towers.
Near Pallas' shrine the corpses of the slain
Weltering in gore to vultures lie exposed,
And Ilion droops beneath the servile yoke.
Thee, O my wretched country, I with tears
Forsake: e'en now thou view'st the piteous end
Of all thy woes, and my loved native house.

HEC. My children! O my desolated city!
Your mother is bereft of every joy.

CHOR. What shrieks, what plaints resound! what
floods of tears

Stream in our houses! but the dead forget
Their sorrows, and for ever cease to weep.

HEC. To those who suffer, what a sweet relief
Do tears afford! the sympathetic Muse
Inspires their plaints.

AND. O mother of that chief,
Whose forceful javelin thinned the ranks of Greece,
Illustrious Hector, seest thou this?

HEC. I see
The gods delight in raising up the low,
And ruining the great.

AND. Hence with my son,
A captive am I hurried; noble birth
Subject to these vicissitudes now sinks
Into degrading slavery.

HEC. Uncontrolled

The power of fate : Cassandra from these arms
But now with brutal violence was torn !

AND. A second Ajax to thy daughter seems
To have appeared. Yet hast thou other griefs.

HEC. All bounds, all numbers they exceed ; with ills
Fresh ills as for pre-eminence contend.

AND. Polyxena, thy daughter, at the tomb
Of Peleus' son hath breathed her last, a gift
To the deceased.

HEC. Wretch that I am, alas !
Too clearly now I understand the riddle
Which in obscurer terms Talthybius uttered.

AND. I saw her bleed, and lighting from this car
Covered her with the decent shroud and wailed
O'er her remains.

HEC. Alas ! alas ! my child
To bloody altars dragged by impious hands,
Alas ! alas ! how basely wert thou slain !

AND. Most dreadfully she perished ; yet her lot
Who perished is more enviable than mine.

HEC. Far different, O my daughter, is the state
Of them who live, from them who breathe no more :
For the deceased are nothing : but fair hope,
While life remains, can never be extinct.

AND. Thou whom, although I sprung not from thy womb,
I deem a mother, to my cheering words
With patience listen, they will yield delight
To thy afflicted soul. 'Tis the same thing
Ne'er to be born, or die ; but better far
To die, than to live wretched : for no sorrow
Affects th' unconscious tenant of the grave.
But he who once was happy, he who falls
From fortune's summit down the vale of woe,
With an afflicted spirit wanders o'er
The scenes of past delight. In the cold grave,
Like one who never saw the blessed sun,
Polyxena remembers not her woes.
But I who aimed the dextrous shaft, and gained
An ample portion of renown, have missed
The mark of happiness. In Hector's house
I acted as behoves each virtuous dame.
First, whether sland'rous tongues assail or spare
The matron's chastity, an evil name,
Her who remains not at her home, pursues :
Such vain desires I therefore quelled, I stayed
In my own chamber, a domestic life
Preferring, and forbore to introduce
Vain sentimental language, such as gains

Too oft the ear of woman : 'twas enough
 For me to yield obedience to the voice
 Of virtue, that best monitor. My lord
 With placid aspect and a silent tongue
 I still received, for I that province knew
 In which I ought to rule, and when to yield
 Submission to a husband's will. The fame
 This conduct gained me, reached the Grecian camp,
 And proved my ruin : for when I became
 A captive, Neoptolemus resolved
 To take me to his bed, and in the house
 Of murderers I to slavery am consigned.
 If shaking off my Hector's loved remembrance
 To this new husband I my soul incline,
 I shall appear perfidious to the dead ;
 Or, if I hate Achilles' son, become
 Obnoxious to my lords ; though some assert
 That one short night can reconcile th' aversion
 Of any woman to the nuptial couch ;
 I scorn that widow, reft of her first lord,
 Who listens to the voice of love, and weds
 Another. From her comrade torn, the mare
 Sustains the yoke reluctant, though a brute
 Dumb and irrational, by nature formed
 Subordinate to man : but I in thee
 Possessed a husband, O my dearest Hector,
 In wisdom, fortune, and illustrious birth,
 For me sufficient, great in martial deeds :
 A spotless virgin-bride, me from the house
 Of my great father, didst thou first receive ;
 But thou art slain, and I to Greece must sail
 A captive, and endure the servile yoke !
 Is not the death of that Polyxena,
 Whom thou, O Hecuba, bewail'st, an ill
 More tolerable than those which I endure ?
 For hope, who visits every wretch beside,
 To me ne'er comes ; to me no promised joys
 Afford a flattering prospect to deceive
 This anxious bosom ; for 'tis sweet to think
 E'en of ideal bliss.

CHOR. Thou art involved
 In the same sufferings, and in plaintive notes
 Bewailing thy calamity, inform'st me
 What treatment to expect.

HEC. I ne'er did mount
 A ship, yet I from pictures and report
 These matters know : amidst a moderate storm,
 Such as they hope to weather out, the sailors
 To save themselves, exert a cheerful toil :

This to the rudder, to the shattered sails
 That goes, a third laborious at the pump
 Draws off the rising waters ; but if vanquished
 By the tempestuous ocean's rage, they yield
 To fortune, and consigning to the waves
 Their vessel, are at random driven along.
 Thus I am mute beneath unnumbered woes,
 Nor can this tongue expatiate, for the gods
 Such torrents pour as drown my feeble voice !
 But, O my daughter, cease to name the fate
 Of slaughtered Hector, whom no tears can save.
 Pay due attention to thy present lord,
 With amorous glances and a fond compliance
 Receiving him ; act thus, and thou wilt cheer
 Our friends, and this my grandson educate
 A bulwark to fallen Ilion, that his race
 The city may rebuild, and dwell in Troy.
 But a fresh topic of discourse ensues.
 What servant of the Greeks do I behold
 Again draw near, t' announce some new design ?

TALTHYBIUS, ANDROMACHE, HECUBA, CHORUS.

TAL. O thou who erst wert Hector's wife, that bravest
 Of Phrygians, hate me not ; for with reluctance
 Will I the general sentence of the Greeks
 And Pelops' progeny, announce.

AND. What means
 This evil prelude.

TAL. 'Tis decreed thy son—
 How shall I speak it ?

AND. To a separate lord
 Shall be consigned ?

TAL. None of the Grecian chiefs
 Shall ever o'er Astyanax bear rule.

AND. Must I leave here, him who alone remains
 Of all that erst was dear to me in Troy ?

TAL. Alas ! I know not in what terms t' express
 The miseries that await thee ?

AND. I commend
 Such modesty, provided thou canst speak
 Aught to afford me comfort.

TAL. They resolve
 To slay thy son ; thou hear'st my dismal errand.

AND. Ah me ! thou hast unfolded to these ears
 An evil, greater than my menaced spousals.

TAL. By his harangues to the assembled Greeks,
 Ulysses hath prevailed.

AND. Alas ! alas !
 Immoderate are the sorrows I endure.

TAL. Saying they ought not to train up the son
Of that heroic sire.

AND. May he obtain
O'er his own children triumphs great as these !

TAL. He from the towers of Ilion must be thrown :
But I entreat thee, and thou hence shall seem
More prudent, strive not to withhold thy son,
But bear thy woes with firmness ; nor, though weak,
Deem thyself strong ; for thou hast no support,
And therefore must consider that thy city
Is overthrown, thy husband is no more,
Thou art reduced to servitude ; and we
Are strong enough to combat with one woman :
O therefore brave not this unequal strife,
Stoop not to aught that's base, nor yet revile,
Nor idly scatter curses on thy foes ;
For if thou utter aught that may provoke
The anger of the host, thy son will bleed
Unburied and unwept : but if thou bear
With silence and composure thy misfortunes,
Funereal honours shall adorn his grave,
And Greece to thee her lenity extend.

AND. Thee, O my dearest son, thy foes will slay ;
Soon art thou doomed to leave thy wretched mother.
What saves the lives of others, the renown
Of an illustrious sire, to thee will prove
The cause of death : by this paternal fame
Art thou attended in an evil hour.
To me how luckless proved the genial bed,
And those espousals, that to Hector's house
First brought me, when I trusted I should bear
A son, no victim to the ruthless Greeks,
But an illustrious Asiatic king.
Weep'st thou, my son ? dost thou perceive thy woes ?
Why cling to me with timid hands ? Why seize
My garment ? thus beneath its mother's wings
The callow bird is sheltered. From the tomb,
No Hector brandishing his massive spear
Rushes to save thee ; no intrepid kinsman
Of thy departed father, nor the might
Of Phrygian hosts is here : but from aloof
Borne headlong by a miserable leap,
Shalt thou pour forth thy latest gasp of life
Unpitied. Tender burden in the arms
Of thy fond mother ! what ambrosial odours
Breathed from thy lips ? I swathed thee to my breast
In vain, I toiled in vain, and wore away
My strength with fruitless labours. Yet embrace
Thy mother once again ; around my neck
Entwine thine arms, and give one parting kiss.

Ye Greeks, who studiously invent new modes
 Of unexampled cruelty, why slay
 This guiltless infant? Helen, O thou daughter
 Of Tyndarus, never didst thou spring from Jove,
 But I pronounce thee born of many sires,
 An evil Genius, Envy, Slaughter, Death,
 And every evil that from Earth receives
 Its nourishment; nor dare I to assert
 That Jove himself begot a pest like thee,
 Fatal to Greece and each barbarian chief.
 Perdition overtake thee! for those eyes
 By their seducing glances have o'erthrown
 The Phrygian empire. Bear this child away,
 And cast him from the turrets if ye list,
 Then banquet on his quivering flesh: the gods
 Ordain that I shall perish: nor from him
 Can I repel the stroke of death. Conceal
 This wretched form from public view, and plunge me
 In the ship's hold; for I have lost my son,
 Such the blest prelude to my nuptial rite.

CHOR. Thy myriads, hapless Ilion, did expire
 In combat for one woman, to maintain
 Paris' accursed espousals.

AND. Cease, my child,
 Fondly to lisp thy wretched mother's name,
 Ascend the height of thy paternal towers,
 Whence 'tis by Greece decreed thy parting breath
 Shall issue. Take him hence. Aloud proclaim
 This deed ye merciless: that wretch alone
 Who never knew the blush of virtuous shame,
 Your sentence can applaud.

[*Exeunt ANDROMACHE and TALTHEVIUS.*]

HEC. O child, thou son
 Of my unhappy Hector, from thy mother
 And me thou unexpectedly art torn.
 What can I do, what help afford? for thee
 I smite this head, this miserable breast;
 Thus far my power extends. Alas! thou city,
 And, O my grand-son! is there yet a curse
 Beyond what we have felt? remains there aught
 To save us from the yawning gulf of ruin?

CHORUS.

ODE.

I. I.

In Salamis' profound retreat
 Famed for the luscious treasures of the bee,
 High raised above th' encircling sea
 Thou, Telamon, didst fix thy regal seat;

Near to those sacred hills, where spread
 The olive first its fragrant sprays,
 To form a garland for Minerva's head,
 And the Athenian splendor raise :
 With the famed archer, with Alcmena's son
 Thou cam'st exulting with vindictive joy ;
 By your confederate arms was Ilion won,
 When from thy Greece thou cam'st our city to destroy.

I. 2.

Repining for the promised steeds,
 From Greece Alcides led a chosen band,
 With hostile prowls th' indented strand
 He reached, and anchored near fair Simois' meads ;
 Selected from each ship, he led
 Those who with dextrous hand could wing
 Th' unerring shaft, till slaughter reached thy head,
 Laomedon, thou perjured king :
 Those battlements which Phœbus' self did rear
 The victor wasted with devouring flame ;
 Twice o'er Troy's walls hath waved the hostile spear,
 Twice have insulting shouts announced Dardania's shame.

II. 1.

Thou bear'st the sparkling wine in vain
 With step effeminate, O Phrygian boy,
 Erewhile didst thou approach with joy
 To fill the goblet of imperial Jove ;
 For now thy Troy lies levelled with the plain,
 And its thick smoke ascends the realms above.
 On th' echoing coast our plaints we vent,
 As feathered songsters o'er their young bewail,
 A child or husband these lament,
 And those behold their captive mothers sail :
 The founts where thou didst bathe, th' athletic sports,
 Are now no more. Each blooming grace
 Sheds charms unheeded o'er thy placid face,
 And thou frequent'st Heaven's splendid courts.
 Triumphant Greece hath levelled in the dust
 The throne where Priam ruled the virtuous and the just.

II. 2.

With happier auspices, O love,
 Erst didst thou hover o'er this fruitful plain,
 Hence caught the gods thy thrilling pain ;
 By thee embellished, Troy's resplendent towers
 Reared their proud summits blest by thundering Jove,
 For our allies were the celestial powers,
 But I no longer will betray

Heaven's ruler to reproach and biting shame.

The white-winged morn, blest source of day,
Who cheers the nations with her kindling flame,
Beheld these walls demolished, and th' abode

Of that dear prince who shared her bed
In fragments o'er the wasted champaign spread :

While swift along the starry road,

Her golden car his country's guardian bore :

False was each amorous god, and Ilion is no more.

MENELAUS, HECUBA, CHORUS.

MEN. Hail, O ye solar beams, who on this day,
When I my consort Helen shall regain
Your radiance shed. For I am he who long
Endured the toils of battle, Menelaus,
Attended by the Grecian host. To Troy,
Not in a woman's cause, as many deem,
I came, but came to punish him who broke
The laws of hospitality, and ravished
My consort from my palace. He hath suffered
As he deserved, such was the will of Heaven,
He and his country by the spear of Greece
Have been destroyed. But I am come to bear
That Spartan dame away, whom with regret
I term my consort, though she once was mine.
But she beneath these tents is with the rest
Of Phrygia's captives numbered : for the troops
Whose arms redeemed her, have to me consigned
That I might either take away, or spare
Her life, and waft her to the Argive coast.
I am resolved that Helen shall not bleed
In Troy, but o'er the foaming waves to Greece
Will I convey her, and to them whose friends
Before yon walls were slain, surrender up
To perish by their vengeance. But with speed
Enter the tent, thence by that hair defiled
With murder, O my followers, drag her forth,
And hither bring : for when a prosperous breeze
Arises, her will I to Greece convey.

HEC. O thou who mov'st the world, and in this earth
Hast fixed thy station, whosoe'er thou art,
Impervious to our reason, whether thou,
O Jove, art dread necessity which rules
All nature, or that soul which animates
The breasts of mortals, thec do I adore,
For in a silent path thou tread'st and guid'st
With justice the affairs of man.

MEN.

What means

This innovation in the solemn prayer
You to the gods address?

HEC. I shall applaud
The stroke, O Menelaus, if thou slay
Thy wife; but soon as thou behold'st her, fly,
Lest she with love ensnare thee. For the eyes
Of men she captivates, o'erturns whole cities,
And fires the roofs of lofty palaces,
She is possessed of such resistless charms;
Both I and thou and thousands to their cost,
Alas! are sensible how great her power.

HELEN, MENELAUS, HECUBA, CHORUS.

HEL. O Menelaus, this is sure a prelude
To greater horrors. For with brutal hands
I by your servants from these tents am dragged?
Too well I know you hate me, yet would learn,
How you and Greece have of my life disposed.

MEN. Thou by the utmost rigour of the laws
Hast not been sentenced; but the host, to me
Whom thou hast wronged, consign thee to be slain.

HEL. May not I answer to these harsh resolves,
That if I bleed, unjustly shall I bleed?

MEN. I came not hither to debate, but slay thee?

HEC. Hear her, nor let her die, O Menelaus,
Without this privilege. Me too allow
To make reply to her defence; for nought
Of the foul deeds, which she in Troy committed
Yet know'st thou: if united, the whole tale
Must force thee to destroy her, and preclude
All means of her escaping.

MEN. An indulgence
Like this supposes leisure to attend;
However, if she have a wish to speak,
She may: but be assured, that my compliance
To your request is owing, for such favour
To her I would not grant.

HEL. Perhaps with me
Whom you account a foe, you will not deign,
Whether I seem to utter truth or falsehood,
To parley. But to each malignant charge
With which, O Hecuba, I know thou com'st
Prepared against me, will I make reply,
And to o'erbalance all that thou canst urge
Produce recriminations. First, she bore
Paris, the author of these mischiefs, next
Did aged Priam ruin Troy and me,
When erst that infant he forbore to slay,
That baleful semblance of a flaming torch!

Hear what ensued ; by Paris were the claims
Of the three rival goddesses decided.
The gift Minerva proffered ; that commanding
The Phrygians, he should conquer Greece ; while Juno
Promised, that he his empire should extend
From Asia to remotest Europe's bounds,
If he to her adjudged the golden prize ;
But Venus, who in rapturous terms extolled
My charms, engaged that as the great reward
She would on him bestow me ; to her beauty
If o'er each goddess he the preference gave.
Observe the sequel : Venus, o'er Minerva
And Juno, gained the triumph ; and my nuptials
Thus far have been a benefit to Greece ;
Ye are not subject to barbarian lords,
Crushed by invasion, or tyrannic power.
But I my ruin owe to what my country
Hath found thus advantageous, for my charms
To Paris sold, and branded with disgrace,
E'en for such deeds as merited a wreath
To crown these brows. But you may urge, that all
I have alleged is of no real weight,
Because by stealth I from your palace fled.
Accompanied by no mean goddess, came
That evil genius, sprung from Hecuba,
Distinguish him by either name you list,
Paris or Alexander, in your house,
Whom, O delirious, you behind you left,
And sailed from Sparta to the Cretan isle.
Well, be it so. Of my own heart, not you
I in regard to all that hence ensued
Will ask the question. What could have induced me,
Following that stranger, to forsake my home,
False to my native land ? impute the guilt
To Venus, and assume a power, beyond
E'en that of Jove, who rules th' inferior gods
But yields to her behests. My crime was venial ;
Yet hence you may allege a specious charge
Against me ; since to earth's dark vaults the corse
Of Paris was consigned, no longer bound
Through Heaven's supreme decree in nuptial chains,
I to the Grecian fleet should have escaped
From Ilion's palace ; such was my design :
This can the guards of Troy's beleaguered towers,
And sentinels who on the walls were stationed,
Attest, that oft they caught me, as with ropes
By stealth I strove to light upon the ground ;
But a new husband, fierce Deiphobus,
Obtained me for a wife by brutal force,

Though every Phrygian disapproved. What law
 Can sentence me, whom 'gainst my will he wedded,
 By you, my lord, with justice to be slain?
 But for the benefits through me derived
 To Greece, I in the stead of laureate wreaths
 With slavery am requited. If you wish
 To overcome the gods' supreme behests,
 That very wish were folly.

CHOR.

O my Queen,
 Assert thy children's and thy country's cause,
 'Gainst her persuasive language, for she speaks
 With eloquence, though guilty: curst imposture!

HEC. I those three goddesses will first defend,
 And prove that she has uttered vile untruths:
 For of such madness ne'er can I suspect
 Juno and Pallas that immortal maid,
 As that the first should to barbarian tribes
 Propose to sell her Argos, or Minerva
 To make her Athens subject to the Phrygians:
 Seeking in sportive strife the palm of beauty
 They came to Ida's mount. For through what motive
 Could Juno with such eagerness have wished
 Her charms might triumph? to obtain a husband
 Greater than Jove? could Pallas, who besought
 Her sire she ever might remain a virgin,
 Propose to wed some deity? Forbear
 To represent these goddesses as foolish,
 That thy transgressions may by their example
 Be justified: thou never canst persuade
 The wise. Thou hast presumed t' assert (but this
 Was a ridiculous pretence) that Venus
 Came with my son to Menelaus' house.
 Could she not calmly have abode in Heaven,
 Yet wafted thee and all Amycla's city
 To Ilion? but the beauty of my son
 Was great, and thy own heart, when thou beheld'st him
 Became thy Venus: for whatever folly
 Prevails, is th' Aphrodite of mankind:
 That of Love's goddess, justly doth commence
 With the same letters as an idiot's name.
 Him didst thou see in a barbaric vest
 With gold refulgent, and thy wanton heart
 Was thence inflamed with love, for thou wert poor
 While yet thou didst reside in Greece; but leaving
 The Spartan regions, thou didst hope, the city
 Of Troy, with gold o'erflowing, could support
 Thy prodigality; for the revenues
 Of Menelaus far too scanty proved
 For thy luxuriant appetites: but sayst thou

That Paris bore thee thence by force? what Spartan
 Saw this? or, with what cries didst thou invoke
 Castor or Pollux, thy immortal brothers,
 Who yet on earth remained, nor had ascended
 The starry height? But since thou cam'st to Troy,
 And hither the confederate troops of Greece
 Tracing thy steps, began the bloody strife,
 Whene'er thou heard'st that Menelaus prospered
 Him didst thou praise, and make my son to grieve
 That such a mighty rival shared thy love:
 But if the Trojan army proved victorious,
 He shrunk into a thing of nought. On Fortune
 Still didst thou look, still deaf to Virtue's call
 Follow her banners: yet dost thou assert
 That thou by cords hast from the lofty towers
 In secrecy attempted to descend,
 As if thou here hadst been constrained to stay?
 Where then wert thou surprised, or sharpened sword,
 Or ropes preparing, as each generous dame
 Who sought her former husband would have done?
 Oft have I counselled thee in many words:
 "Depart, O daughter, that my sons may take
 Brides less obnoxious: thee aboard the ships
 Of Greece, assisting in thy secret flight,
 Will I convey. O end the war 'twixt Greece
 And Ilion." But to thee was such advice
 Unwelcome; for with pride thou in the house
 Of Paris didst behave thyself, and claim
 The adoration of barbaric tribes,
 For this was thy great object. But e'en now
 Thy charms displaying, clad in gorgeous vest
 Dost thou go forth, still daring to behold
 That canopy of Heaven which o'erhangs
 Thy injured husband; thou detested woman!
 Whom it had suited, if in tattered vest
 Shivering, with tresses shorn, in Scythian guise
 Thou hadst appeared, and for transgressions past
 Deep smitten with remorse, assumed the blush
 Of virtuous matrons, not that frontless air.
 O Menelaus! I will now conclude;
 By slaying her, prepare for Greece the wreaths
 It merits, and extend to the whole sex
 This law, that every woman who betrays
 Her lord shall die.

CHOR. As that illustrious stem
 Whence thou deriv'st thy birth, and as thy rank
 Demand, on thy adulterous wife inflict
 Just punishment, and purge this foul reproach,
 This instance of a woman's lust, from Greece;

So shall thy very enemies perceive
Thou art magnanimous.

MEN. Your thoughts concur
With mine, that she a willing fugitive
My palace left and sought a foreign bed ;
But speaks of Venus merely to disguise
Her infamy !—Away ! thou shalt be stoned,
And in one instant for the tedious woes
Of Greece make full atonement ; I will teach thee
That thou didst shame me in an evil hour.

HEL. I by those knees entreat you, O forbear
To slay me, that distraction sent by Heaven
To me imputing : but forgive me.

HEC. Wrong not
Thy partners in the war, whom she hath slain ;
In theirs, and in my children's cause, I sue.

MEN. Desist, thou hoary matron : her entreaties
Move not this steadfast bosom. O my followers
Attend her, I command you, to the ships
Which shall convey her hence.

HEC. Let her not enter
Thy ship.

MEN. Is she grown heavier than before ?

HEC. He never loved who doth not always love,
How'er the inclinations of the dame
He loves may fluctuate.

MEN. All shall be performed
According to thy wish ; she shall not enter
My bark : for thou hast uttered wholesome counsels :
But soon as she in Argos' lands, with shame,
As she deserves, shall she be slain, and warn
All women to be chaste. No easy task :
Yet shall her ruin startle every child
Of folly, though more vicious still than Helen.

CHORUS.

ODE.

I. I.

E'en thus by too severe a doom,
To Greece, O Jove, hast thou betrayed
Our shrines, our altars, dropping rich perfume,
The lambent flame that round the victims played,
Myrrh's odorous smoke that mounts the skies,
Yon holy citadel, with Ida's grove
Around whose oaks the clasping ivy plies,
Where rivulets meandering rove

Cold and translucent from the drifted snows ;
 On that high ridge with orient blaze
 The sun first scatters his enlivening rays,
 And with celestial flame th' ecstatic priestess glows.

I. 2.

Each sacrifice, each pious rite,
 Hence vanished, with th' harmonious choirs
 Whose accents soothed the languid ear of night,
 While to the gods we waked our sounding lyres ;
 Their golden images no more
 Twelve times each year, on that revolving eve
 When shines the full-orbed moon, do we adore.
 Harassed by anxious fears, I grieve,
 Oft thinking whether thou, O Jove, wilt deign
 To listen to our piteous moan,
 High as thou sitt'st on thy celestial throne ;
 For Troy, by fire consumed, lies level with the plain.

II. 1.

Thou, O my husband, roam'st a flitting shade,
 To thee are all funereal rites denied,
 To thee no lustral drops supplied :
 But I by the swift bark shall be conveyed
 Where Argos' cloud-capped fortress stands,
 Erected by the Cyclops' skillful hands.
 Before our doors assembling children groan,
 And oft repeat with clamorous moan
 A mother's name. Alone shall I be borne
 Far from thy sight, by the victorious host
 Of Greece, and leaving Ilion's coast,
 O'er ocean's azure billows sail forlorn,
 Either to Salamis, that sacred land,
 Or where the Isthmian summit o'er two seas
 A wide extended prospect doth command.
 Seated in Pelops' straits where Greece the prize decrees.

II. 2.

Its arduous voyage more than half complete,
 In the Ægean deep, and near the land,
 May the red lightning by Jove's hand
 Winged from the skies with tenfold ruin, meet
 The bark that wafts me o'er the wave
 From Troy to Greece a miserable slave.
 Before the golden mirror wont to braid
 Her tresses, like a sportive maid,
 May Helen never reach the Spartan shore,
 Those household gods to whom she proved untrue,
 Nor her paternal mansions view,

Enter the streets of Pitane no more,
 Nor Pallas' temple with its brazen gate ;
 Because her nuptials teemed with foul disgrace
 To mighty Greece through each confederate state ;
 And hence on Simois' banks were slain Troy's guiltless race

But ha ! on this devoted realm are hurled
 Successive woes. Ye hapless Phrygian dames,
 Behold the slain Astyanax, whom Greece
 With rage inhuman from yon towers hath thrown.

TALTHYBIUS, HECUBA, CHORUS.

The Body of ASTYANAX borne in upon a Shield.

TAL. O Hecuba, one ship is left behind
 To carry the remainder of the spoils
 Which to Achilles' son have been adjudged,
 To Phthia's coast. For Neoptolemus,
 Hearing that recent evils hath befall'n
 His grandsire Peleus, and that Pelias' son
 Acastus hath expelled him from his realm,
 Already hath departed with such speed
 As would admit of no delay : with him
 Andromache is gone, for whom I shed
 A stream of tears, when from the land she went
 Wailing her country, and to Hector's tomb
 Her plaints addressing : the victorious chief
 Hath she entreated, to allow the corse
 Of your unhappy Hector's son, who perished
 From Ilion's ramparts thrown, to be interred,
 Nor bear this shield, the terror of the Greeks,
 With brass refulgent, which his father placed
 Before his flank in battle, to the house
 Of Peleus ; nor to that ill-omened chamber
 Where spousals dire on her arrival wait
 The mother of the slain ; for such an object
 Must grieve her to behold : but in the stead
 Of cedar and the monumental stone,
 Bury the child in this : for she the corse
 Hath to your arms consigned, that you may grace it
 With many a fragrant garland, and with vests
 Such as your present fortunes will afford.
 For she has sailed, and through his haste her lord
 Prevented her from lodging in the grave
 Her son. While thus you his remains adorn
 We will mark out the spot, and with our spears
 Dig up the ground. Without delay perform
 These duties : I one task to you most irksome
 Have rendered needless : for I loved the body,

And cleansed the wounds as o'er Scamander's stream
 I passed. But to prepare for the deceased
 A tomb, I go, that with united toil
 When this we have accomplished, they may steer
 Our vessel homeward. [Exit TALITHYBIUS.

HEC. Place that orb'd shield
 Of Hector on the ground, a spectacle
 Most piteous, and unwelcome to these eyes.
 How, O ye Greeks, whose abject souls belie
 Your brave achievements, trembling at a child,
 Could ye commit this unexampled murder,
 Lest at some future time he should rebuild
 The walls of Ilion? Ye inhuman cowards!
 Our ruin from that fatal hour we date
 When Hector with unnumbered heroes fell.
 But having sacked our city, and destroyed
 Each Phrygian warrior, feared ye such an infant
 The dastard I abhor who meanly shrinks
 Through groundless panic. O for ever loved,
 By what a piteous fate didst thou expire!
 Hadst thou, the champion of thy country, died,
 In riper years, when married, and endued
 With power scarce second to th' immortal gods,
 Thou hadst been blest, if aught on earth deserves
 The name of bliss. But thou, my son, beheld'st
 And hadst a distant knowledge of these joys,
 Which thou didst ne'er experience: for to thee
 The treasures which the palaces of Troy
 Contained, proved useless. O unhappy youth,
 How wert thou hurled from thy paternal walls
 Reared by Apollo's hand; and through those ringlets,
 Which oft thy mother smoothed and kissed, the gore
 Bursts from thy fractured skull: but let me waive
 So horrid a description. O ye hands,
 How in your fingers do ye still retain
 A pleasing sad remembrance of your sire,
 Or why do ye lie motionless before me?
 Dear mouth, full many a babbling accent wont
 To utter, art thou closed by death? Thy voice
 Deceived me erst, when clinging to these garments,
 "O mother," oft didst thou exclaim, "the hair
 Shorn from my brows to thee I will devote,
 Lead round thy tomb my comrades, and address
 Thy hovering ghost in many a plaintive strain."
 Now not to me, alas! dost thou perform
 These duteous offices, but I, bowed down
 With age, an exile, of my children reft,
 Must bury the disfigured corpse of thee
 A tender infant. These unnumbered kisses,

My cares in nurturing thee, and broken sleep,
 Proved fruitless. What inscription can the bard
 Place o'er thy sepulchre? "The Greeks who feared
 This infant, slew him!" Such an epitaph
 Would shame them. As for thee who hast obtained
 Nought of thy wealth paternal, yet this shield
 In which thou shalt be buried will be thine.
 O brazen orb, which erst wert wont to guard
 The nervous arm of Hector, thou hast lost
 Thy best possessor: in thy concave circle
 How is that hero's shape impressed; it bears
 Marks of that sweat which dropped from Hector's brow,
 Wearied with toil, when 'gainst thy edge he leaned
 His cheek. Hence carry, to adorn the corse,
 Whate'er our present station will afford,
 For such the fortunes which Jove grants us now
 As splendour suits not: yet accept these gifts
 Out of the little I possess. An idiot
 Is he, who thinking himself blest, exults
 As if his joys were stable: like a man
 Smitten with frenzy, changeful fortune bounds
 Inconstant in her course, now here, now there,
 Nor is there any one who leads a life
 Of bliss uninterrupted.

CHOR.

All is ready:

For from the spoils yon Phrygian matrons bear
 Trappings to grace the dead.

HEC.

On thee, my son,

Not as a victor who with rapid steeds
 Didst ever reach the goal, or wing the shaft
 With surer aim, an exercise revered
 By each unwearied Phrygian youth, thy grandame
 Places these ornaments which erst were thine:
 But now hath Helen, by the gods abhorred,
 Stripped thee of all thou didst possess, and caused
 Thy murder, and the ruin of our house.

CHOR. Alas! thou hast transpierced my inmost soul,
 O thou, whom I expected to have seen
 Troy's mighty ruler.

HEC.

But I now enwrap

Thy body with the vest thou shouldst have worn
 At Hymen's festive rites, in wedlock joined
 With Asia's noblest princess. But, O source
 Of triumphs numberless, dear shield of Hector,
 Accept these laureate wreaths: for though by death
 Thou canst not be affected, thou shalt be
 Joined with this corse in death; since thou deserv'st
 More honourable treatment, than the arms
 Of crafty and malignant Ithacus.

CHOR. Thee, much lamented youth, shall earth receive.
Now groan, thou wretched mother.

HEC. Oh !

CHOR. Commence
Those wailings which are uttered o'er the dead.

HEC. Ah me !

CHOR. Alas ! too grievous are thy woes
To be endured.

HEC. These fillets o'er thy wounds
I bind, and exercise the healing art

In name and semblance only, but, alas !

Not in reality. Whate'er remains

Unfinished, 'mid the shades beneath, to thee

With tender care thy father will supply.

CHOR. Smite with thy hand thy miserable head
Till it resound. Alas !

HEC. My dearest comrades.

CHOR. Speak to thy friends ; O Hecuba, what complaints
Hast thou to utter ?

HEC. Nought but woe for me
Was by the gods reserved ; beyond all cities
To them hath Troy been odious. We in vain
Have offered sacrifice. But had not Jove
O'erthrown and plunged us in the shades beneath,
We had remained obscure, we by the Muse
Had ne'er been sung, nor ever furnished themes
To future bards. But for this hapless youth
Go and prepare a grave ; for the deceased
Is with funereal wreaths already crowned :
Although these pomps, I deem, are to the dead
Of little consequence ; an empty pride
They in the living serve but to display.

CHOR. Thy wretched mother on thy vital thread
Had stretched forth mighty hopes : though styled most happy
From thy illustrious birth, thou by a death
Most horrid didst expire.

HEC. Ha ! who are these
Whom I behold, in their victorious hands
Waving those torches o'er the roofs of Troy ?
E'en now o'er Ilion some fresh woes impend.

TALTHYBIUS, HECUBA, CHORUS.

TAL. To you I speak, O leaders of the troops
Who are ordained to burn this town of Priam.
No longer in your hands without effect
Reserve those blazing torches : but hurl flames
On this devoted city, for when Troy
Is utterly demolished, we shall leave

Its hated shores, exulting. But to you,
 O Phrygians, I the same behests address;
 When the shrill trumpet of our chief resounds,
 Ye to the Grecian navy must repair
 And from these regions sail. But as for thee,
 Thou aged and most miserable dame,
 Follow their steps who from Ulysses come,
 To whom thy fate consigns thee for a slave
 Far from thy country in a foreign land.

HEC. Ah, wretched me! this surely is the last,
 The dire completion this, of all my woes.
 I leave my country: Ilion's bulwarks flame.
 Yet, O decrepit feet, with painful haste
 Bear me along, that I may bid adieu
 To my unhappy city. Thou, O Troy,
 Distinguished erst among barbarian tribes
 By thy superior prowess, soon shalt lose
 The most illustrious name thou didst acquire:
 Thee will the flames consume, and us our foes
 Drag from our home to slavery. O ye gods!
 Upon the gods yet wherefore should I call?
 For when we erst invoked them oft, they heard not.
 Come on, and let us rush amid the flames:
 For in the ruins of my blazing country
 'Twill be to me most glorious to expire.

TAL. Thy griefs, O wretched woman, make thee frantic.
 But lead her hence, neglect not. For Ulysses
 Obtained this prize, and she to him must go.

HEC. O dread Saturnian king, from whom the Phrygians
 Derive their origin, dost thou behold
 Our sufferings, most unworthy of the race
 Of Dardanus?

CHOR. He surely doth behold:
 But this great city, city now no more,
 Is ruined: nought remains of Troy.

HEC. The blaze
 Of Ilion glares, the fire hath caught the roofs,
 The streets of Pergamus, and crashing towers.

CHOR. As the light smoke on rapid wing ascends
 To heaven, how swiftly vanishes fallen Troy!
 Torrents of flame have laid the palace waste,
 And o'er its summit waves the hostile spear.

HEC. O fostering soil, that gave my children birth.

CHOR. Alas! alas!

HEC. Yet hear me, O my sons,
 Your mother's voice distinguish.

CHOR. With loud plaints
 Thou call'st upon the dead, those aged limbs
 Stretched on the ground, and scraping up the dust

With either hand. I follow thy example
Kneeling on earth's cold bosom, and invoke
My wretched husband in the shades beneath.

HEC. We forcibly are borne——

CHOR.

Most doleful sound!

HEC. To servile roofs.

CHOR.

From my dear native land.

HEC. Slain, uninterred, abandoned by thy friends,
Thou sure, O Priam, know'st not what I suffer.
For sable death hath closed thine eyes for ever;
Though pious, thou by impious hands wert murdered.
O ye polluted temples of the gods,
And thou my dearest city.

CHOR.

Ye, alas!

Are by the deadly flame and pointed spear
Now occupied, on this beloved soil
Soon shall you lie a heap of nameless ruins :
For dust, which mixed with smoke, to Heaven ascends,
No longer will permit me to discern
Where erst my habitation stood : the land
Loses its very name, and each memorial
Of pristine grandeur ; wretched Troy's no more.

HEC. Ye know the fatal truth, ye heard the crash
Of falling towers. Our city to its basis
Is shaken. O ye trembling, trembling limbs,
Support my steps !

TAL.

Depart to end thy days

In servitude. Alas ! thou wretched city !
Yet to the navy of the Greeks proceed.



THE CYCLOPS.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

SILENUS.

CHORUS OF SATYRS.

ULYSSES.

POLYPHEME THE CYCLOPS.

SCENE.—THE MOUNTAIN OF ÆTNA IN SICILY.

SILENUS.

O BACCHUS, for thy sake have I endured
Unnumbered toils, both at the present hour,
And when these nerves by vigorous youth were strung :
By Juno first with wild distraction fired,
Thou didst forsake the mountain nymphs whose care
Nurtured thy infancy. Next in that war
With the gigantic progeny of earth,
Stationed beside thee to sustain thy shield,
Piercing the buckler of Enceladus,
I slew him with my lance. Is this a dream ?
By Jove it is not : for I showed his spoils
To Bacchus, and the labours I endure
At present, are so great that they exceed
E'en those. For since 'gainst thee Saturnia roused,
To bear thee far away, Etruria's race
Of impious pirates, I soon caught th' alarm,
And sailed in quest of thee with all my children :
Myself the stern ascended, to direct
The rudder, and each satyr plied an oar
Till ocean's azure surface with white foam
Was covered ; thee, O mighty King, they sought. .
Near Malea's harbour as the vessel rode,
An eastern blast arose, and to this rock
Of Ætna, drove us, where the sons of Neptune,
The one-eyed Cyclops, drenched with human gore,
Inhabit desert caves ; by one of these
Were we made captives, and beneath his roof
To slavery are reduced. Our master's name

Is Polypheme ; instead of Bacchus' orgies
 We tend the flocks of an accursed Cyclops.
 My blooming sons, on yonder distant cliffs,
 Feed the young lambs ; while I at home am stationed
 The goblet to replenish, and to scrape
 The rugged floor ; to this unholy lord,
 A minister of impious festivals :
 And now must I perform the task assigned
 Of cleansing with this rake the filthy ground,
 So shall the cave be fit for his reception,
 When with his flocks my absent lord returns.
 But I already see my sons approach,
 Their fleecy charge conducting. Ha ! what means
 This uproar ? would ye now renew the dance
 Of the Sicinnides, as when ye formed
 The train of amorous Bacchus, and assembled,
 Charmed by the lute, before Althæa's gate ?

CHORUS, SILENUS.

CHORUS.

ODE.

I.

Sprung from an untainted race,
 Hardy father of the fold,
 Why, bounding o'er that craggy space,
 Roam'st thou desperately bold,
 Far from the refreshing gale,
 The verdant herbage of the mead,
 And sloping channel wont to feed
 Thy trough with springs that never fail ?
 Yon caves with bleating lambkins ring,
 Come, depasture with the flock ;
 Leave, O leave the dewy rock,
 Ere this ponderous stone I fling.
 Thee with speeding horns I call
 To the Cyclops' lofty stall.

II.

Thou too those swollen udders yield,
 That thy young ones may be fed,
 Who, while thou browses o'er the field,
 Lie neglected in the shed ;
 Slumbering all the livelong day
 At length with clamorous complaints they wake,
 Thou t' appease them wilt forsake
 Ætna's valleys ever gay.

Young Bromius and his jocund rout
 Here their orgies ne'er repeat,
 No thyrsus waves, no drums they beat ;
 Where the gurgling currents spout,
 Here no vineyards yield delight,
 Nor sport the nymphs on Nyssa's height.

III.

Yet here I chaunt the strains which Bacchus taught,
 To that Venus whom I sought
 When with the Mænades I ranged.
 Where, gentle Evan, dost thou tread
 Alone, and from thy comrades far estranged,
 Those auburn ringlets floating from thy head ?
 Thy vot'ry once, but now a slave
 To yonder one-eyed Cyclops, I abide
 In this detested cave :
 Covered with a goat's vile hide,
 Thy friend, alas ! exposed to scorn
 Wanders helpless and forlorn.

SIL. My sons, be silent : bid your followers drive
 Their flocks into the stony cave.

CHOR. Proceed.

But wherefore, O my father, in this haste ?

SIL. A Grecian vessel, stranded on the coast,
 I see, and to this cave the mariners
 Attend their leader, on their heads they bear
 Those empty vessels which express they want
 Provisions, with fresh water too their urns
 Would they replenish. O unhappy strangers !
 Who are they ? unapprised what lord here rules,
 Dread Polypheme, they in an evil hour
 Are entering this inhospitable threshold,
 And rushing headlong e'en into the jaws
 Of this fierce Cyclops, gorged with human flesh.
 But interrupt me not ; I will inquire
 Whence to Sicilian Ætna's mount they came.

ULYSSES, SILENUS, CHORUS.

ULY. Can ye direct me, strangers, where to find
 Fresh springs to slake our thirst ; or who will sell
 Food to the hungry sailor ? But what means
 That group of satyrs, whom before yon cave
 I see assembled ? we at Bacchus' city
 Seem to have landed. Thee, the elder-born,
 Thee first I hail.

SIL. Hail! foreigner; acquaint us
Both who you are, and from what realm you came.

ULY. Ulysses, king of Ithaca, and th' isle
Of Cephalenè.

SIL. That loquacious man,
The crafty brood of Sisyphus, full well
I know.

ULY. Reproach me not, for I am he.

SIL. Whence sailed you to Sicilia?

ULY. From the shores
Of blazing Ilion, from the war of Troy.

SIL. What, knew you not the way to your own country?

ULY. The tempests violently drove me hither.

SIL. By Heaven, your fortunes are the same with mine.

ULY. What cam'st thou hither too against thy will?

SIL. Yes, in pursuit of those accursed pirates
Who seized on Bromius.

ULY. But what land is this,
And by what men inhabited?

SIL. This mountain,
Called Ætna, overlooks Sicilia's plains.

ULY. Where are the fortresses and lofty towers
Which guard its peopled cities?

SIL. They exist not.
No men, O stranger, on these summits dwell.

ULY. But who possess the land, a savage race
Of beasts?

SIL. The Cyclops occupy these caves,
They have no houses.

ULY. Governed by what chief?
Is this a mere democracy?

SIL. They lead
The life of shepherds, and in no respect
Yield to each other.

ULY. Do they sow the grain
Of Ceres, or on what do they subsist?

SIL. On milk, on cheese, and on their sheep, they feed.

ULY. Affords the vine, nectareous juice, the drink
Bacchus invented?

SIL. No such thing: they dwell
In an ungrateful soil.

ULY. But do they practise
The rites of hospitality, and hold
The stranger sacred?

SIL. They aver the flesh
Of strangers is a most delicious food.

ULY. What saidst thou, banquet they on human flesh?

SIL. Here no man lands who is not doomed to bleed.

ULY. Where is this Cyclops, in the cave?

- SIL. He went
To Ætna's summit, with his hounds to trace
The savage beasts.
- ULY. But know'st thou by what means
We from this region may escape?
- SIL. I know not.
But, O Ulysses, I'll do everything
To serve you.
- ULY. Sell us bread, supply our want.
- SIL. I told you we have nothing here but flesh.
- ULY. By this, sharp hunger, which makes all things sweet,
May be assuaged.
- SIL. Cheese from the press, and milk
Of heifers too.
- ULY. Produce them: while the day
Yet lasts, should we conclude our merchandise.
- SIL. With how much gold will you repay me? Speak.
- ULY. No gold I bring, but Bacchus' cheering juice.
- SIL. My dearest friend, you mention what we long
Have stood in need of.
- ULY. This enchanting liquor
Did Maron, offspring of the courteous god,
On us bestow.
- SIL. Whom erst, while yet a boy
I in these arms sustained.
- ULY. The son of Bacchus,
T' inform thee more minutely who he is.
- SIL. Aboard the ship, or have you hither brought it?
- ULY. Here is the cask, old man, which thou perceiv'st
Contains the wine.
- SIL. It hardly is a sup.
- ULY. But we have twice as much as this will yield.
- SIL. A most delicious spring is that you named.
- ULY. Shall I first treat thee with some wine unmixed,
That thou may'st taste?
- SIL. Well judged: this specimen
Soon will induce me to conclude the purchase.
- ULY. A cup too I have brought as well as cask.
- SIL. Pour forth, that I may drink, and recollect
The grateful taste of wine.
- ULY. Look there!
- SIL. Ye gods!
How beauteous is its odour!
- ULY. Hast thou seen it?
- SIL. By Jove I have not, but I smell its charms.
- ULY. Taste, nor to words alone confine thy praise.
- SIL. Ha! ha! now Bacchus to the choral dance
Invites me.
- ULY. Hath it moistened well thy palate?

SIL. So well as e'en to reach my fingers' ends.

ULY. Beside all this, shall money too be thine.

SIL. Empty the vessel, and reserve your gold.

ULY. Bring forth the cheese and lambs.

SIL.

That will I do,

Regardless of my lord, because I wish

To drain one goblet of this wine, and give

The flocks of all the Cyclops in its stead.

I'd from Leucadè, when completely drunk,

Into the ocean take a lover's leap,

Shutting my eyes. For he who, when he quaffs

The mantling bowl, exults not, is a madman.

Through wine new joys our wanton bosoms fire,

With eager arms we clasp the yielding fair,

And in the giddy dance forget each ill

That heretofore assailed us. So I kiss

The rich potation; let the stupid Cyclops

Weep with that central eye which in his front

Glares horribly.

[Exit SILENUS.]

CHOR. Attend: for we must hold

A long confabulation, O Ulysses.

ULY. We meet each other like old friends.

CHOR.

Was Troy

By you subdued? was Helen taken captive?

ULY. And the whole house of Priam we laid waste.

CHOR. When ye had seized on that transcendent fair,

Did ye then all enjoy her in your turn,

Because she loves variety of husbands?

False to her vows, when she the painted greaves

Around the legs of Paris, on his neck

The golden chain, beheld, with love deep smitten

From Menelaus, best of men, she fled.

Ah! would to Heaven no women had been born

But such as were reserved for my embraces.

SILENUS *returning*, ULYSSES, CHORUS.

SIL. Here, King Ulysses, is the shepherd's food:

Banquet on bleating lambs, and bear away

As many curdled cheeses as you can;

But from these caverns with your utmost speed

Depart, when ye have given me in return

The clustering vine's rich juice which Bacchus loves.

ULY. The Cyclops comes. What shall we do? Old man,
We are undone. Ah, whither can we fly?

SIL. Ye may conceal yourselves beneath that rock.

ULY. Most dangerous is the scheme thou hast proposed,
To rush into the toils.

SIL.

No danger truly;

For in this rock is many a hiding-place.

ULY. Not thus: indignant Troy might groan indeed

If from a single arm we basely fled.
 Oft with my shield against a countless band
 Of Phrygians have I fought. If we must die,
 Let us die nobly : or with life maintain
 The fame we erst in dubious fields acquired.

POLYPHEME, SILENUS, CHORUS, ULYSSES.

POL. What mean these transports, this insensate uproar,
 These Bacchanalian orgies? Nyssa's god,
 The brazen timbrel, and the rattling drum,
 Are distant from these regions. In the cave
 How fare the new-yeaned lambkins? do they suck,
 Or follow they the ewes? have ye prepared
 In wicker vats the cheeses? No reply?
 This club shall make ye weep forthwith. Look up,
 Not on the ground.

CHOR. We lift our dazzled eyes
 To Jove himself; I view the twinkling stars
 And bright Orion.

POL. Is my dinner ready?

CHOR. It is. Prepare your jaws for mastication.

POL. Are the bowls filled with milk?

CHOR. They overflow,
 And you may drink whole hogsheads if you will.

POL. Of sheep, or cows, or mixed?

CHOR. Whate'er you please;
 But swallow not me too.

POL. No certainly;
 For ye would foot it in my tortured paunch,
 And kill me with those antics. But what crowd
 Behold I in the stalls? Some thieves or pirates
 Are landed: at the mouth of yonder cave
 The lambs are bound with osiers, on the floor
 The cheese-press scattered lies, and the bald head
 Of this old man is swoll'n with many bruises.

SIL. Ah me! into a fever I am beaten.

POL. By whom, old man, who smote thy hoary head?

SIL. O Cyclops, by these ruffians whom I hindered
 From carrying off their plunder.

POL. Know they not
 I am a god sprung from the blest immortals?

SIL. All this I told them, yet they seized your goods,
 Eat up your cheese without my leave, dragged forth
 The lambs, declared they would exhibit you
 In a huge collar of three cubits long,
 Closely imprisoned, and before that eye,
 Which in the centre of your forehead glares,
 Bore out your entrails, soundly scourge your hide,
 Then throw you into their swift vessel's hold
 Tied hand and foot, and sell you, with a lever

To heave up ponderous stones, or to the ground
Level some door.

POL. Indeed ! go whet the knives
Without delay, collect a mighty pile
Of wood, and light it up with flaming brands,
They shall be slain immediately, and broiled
To satisfy my appetite with viands
Hot from the coals. The rest shall be well sodden ;
For I am sated with unsavoury beasts,
Enough on lions have I banqueted
And stags that haunt this mountain : but 'tis long
Since human flesh I tasted.

SIL. My dread lord,
Variety is sweet : no other strangers
Have reached of late these solitary caves.

ULY. O Cyclops, hear the strangers also speak,
In their defence. We, wanting to buy food,
Came to your caverns from our anchored bark.
These lambs to us he bartered for our wine,
And of his own accord, when he had drank,
Yielded them up ; no violence was used :
But the account he gives is utter falsehood,
Since he was caught without your privacy
Vending your goods.

SIL. I ? curses on your head !

ULY. If I have uttered an untruth.

SIL. By Neptune
Your sire, O Cyclops, by great Triton, Nereus,
Calypso, Nereus' daughters, by the waves,
And all the race of fishes, I protest,
Most beauteous Cyclops, my dear little lord,
I sold not to the foreigners your goods ;
May swift perdition, if I did, o'ertake
These sinners here, my children, whom I love
Beyond expression.

CHOR. Curb thy tongue : I saw thee
Vending thy lord's possessions to the strangers :
If I speak falsehood, may our father perish !
But injure not these foreigners.

POL. Ye lie ;
For I in him much rather would confide
Than Rhadamanthus, and pronounce that he
Is a more upright judge. But I to them
Some questions would propose. Whence sailed, strangers ?
Where is your country and your native town ?

ULY. We in the realms of Ithaca were born ;
But after we had laid Troy's bulwarks waste,
O Cyclops, by those howling winds which raise
The ocean's boisterous surges, to your coast
Our vessel was impelled.

POL. Are ye the men
Who worthless Helen's ravisher pursued
To Ilion's turrets on Scamander's bank?

ULY. The same: most dreadful toils have we endured.

POL. Dishonourable warfare; ~~in the cause~~
Of one vile woman ye to Phrygia sa led.

ULY. Such was the will of Jove: on no man charge
The fault. But we to you, O gen'rous son
Of ocean's god, our earnest prayers address,
Nor fear with honest freedom to remonstrate
That we your hapless friends, who to these craves
For refuge fly, deserve not to be slain
To satiate with accursed human food
Your appetite: for to your sire, great king,
Full many a temple on the shores of Greece
Have we erected; Tænaros' sacred haven
To him remains inviolate, the cliff
Of Malea, Sunium for its silver mines
Renowned, on whose steep promontory stands
Minerva's fane, and the Gerastian bay.
But those intolerable wrongs which Greece
From Troy had suffered, could we not forgive,
Our triumph interests you, who in a land
With Greece connected, dwell, beneath the rock
Of flaming Ætna. Let those public laws
Which all mankind obey, on you prevail
To change your ruthless purpose, and admit
Your suppliants to a conference, who have long
Endured the perils of the billowy deep;
With hospitable gifts, and change of raiment
Assist us, nor affix our quivering limbs
On spits, to sate your gluttony. Enough
Hath Priam's land depopulated Greece,
Whole myriads have in fighting fields been slain;
The widowed bride, the aged childless matron,
And hoary sire, hath Troy made ever wretched.
But if you burn, and at your hateful feasts
Devour the scattered relics of our host,
Whither shall any Grecian turn? but listen
To my persuasion, Cyclops, and control
Your gluttony. What piety enjoins,
Prefer to this defiance of the gods:
For ruin oft attends unrighteous gain.

SIL. Leave not the smallest morsel of his flesh;
Take my advice, and if you eat his tongue,
You certainly, O Cyclops, will become
A most accomplished orator.

POL. Vile caltiff,
Wealth is the deity the wise adore,
But all things else are unsubstantial boasts.

And specious words alone. I nought regard
 Those promontories sacred to my sire.
 Why dost thou talk of them? I tremble not,
 O stranger, at the thunderbolts of Jove,
 Him I account not a more powerful god
 Than I am, nor henceforth will heed him : hear
 My reasons ; when he from the skies sends down
 The rain, secure from its inclemency
 Beneath this rock I dwell, and make a feast
 On roasted calves, or on the savage prey,
 Stretched at my length supine, then drain a pitcher
 Of milk, and emulate the thunder's sound.
 When Thracian Boreas pours his flaky showers,
 In hides of bea-ts my body I enwrap,
 Approach the fire, nor heed the pelting snows.
 Compelled by strong necessity, the ground
 Produces grass, and nourishes my herds,
 Whom, to no other god except myself,
 And to this belly, greatest of the gods,
 I sacrifice. Because each day to eat,
 To drink, and feel no grief, is bliss supreme,
 The Heaven, the object of the wise man's worship.
 I leave those gloomy lawgivers to weep,
 Who by their harsh impertinent restrictions
 Have chequered human life ; but will indulge
 My genius, and devour thee. That my conduct
 May be exempt from blame, thou shalt receive
 As pledges of our hospitality
 The fire, and that hereditary cauldron
 Well heated, which shall boil thy flesh : walk in,
 Ye shall adorn my table, and produce
 Delicious meals to cheer my gloomy cave,
 Such as a god can relish.

ULY. I have 'scaped,
 Alas ! each danger at the siege of Troy,
 'Scaped the tempestuous ocean ; but in vain
 Attempt to soften the un pitying heart
 Of him who spurns all laws. Now, sacred queen,
 Daughter of Jove, now aid me, O Minerva,
 For I such perils as far, far exceed
 My Phrygian toils, encounter : and, O Jove,
 Dread guardian of each hospitable rite,
 Who sitt'st enthroned above the radiant stars,
 Look down : for if thou view not this, though deemed
 Omnipotent, thou art a thing of nought.

Exeunt POLYPHEME, ULYSSES, and SILENUS.

1st SEMICHOR. That insatiate throat expand,
 Boiled and roast are now at hand
 For thee, O Cyclops, to devour :
 From the coals in evil hour

Yet reeking, shall thy teeth divide
 The limbs of each unhappy guest,
 To thy table served when dressed
 In dishes formed of shaggy hide.
 O betray me not, my friend,
 For I on you alone depend :
 Now approach the shades of night,
 Launch the bark, and aid our flight.

2nd SEMICHOR. Thou cave, and ye unholy rites,
 Adieu, the Cyclops' cursed delights,
 Who on his prisoners wont to feed,
 Hath banished pity from his breast.
 Inhuman execrable deed !
 On his own hearth, the suppliant guest,
 Regardless of the Lares' guardian powers,
 Now he slays, and now devours :
 Hot from the coals, with odious jaws,
 Human flesh the miscreant gnaws.

ULYSSES, CHORUS.

ULY. How, mighty Jove ! shall I express myself ?
 The dreadful scenes I in the cave have viewed
 Are so astonishing, they more resemble
 Some fable than the actions of a man.

CHOR. What now, Ulysses, on your loved companions
 Feasts this most impious Cyclops ?

ULY. Two, the fattest,
 Having well viewed and poised them in his hands——

CHOR. How did you bear, O miserable man,
 These cruel outrages ?

ULY. Soon as we entered
 The rocky cave, he lighted first the fire,
 On the wide blaze heaped trunks of lofty oaks,
 A load sufficient for three wains to bear ;
 Then near the flaming hearth, upon the ground,
 Arranged his couch of pine leaves, filled a bowl,
 Holding about ten firkins, with the milk
 Of heifers, and beside it placed a jug
 Adorned with ivy, the circumference seemed
 Three spacious ells, the depth no less than four :
 Then made his cauldron bubble, and reached down
 Spits burnt at the extremities, and polished
 Not with a knife, but hatchets ; Ætna furnished
 Such instruments for sacrifice, the stems
 Of thorn. No sooner had the hellish cook
 Finished his preparations, than he seized
 Two of my valiant comrades, whom he slew
 With calm deliberation ; one he cast
 Into the hollow cauldron ; from the ground
 Then lifting up his fellow by the foot

Dashed out his brains against the pointed rock ;
 Severing his flesh with an enormous knife,
 Part at the fire he roasted, and to boil,
 His other joints into the cauldron threw.
 But I, though from these eyes full many a tear
 Burst forth, approached the Cyclops, and on him
 Attended, while my friends, like timorous birds
 Lurked in the distant crannies of the rock,
 And all the blood forsook their pallid frame.
 When sated with his feast the monster lay
 Supine, and snored, a thought by Heaven inspired
 Entered this bosom ; having filled a cup
 With Maron's juice unmingled, I to him
 Bore it, that he might drink ; and cried, " Behold,
 O Cyclops, son of Neptune, how divine
 The beverage which our Grecian vineyards yield
 The stream of Bacchus." But already gulted
 With his abominable food, he seized
 And emptied the whole bumper at one draught,
 Then lifting up, in token of applause,
 His hand : " O dearest stranger," he exclaimed,
 " To a delicious banquet thou hast added
 Delicious wine." Perceiving he grew merry
 I plied him with a second cup, well knowing
 That wine will stagger him : he soon shall feel
 Such punishment as he deserves. He sung ;
 I poured forth more and more, to warm his bowels
 With strong potations : 'midst my weeping crew
 He makes the cave with unharmonious strains
 Re-echo. But I silently came forth,
 And, if ye give consent, design to save
 You, and myself. Say, therefore, will ye fly
 From this unsocial monster, and reside
 With Grecian maids beneath the roofs of Bacchus ?
 Your sire within approves of these proposals :
 But now grown feeble and o'ercharged with wine,
 Attracted by the goblet, as if birdlime
 Had smeared his wings, he wavers. But with me
 Do thou preserve thyself, for thou art young :
 And I to Bacchus, to thy ancient friend
 Far different from this Cyclops, will restore thee.
 CHOR. My dearest friend, O could we see that day,
 And 'scape yon impious monster ! for we long
 Have been deprived of the enlivening bowl,
 Nor entertain a single hope of freedom.
 ULY. Now hear the means by which I can requite
 This odious savage, and thou too mayst 'scape
 From servitude.

CHOR. Speak, for we should not hear

The sound of Asia's harp with more delight,
Than the glad tidings of the Cyclops' death.

ULY. By wine enlivened, he resolves to go
And revel with his brethren.

CHOR. I perceive
You mean to seize and kill him when alone,
By some enchantment, or to dash him headlong
From the steep rock.

ULY. I have no such design
As these: on craft alone my plan depends.

CHOR. How then will you proceed? For we long since
Have heard that you for wisdom are renowned.

ULY. I will deter him from the feast, and say
He must not portion out among the Cyclops
This liquor, but reserve it for himself
And lead a joyous life: when overcome
By Bacchus' gifts he sleeps, this sword shall point
An olive pole, which to my purpose suited
Lies in the cave: I in the fire will heat,
And, when it flames, direct the hissing brand
Full on the Cyclops' forehead, to extinguish
The orb of sight. As when some artist frames
A nautic structure, he by thongs directs
The ponderous auger: thus will I whirl round
Within the Cyclops' eye the kindled staff,
And scorch his visual nerve.

CHOR. Ho! I rejoice;
This blest invention almost makes me frantic.

ULY. Thee, and thy friends, and thy decrepit sire,
This done, aboard my vessel will I place,
And from this region with a double tier
Of oars convey.

CHOR. But is it possible
That I, as if dread Jove were my confederate,
Shall guide the well-poised brand, and of his eyesight
Deprive the monster? For I wish to share
In such assassination.

ULY. I expect
Your aid: the brand is weighty, and requires
Our social efforts.

CHOR. I'd sustain a load
Equal to what a hundred teams convey,
Could I dash out the cursed Cyclops' eye
E'en as a swarm of wasps.

ULY. Be silent now;
(Ye know my stratagem) and at my bidding
To those who o'er th' adventurous scheme preside
Yield prompt obedience: for I scorn to leave
My friends within, and save this single life.

True, 'scape I might, already having passed
 The cavern's deep recess : but it were mean
 If I should extricate myself alone,
 False to the faithful partners of my voyage.

[Exit ULYSSES.]

CHOR. Who first, who next, with steadfast hand
 Ordained to guide the flaming brand,
 The Cyclops' radiant eye shall pierce?

1st SEMICHOR. Silence ! for from within a song
 Bursts on my ear in tuneless verse,
 Insensate minstrel, doomed ere long
 This luxurious meal to rue,
 He staggers from yon rocky cave.
 Him let us teach who never knew
 How at the banquet to behave,
 Outrageous and unmannered hind,
 Soon shall he totally be blind.

2nd SEMICHOR. Thrice blest is he, in careless play
 'Midst Bacchus' orgies ever gay,
 Stretched near the social board whence glides
 The vine's rich juice in purple tides,
 Who fondly clasps with eager arms
 The consenting virgin's charms ;
 Rich perfumes conspire to shed
 Sweetest odours on his head,
 While enamoured of the fair
 He wantons with her auburn hair.
 But hark ! for surely 'tis our mate
 Exclaiming, " Who will ope the gate ? "

POLYPHEME, ULYSSES, SILENUS, CHORUS.

POL. Ha ! ha ! I am replete with wine, the banquet
 Hath cheered my soul : like a well-freighted ship
 My stomach's with abundant viands stowed
 Up to my very chin. This smiling turf
 Invites me to partake a vernal feast
 With my Cyclopean brothers. Stranger, bring
 That vessel from the cave. [Exit ULYSSES.]

CHOR. With bright-eyed grace
 Our master issues from his spacious hall ;
 (Some god approves—the kindled torch—) that form
 Equals the lustre of a blooming nymph
 Fresh from the dripping caverns of the main.
 Soon shall the variegated wreath adorn
 Your temples.

ULY. [returning.] Hear me, Cyclops ; well I know
 Th' effect of this potation, Bacchus' gift,
 Which I to you dispensed.

POL. Yet say what sort
Of god is Bacchus by his votaries deemed?

ULY. The greatest source of pleasure to mankind.

POL. I therefore to my palate find it sweet.

ULY. A god like this to no man will do wrong.

POL. But in a bottle how can any god
Delight to dwell?

ULY. In whatsoever place
We lodge him, the benignant power resides.

POL. The skins of goats are an unseemly lodging
For deities.

ULY. If you admire the wine,
Why quarrel with its case?

POL. Those filthy hides
I utterly detest, but love the liquor.

ULY. Stay here; drink, drink, O Cyclops, and be gay.

POL. This luscious beverage, must I not impart
To cheer my brothers?

ULY. Keep it to yourself
And you shall seem more honourable.

POL. More useful,
If I distribute largely to my friends.

ULY. Broils, taunts, and discord from the banquet rise.

POL. Though I am fuddled, no man dares to touch me.

ULY. He who hath drunk too freely, O my friend,
Ought to remain at home.

POL. Devoid of reason
Is he who when he drinks pays no regard
To mirth and to good-fellowship.

ULY. More wise,
O'ercharged with wine, who ventures not abroad.

POL. Shall we stay here? What think'st thou, O
Silenus?

SIL. With all my heart. What need, for our carousals,
Of a more numerous company?

POL. The ground
Beneath our feet, a flowery turf adorns.

SIL. O how delightful 'tis to drink, and bask
Here in the sunshine: on this grassy couch
Beside me take your seat.

POL. Why dost thou place
The cup behind my elbow?

SIL. Lest some stranger
Should come and snatch the precious boon away.

POL. Thou mean'st to tope clandestinely: between us
Here let it stand. O stranger, by what name
Say shall I call thee?

ULY. Noman is my name.
But for what favour shall I praise your kindness?

POL. The last of all the crew will I devour.

ULY. A wondrous privilege is this, O Cyclops,
Which on the stranger you bestow.

POL. What mean'st thou?
Ha! art thou drinking up the wine by stealth?

SIL. Only the gentle Bacchus gave that kiss,
Because I look so blooming.

POL. Thou shalt weep,
Because thy lips were to the wine applied,
Nor did it seek thy mouth.

SIL. Not thus, by Jove;
I drank because the generous god of wine
Declared that he admired me for my beauty.

POL. Pour forth; give me a bumper.

SIL. I must taste
To see what mixture it requires.

POL. Damnation!
Give it me pure.

SIL. Not so, the heavens forbid!
Till you the wreath bind on your ample front,
And I again have tasted.

POL. What a knave
Is this my cupbearer!

SIL. Accuse me not;
The wine is sweet: you ought to wipe your mouth
Before you drink.

POL. My lips and beard are clean.

SIL. Loll thus upon your elbow with a grace,
Drink as you see me drink, and imitate
My every gesture.

POL. What art thou about?

SIL. I swallowed then a most delicious bumper.

POL. Take thou the cask, O stranger, and perform
The office of my cupbearer.

ULY. These hands
Have been accustomed to the pleasing office.

POL. Now pour it forth.

ULY. Be silent: I obey.

POL. Thou hast proposed a difficult restraint
To him who largely drinks.

ULY. Now drain the bowl;
Leave nought behind: the toper must not prate
Before his liquor's ended.

POL. In the vine
There's wisdom.

ULY. When to plenteous food you add
An equal share of liquor, and well drench
The throat beyond what thirst demands, you sink
Into sweet sleep: but if you leave behind

Aught of th' unfinished beverage in your cup,
Bacchus will scorch your entrails.

POL. 'Tis a mercy
How I swam out ; the very heavens whirl round
Mingled with earth. I view Jove's throne sublime,
And the whole synod of encircling gods.
Were all the Graces to solicit me,
I would not kiss them : Ganymede himself
Appears in matchless beauty.

SIL. I, O Cyclops,
Am Jove's own Ganymede.

POL. By Heaven thou art !
Whom from the realms of Dardanus I bore.

[Exit POLYPHEME.]

SIL. Ruin awaits me.

CHOR. Dost thou loathe him now

SIL. Ah me ! I from this sleep shall soon behold
The most accursed effects. [Exit SILENUS.]

ULY. Come on, ye sons
Of Bacchus, generous youths ; for soon dissolved
In slumber shall the monster from those jaws
Vomit forth flesh, within the hall now smokes
The brand, and nought remains but to burn out
The Cyclops' eye : act only like a man.

CHOR. The firmness of my soul shall equal rocks
And adamant. But go into the cave
With speed, before tumultuous sounds assail
Our aged father's ears ; for to effect
Your purpose, all is ready.

ULY. Vulcan, king
Of Ætna, from this impious pest, who haunts
Thy sacred mountain, free thyself at once,
By burning out his glaring eye ; and thou
Nurtured by sable night, O sleep, invade
With thy resistless force this beast abhorred
By Heaven ; nor after all the glorious deeds
Achieved at Ilion, with his faithful sailors,
Destroy Ulysses' self, by him who heeds
Nor god nor mortal. Else must we hold fortune
A goddess, and all other deities
Inferior to resistless fortune's power. [Exit ULYSSES.]

CHOR. The neck of him who slays his guest,
With burning pincers shall be prest,
And fire bereaving him of sight
Soon shall destroy that orb of light,
Within the embers near at hand
Lies concealed a smoking brand,
Torn from its parental tree.
Maron, we depend on thee ;

May th' exasperated foe
 With success direct the blow !
 May the Cyclops lose his eye,
 And curse his ill-timed jollity !
 Thee, Bromius, how I long to meet
 Thy front adorned with ivy twine ;
 Leaving this abhorred retreat.
 Ah, when shall such delight be mine ?

ULYSSES, CHORUS.

ULY. Be silent, O ye savages, restrain
 Those clamorous tongues : by Heaven ye shall not breathe,
 Nor wink your eyes, nor cough, lest ye awaken
 This pest, the Cyclops, ere he of his eyesight
 Is by the fire bereft.

CHOR. We will be silent,
 And in our jaws confine the very air.

ULY. The ponderous weapon seize with dauntless hands,
 Entering the cavern ; for 'tis fully heated.

CHOR. Will you not give directions who shall first
 Manage the glowing lever, and burn out
 The Cyclops' eye, that in one common fortune
 We all may share.

1st SEMICHOR. We who before the portals
 Are stationed, are not tall enough to drive
 Full on its destined mark the hissing brand.

2nd SEMICHOR. But I am with a sudden lameness seized.

1st SEMICHOR. The same calamity which you experience
 To me hath also happened ; for my feet
 Are by convulsions tortured, though the cause
 I know not.

ULY. If ye feel such dreadful spasms,
 How can ye stand ?

CHOR. Our eyes are also filled
 With dust or ashes.

ULY. These allies of mine
 Are worthless cowards.

CHOR. We forsooth want courage
 Because we feel compassion for our shoulders,
 Nor would be beaten till our teeth drop out.
 But I a magic incantation know,
 Devised by Orpheus, which hath such effect,
 That of its own accord the brand shall pierce
 The skull of him, the one-eyed son of earth.

ULY. Long have I known ye are by nature such ;
 But more than ever do I know you now.
 On my own friends I therefore must rely.
 Yet if thou hast no vigour in that arm,
 Exhort my drooping friends to act with valour
 And let thy counsels aid the bold emprise. [*Exit ULYSSES.*]

CHOR. Such be my province : we this Carian's life
Will hazard. But my counsels shall induce them
To burn the Cyclops. Ho ! with courage whirl
The brand, delay not to scorch out the eye
Of him who banquets on the stranger's flesh.
With fire assail the savage, pierce the front
Of Ætna's shepherd, lest, with anguish stung,
On you he perpetrate some deed of horror.

POL. [*within.*] Ah me ! by burning coals I am deprived
Of eyesight.

CHOR. That was a melodious pæan :
To me, O Cyclops, sing th' enchanting strain.

POLYPHEME, CHORUS.

POL. Ah, how am I insulted and destroyed !
Yet shall ye never from this hollow rock
Escape triumphant, O ye things of nought :
For in my station rooted, where this cleft
Opens a door, will I spread forth my hands
And stop your passage !

CHOR. Ha ! what means these outcries,
O Cyclops ?

POL. I am ruined.

CHOR. You appear
To have much been abused.

POL. Deplorably.

CHOR. When fuddled, did you fall 'mid burning coals ?

POL. Noman hath ruined me.

CHOR. To you then no one
Hath offered any wrong.

POL. These lids hath Noman
Deprived of sight.

CHOR. You therefore are not blind.

POL. Would thou couldst see as little.

CHOR. How can no man
Put out your eye ?

POL. Thou art disposed to jest.
But where is Noman ?

CHOR. He is nowhere, Cyclops.

POL. That execrable stranger, mark me well,
Is author of my ruin, who produced
The fraudulent draught, and burned my visual nerves.

CHOR. Wine is invincible.

POL. By all the gods,
Answer me I conjure you ; did they fly,
Or are they here within ?

CHOR. They on the top
Of yonder rock which screens them from your reach,
In silence take their stand.

POL. But on which side ?

CHOR. Your right.

POL. Where, where ?

CHOR. Upon that very rock.

Have you yet caught them ?

POL. To mischance succeeds

Mischance ; I have fallen down and cracked my skull.

CHOR. They 'scape you now.

POL. Ye misinformed me sure ;

They are not here.

CHOR. I say not that they are.

POL. Where then ?

CHOR. They wheel around you on your left.

POL. Ah me ! I am derided, ye but mock

At my affliction.

CHOR. They are there no longer :

But Noman stands before you.

POL. O thou villain,

Where art thou ?

ULYSSES, POLYPHEME, CHORUS.

ULY. Keeping cautiously aloof,

Thus I, Ulysses, guard my threatened life.

POL. What saidst thou ? Wherefore hast thou changed
thy name

T' assume a new one ?

ULY. Me my father named

Ulysses. It was destined you should suffer

A just requital for your impious feast ;

For I in vain had with consuming flames

Laid Ilion waste, had I forborne t' avenge

On you the murder of my valiant friends.

POL. Now is that ancient oracle, alas !

Accomplished, which foretold, that I by thee,

On thy return from Troy, should be deprived

Of sight : but that thou also for a deed

So cruel, shalt be punished, and full long

Endure the beating of tempestuous waves.

ULY. Go weep, my actions justify these words.

But to the shore I haste ; and to my country

Will steer the vessel o'er Sicilia's waves.

POL. Thou shalt not ; with this fragment of the rock

Hurled at thy head, thee and thy perjured crew

Will I demolish : for I yet, though blind,

Can mount the cliff which overhangs the port,

And in its wonted crannies fix my steps.

CHOR. But we, blest partners in Ulysses' voyage,

Henceforth the laws of Bacchus will obey.

HELEN.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

HELEN.

TEUCER.

CHORUS OF GRECIAN DAMES

(HELEN'S ATTENDANTS).

MENELAUS.

FEMALE SERVANT.

MESSANGER.

THEOCLYMENUS.

THEONOE.

CASTOR AND POLLUX.

SCENE.—PROTEUS' TOMB, AT THE ENTRANCE OF THEOCLYMENUS' PALACE IN PHAROS, AN ISLAND AT THE MOUTH OF THE NILE.

HELEN.

BRIGHT are these virgin currents of the Nile
Which water Egypt's soil, and are supplied,
Instead of drops from heaven, by molten snow.
But Proteus, while he lived, of these domains
Was lord, he in the isle of Pharos dwelt,
King of all Ægypt; for his wife he gained
One of the nymphs who haunt the briny deep,
Fair Psamathe, after she left the bed
Of Æacus; she in the palace bore
To him two children, one of them a son
Called Theoclymenus, because his life
Is passed in duteous homage to the gods;
A daughter also of majestic mien,
Her mother's darling, in her infant years
(Eidothea called by her enraptured sire):
But when the blooming maid became mature
For nuptial joys, Theonoe was the name
They gave her; all the counsels of the gods,
The present and the future, well she knew,
Such privilege she from her grandsire Nereus
Inherited. But not to fame unknown
Are Sparta's realm, whence I derive my birth,
And my sire, Tyndarus. There prevails a rumour
That to my mother Leda Jove was borne
On rapid wings, the figure of a swan

Assuming, and by treachery gained admission
 To her embraces, flying from an eagle,
 If we may credit such report. My name
 Is Helen ; but I also will recount
 What woes I have endured ; three goddesses,
 For beauty's prize contending, in the cave
 Of Ida, came to Paris ; Juno, Venus,
 And Pallas, virgin progeny of Jove,
 Requesting him to end their strife, and judge
 Whose charms outshone her rivals. But proposing
 For a reward, my beauty (if the name
 Of beauty suit this inauspicious form)
 And promising in marriage to bestow me
 On Paris, Venus conquered : for the swain
 Of Ida, leaving all his herds behind,
 Expecting to receive me for his bride,
 To Sparta came. But Juno, whose defeat
 Fired with resentment her indignant soul,
 Our nuptials frustrated ; for to the arms
 Of royal Priam's son, she gave not me,
 But in my semblance formed a living image
 Composed of ether. Paris falsely deemed
 That he possessed me ; from that time these ills
 Have been increased by the decrees of Jove,
 For he with war hath visited the realms
 Of Greece, and Phrygia's miserable sons,
 That he might lighten from th' unrighteous swarms
 Of its inhabitants the groaning earth,
 And on the bravest of the Grecian chiefs
 Confer renown. While in the Phrygian war,
 As the reward of their victorious arms,
 I to the host of Greece have been displayed,
 Though absent, save in likeness and in name.
 But Mercury, receiving me in folds
 Of air, and covering with a cloud (for Jove
 Was not unmindful of me), in this house
 Of royal Proteus, who of all mankind
 Was in his judgment the most virtuous, placed me,
 That undefiled I might preserve the bed
 Of Menelaus. I indeed am here ;
 But with collected troops my hapless lord
 Pursues the ravisher to Ilion's towers.
 Beside Scamander's stream hath many a chief
 Died in my cause ; but I, who have endured
 All these afflictions, am a public curse ; —
 For 'tis supposed, that treacherous to my lord,
 I have through Greece blown up the flames of war.
 Why then do I prolong my life ? these words
 I heard from Mercury : " That I again

In Sparta, with my husband shall reside,
 When he discovers that I never went
 To Troy :” he therefore counselled me to keep
 A spotless chastity. While Proteus viewed
 The solar beams, I from the nuptial yoke
 Still lived exempt ; but since the darksome grave
 Hath covered his remains, the royal son
 Of the deceased solicits me to wed him :
 But honouring my first husband, at this tomb
 Of Proteus, I a suppliant kneel, to him,
 To him I sue, to guard my nuptial couch,
 That if through Greece I bear a name assailed
 By foul aspersions, no unseemly deed
 May cover me with real infamy.

TEUCER, HELEN.

TEU. Who rules this fortress ? such a splendid dome
 With royal porticos and blazoned roofs
 Seems worthy of a Plutus for its lord.
 But, O ye gods, what vision ! I behold
 That hateful woman who hath ruined me,
 And all the Greeks. Heaven’s vengeance on thy head !
 Such a resemblance bear’st thou to that Helen,
 That if I were not in a foreign land,
 I with this stone would smite thee : thou shouldst bleed
 For being like Jove’s daughter.

HEL. Wretched man,
 Whoe’er you are, why do you hate me thus
 Because of her misfortunes ?

TEU. I have erred
 In giving way to such unseemly rage.
 All Greece abhors Jove’s daughter. But forgive me,
 O woman, for the words which I have uttered.

HEL. Say who you are, and from what land you come ?

TEU. One of that miserable race the Greeks.

HEL. No wonder is it then, if you detest
 The Spartan Helen. But to me declare,
 Who are you, whence, and from what father sprung ?

TEU. My name is Teucer, Telamon my sire ;
 The land which nurtured me is Salamis.

HEL. But wherefore do you wander o’er these meads
 Laved by the Nile ?

TEU. I from my native land
 Am banished.

HEL. You, alas ! must needs be wretched.
 Who drove you thence ?

TEU. My father Telamon.
 What friend canst thou hold dearer ?

HEL. For what cause

Were you to exile doomed? your situation
Is most calamitous.

TEU. My brother Ajax,
Who died at Troy, was author of my ruin.

HEL. How? by your sword deprived of life?

TEU. He fell,
On his own blade, and perished.

HEL. Was he mad?
Who could act thus whose intellects are sound?

TEU. Know'st thou Achilles, Peleus' son?

HEL. He erst,
I heard, to Helen as a suitor came.

TEU. He, at his death, his comrades left to strive
Which should obtain his arms.

HEL. But why was this
Hurtful to Ajax?

TEU. When another won
Those arms, he gave up life.

HEL. Do your afflictions
Rise from his fate?

TEU. Because I died not with him.

HEL. O stranger, went you then to Troy's famed city?

TEU. And having shared in laying waste its bulwarks,
I also perished.

HEL. Have the flames consumed,
And utterly destroyed them?

TEU. Not a trace
Of those proud walls is now to be discerned.

HEL. Through thee, O Helen, do the Phrygians perish.

TEU. The Greeks too: for most grievous are the mischiefs
Which have been wrought.

HEL. What length of time's elapsed
Since Troy was sacked?

TEU. Seven times the fruitful year
Hath almost turned around her lingering wheel.

HEL. But how much longer did your host remain
Before those bulwarks?

TEU. Many a tedious moon;
There full ten years were spent.

HEL. And have ye taken
That Spartan dame?

TEU. By her dishevelled hair,
Th' adult'ress, Menelaus dragged away.

HEL. Did you behold that object of distress,
Or speak you from report?

TEU. These eyes as clearly
Witnessed the whole, as I now view thy face.

HEL. Be cautious, lest for her ye should mistake
Some well-formed semblance which the gods have sent.

TEU. Talk if thou wilt on any other subject ;
No more of her.

HEL. Believe you this opinion
To be well-grounded ?

TEU. With these eyes I saw her,
And she e'en now is present to my soul.

HEL. Have Menelaus and his consort reached
Their home.

TEU. They are not in the Argive land,
Nor on Eurotas' banks.

HEL. Alas ! alas !
The tale you have recounted, is to her
Who hears you, an event most inauspicious.

TEU. He and his consort, both they say are dead.

HEL. Did not the Greeks in one large squadron sail ?

TEU. Yes ; but a storm dispersed their shattered fleet.

HEL. Where were they, in what seas ?

TEU. They at that time
Through the mid waves of the Ægean deep
Were passing.

HEL. Can none tell if Menelaus
Escaped this tempest ?

TEU. No man ; but through Greece
'Tis rumoured he is dead.

HEL. I am undone.
Is Thestius' daughter living ?

TEU. Mean'st thou Leda ?
She with the dead is numbered.

HEL. Did the shame
Of Helen cause her wretched mother's death ?

TEU. Around her neck, 'tis said the noble dame
Entwined the gliding noose.

HEL. But live the sons
Of Tyndarus, or are they too now no more ?

TEU. They are, and are not, dead ; for two accounts
Are propagated.

HEL. Which is best confirmed ?
O wretched me !

TEU. Some say that they are gods
Under the semblance of two radiant stars.

HEL. Well have you spoken. But what else is rumoured ?

TEU. That on account of their lost sister's guilt
They died by their own swords. But of these themes
Enough : I wish not to renew my sorrows.
But O assist me in the great affairs
On which I to these royal mansions came,
Wishing to see the prophetess Theonoe,
And learn, from Heaven's oracular response,
How I may steer my vessel with success

To Cyprus' isle, where Phœbus hath foretold
That I shall dwell, and on the walls I rear
Bestow the name of Salamis, yet mindful
Of that dear country I have left behind.

HEL. This will your voyage of itself explain :
But fly from these inhospitable shores,
Ere Proteus' son, the ruler of this land,
Behold you : fly, for he is absent now
Pursuing with his hounds the savage prey.
He slays each Grecian stranger who becomes
His captive : ask not why, for I am silent ;
And what could it avail you to be told ?

TEU. O woman, most discreetly hast thou spoken ;
Thy kindness may the righteous gods repay !
For though thy person so resemble Helen,
Thou hast a soul unlike that worthless dame.
Perdition seize her ; never may she reach
The current of Eurotas : but mayst thou,
Most generous woman, be for ever blest. [*Exit TEUCER.*]

HEL. Plunged as I am 'midst great and piteous woes,
How shall I frame the plaintive strain, what Muse
With tears, or doleful elegies, invoke ?

ODE.

I. 1.

Ye syrens, winged daughters of the earth,
Come and attune the sympathetic string,
Expressive now no more of mirth,
To soothe my griefs, the flute of Libya bring ;
Record the tortures which this bosom rend,
And echo back my elegiac strains :
Proserpine next will I invoke, to send
Numbers adapted to her votary's pains ;
So shall her dark abode, while many a tear I shed,
Waft the full dirge to soothe th' illustrious dead.

CHORUS, HELEN.

CHORUS.

I. 2.

Near the cerulean margin of our streams
I stood, and on the tufted herbage spread
My purple vestments in those beams
Which from his noontide orb Hyperion shed,
When on a sudden from the waving reeds
I heard a plaintive and unwelcome sound
Of bitter lamentation ; o'er the meads
Groans inarticulate were poured around :
Beneath the rocky cave, dear scene of past delight,
Some Naiad thus bewails Pan's hasty flight.

HELEN.

II. 1.

Ye Grecian nymphs, whom those barbarians caught,
And from your native land reluctant bore,
The tidings which yon sailor brought
Call forth these tears; for Ilion is no more,
By him of Ida, that predicted flame
Destroyed; through me, alas! have myriads bled,
If not through me, through my detested name.
By th' ignominious noose is Leda dead
Who my imaginary guilt deplored;
And doomed by the relentless Fates in vain
To tedious wanderings, my unhappy lord
At length hath perished 'midst the billowy main:
The twin protectors of their native land,
Castor and Pollux, from all human eyes
Are vanished, they have left Eurotas' strand,
And fields, in playful strife where each young wrestler vies.

CHORUS.

II. 2.

My royal mistress, your disastrous fate
With many a groan and fruitless tear I mourn.
I from that hour your sorrows date
When amorous Jove on snowy pinions borne,
In form a swan, by Leda was carest.
Is there an evil you have not endured?
Your mother is no more, through you unblest
Are Jove's twin sons. Nor have your vows procured
Of your dear country the enchanting sight
A rumour too through various realms hath spread,
Caught by the envious vulgar with delight,
Assigning you to the barbarian's bed.
Amid the waves, far from the wished-for shore,
Your husband hath been buried in the main.
You shall behold your native walls no more
Nor under burnished roofs your wonted state maintain.

HELEN.

III.

What Phrygian artist on the top of Ide,
Or vagrant of a Grecian line,
Felled that inauspicious pine,
To frame the bark which Paris o'er the tide
Dared with barbaric oars to guide,

When to my palace, in an evil hour
 Caught by beauty's magic power,
 He came to seize me for his bride?
 But crafty Venus, authoress of these broils,
 Marched thither, leagued with death, t' annoy
 Triumphant Greece and vanquished Troy,
 (Wretch that I am, consumed with endless toils!)
 And Juno seated on her golden throne,
 Consort of thundering Jove,
 Sent Hermes from the realms above,
 Who found me, when I carelessly had strewn
 Leaves plucked from roses in my vest,
 As Minerva's votary drest;
 He bore me through the paths of air
 To this loathed, this dreary land,
 Called Greece, and Priam's friends the strife to share,
 And roused to bloody deeds each rival band;
 Where Simois' current glides, my name
 Hence is marked with groundless shame.

CHOR. Your woes I know are grievous: but to bear
 With tranquil mind the necessary ills
 Of life, is most expedient.

HEL. To what ills
 Have I been subject, O my dear companions!
 Did not my mother, as a prodigy
 Which wondering mortals gaze at, bring me forth?
 For neither Grecian nor barbaric dame
 Till then produced an egg, in which her children
 Enveloped lay, as they report, from Jove
 Leda engendered. My whole life and all
 That hath befallen me, but conspires to form
 One series of miraculous events;
 To Juno some, and to my beauty some,
 Are owing. Would to Heaven, that, like a tablet
 Whose picture is effaced, I could exchange—
 This form for one less comely, since the Greeks
 Forgetting those abundant gifts showered down
 By prosperous Fortune which I now possess,
 Think but of what redounds not to my honour,
 And still remember my ideal shame.
 Whoever therefore, with one single species
 Of misery is afflicted by the gods,
 Although the weight of Heaven's chastising hand
 Be grievous, may with fortitude endure
 Such visitation: but by many woes
 Am I oppressed, and first of all exposed
 To slanderous tongues, although I ne'er have erred.
 It were a lesser evil e'en to sin
 Then be suspected falsely. Then the gods,

'Midst men of barbarous manners, placed me far
 From my loved country : torn from every friend,
 I languish here, to servitude consigned
 Although of free born race : for 'midst barbarians
 Are all enslaved but one, their haughty lord.
 My fortunes had this single anchor left,
 Perchance my husband might at length arrive
 To snatch me from my woes ; but he, alas !
 Is now no more, my mother too is dead,
 And I am deemed her murd'ress, though unjustly,
 Yet am I branded with this foul reproach ;
 And she who was the glory of our house,
 My daughter in the virgin state grown grey,
 Still droops unwedded : my illustrious brothers,
 Castor and Pollux, called the sons of Jove,
 Are now no more. But I impute my death,
 Crushed as I am by all these various woes,
 Not to my own misdeeds, but to the power
 Of adverse fortune only : this one danger
 There yet remains, if at my native land
 I should again arrive, they will confine me
 In a close dungeon, thinking me that Helen
 Who dwelt in Ilion, till she thence was borne
 By Menelaus. Were my husband living,
 We might have known each other, by producing
 Those tokens to which none beside are privy :
 But this will never be, nor can he e'er
 Return in safety. To what purpose then
 Do I still lengthen out this wretched being ?
 To what new fortunes am I still reserved ?
 Shall I select a husband, but to vary
 My present ills, to dwell beneath the roof
 Of a barbarian, at luxurious boards
 With wealth abounding, seated ? for the dame
 Whom wedlock couples with the man she hates
 Death is the best expedient. But with glory
 How shall I die ? the fatal noose appears
 To be so base, that e'en in slaves 'tis held
 Unseemly thus to perish ; in the poniard
 There's somewhat great and generous. But to me
 Delays are useless : welcome instant death :
 Into such depth of misery am I plunged.
 For beauty renders other women blest, -
 But hath to me the source of ruin proved.

CHOR. O Helen, whosoe'er the stranger be
 Who hither came, believe not that the whole
 Of what he said, is truth.

HEL. But in plain terms
 Hath he announced my dearest husband's death.

CHOR. The false assertions which prevail, are many.

HEL. Clear is the language in which honest Truth
Loves to express herself.

CHOR. You are inclined
Rather to credit inauspicious tidings
Than those which are more favourable.

HEL. By fears
Encompassed, am I hurried to despair.

CHOR. What hospitable treatment have you found
Beneath these roofs?

HEL. All here, except the man
Who seeks to wed me, are my friends.

CHOR. You know
How then to act : leave this sepulchral gloom,

HEL. What are the counsels, or the cheering words
You wish to introduce?

CHOR. Go in, and question
The daughter of the Nereid, her who knows
All hidden truths, Theonoe, if your lord
Yet live, or view the solar beams no more :
And when you have learnt this, as suit your fortunes
Indulge your joys, or pour forth all your tears :
But ere you know aught fully, what avail
Your sorrows ? therefore listen to my words ;
Leaving this tomb, attend the maid : from her
Shall you know all. But why should you look farther
When truth is in these mansions to be found ?
With you the doors I'll enter ; we together
The royal virgin's oracles will hear.
For 'tis a woman's duty to exert
Her utmost efforts in a woman's cause.

HEL. My friends, your wholesome counsels I approve :
But enter ye these doors, that ye, within
The palace, my calamities may hear

CHOR. You summon her who your commands obeys
Without reluctance.

HEL. Woeful day ! ah me,
What lamentable tidings shall I hear ?

CHOR. Forbear these plaintive strains, my dearest queen,
Nor with presaging soul anticipate
Evils to come.

HEL. What hath my wretched lord
Endured ? Doth he yet view the light, the sun
Borne in his radiant chariot, and the paths
Of all the starry train ? Or hath he shared
The common lot of mortals, is he plunged
Among the dead, beneath th' insatiate grave ?

CHOR. O construe what time yet may bring to pass
In the most favourable terms.

HEL. On thee
I call to testify, and thee adjure,
Eurotas, on whose verdant margin grow
The waving reeds : O tell me, if my lord
Be dead, as fame avers.

CHOR. Why do you utter
These incoherent ditties ?

HEL. Round my neck
The deadly noose will I entwine, or drive
With my own hand a poinard through my breast ;
For I was erst the cause of bloody strife ;
But now am I a victim, to appease
The wrath of those three goddesses who strove
On Ida's mount, when 'midst the stalls where fed
His lowing herds, the son of Priam waked
The sylvan reed, to celebrate my beauty.

CHOR. Cause these averted ills, ye gods, to light
On other heads ; but, O my royal mistress,
May you be happy.

HEL. Thou, O wretched Troy,
To crimes which thou hast ne'er committed, ow'st
Thy ruin, and those horrible disasters
Thou hast endured. For as my nuptial gifts,
Hath Venus caused an intermingled stream
Of blood and tears to flow, she, griefs to griefs
And tears to tears hath added ; all these sufferings
Have been the miserable Ilion's lot.
Of their brave sons the mothers were bereft
The virgin sisters of the mighty dead
Strewed their shorn tresses on Scamander's banks,
While, by repeated shrieks, victorious Greece
Her woes expressing, smote her laurelled head,
And with her nails deep furrowing tore her cheeks.
Happy Calisto, thou Arcadian nymph
Who didst ascend the couch of Jove, transformed
To a four-footed savage, far more blest
Art thou than she to whom I owe my birth :
For thou beneath the semblance of a beast,
Thy tender limbs with shaggy hide o'erspread,
And glaring with stern visage, by that change
Didst end thy griefs. She too whom Dian drove
Indignant from her choir, that hind whose horns
Were tipped with gold, the bright Titanian maid,
Daughter of Merops, to her beauty owed
That transformation : but my charms have ruined
Both Troy and the unhappy Grecian host.

[*Exeunt HELEN and CHORUS.*]

MENELAUS.

O Pelops, in the strife on Pisa's field,
Who didst outstrip the fiery steeds that whirled
The chariot of Oenomaus, would to Heaven
That when thy severed limbs before the gods
Were at the banquet placed, thou then thy life
Amidst the blest immortal powers hadst closed,
Ere thou my father Atreus didst beget,
Whose issue by his consort *Ærope*
Were Agamemnon and myself, two chiefs
Of high renown. No ostentatious words
Are these ; but such a numerous host, I deem,
As that which we to Ilion's shore conveyed,
Ne'er stemmed the tide before ; these troops their king
Led not by force to combat, but bore rule
O'er Grecian youths his voluntary subjects,
And among these, some heroes, now no more,
May we enumerate ; others from the sea
Who 'scaped with joy, and to their homes returned,
E'en after fame had classed them with the dead.
But I, most wretched, o'er the briny waves
Of ocean wander, since I have o'erthrown
The battlements of Troy, and though I wish
Again to reach my country ; by the gods
Am I esteemed unworthy of such bliss.
E'en to the Libyan deserts have I sailed,
And traversed each inhospitable scene
Of brutal outrage ; still as I approach
My country, the tempestuous winds repel me,
Nor hath a prosperous breeze from Heaven yet filled
My sails, to waft me to the Spartan coast :
And now a shipwrecked, miserable man,
Reft of my friends, I on these shores am cast,
My vessel hath been shivered 'gainst the rocks
Into a thousand fragments : on the keel,
The only part which yet remains entire
Of all that fabric, scarce could I and Helen,
Whom I from Troy have borne, escape with life
Through fortunes unforeseen : but of this land
And its inhabitants, the name I know not :
For with the crowd I blushed to intermingle
Lest they my squalid garments should observe,
Through shame my wants concealing. For the man
Of an exalted station, when assailed
By adverse fortune, having never learned
How to endure calamity, is plunged
Into a state far worse than he whose woes
Have been of ancient date. But pinching need

Torments me : for I have not either food
 Or raiment to protect my shivering frame,
 Which may be guessed from these vile rags I wear
 Cast up from my wrecked vessel : for the sea
 Hath swallowed up my robes, my tissued vests,
 And every ensign of my former state.
 Within the dark recesses of a cave
 Having concealed my wife, that guilty cause
 Of all my woes, and my surviving friends
 Enjoined to guard her, hither am I come.
 Alone, in quest of necessary aid
 For my brave comrades whom I there have left,
 If by my search I haply can obtain it,
 I roam ; but when I viewed this house adorned
 With gilded pinnacles, and gates that speak
 The riches of their owner, I advanced :
 For I have hopes that from this wealthy mansion
 I, somewhat for my sailors, shall obtain.
 But they who want the necessary comforts
 Of life, although they are disposed to aid us,
 Yet have not wherewithal. Ho ! who comes forth
 From yonder gate, my doleful tale to bear
 Into the house ?

FEMALE SERVANT, MENELAUS.

FEMALE SER. Who at the threshold stands ?
 Wilt thou not hence depart, lest thy appearance
 Before these doors give umbrage to our lords ?
 Else shalt thou surely die, because thou cam'st
 From Greece, whose sons shall never hence return.

MEN. Well hast thou spoken, O thou aged dame.
 Wilt thou permit me ? For to thy behests
 Must I submit : but suffer me to speak.

FEMALE SER. Depart : for 'tis my duty to permit
 No Greek to enter this imperial dome.

MEN. Lift not thy hand against me, nor attempt
 To drive me hence by force.

FEMALE SER. Thou wilt not yield
 To my advice, thou therefore art to blame.

MEN. Carry my message to thy lords within.

FEMALE SER. I fear lest somewhat dreadful might ensue,
 Should I repeat your words.

MEN. I hither come
 A shipwrecked man, a stranger, one of those
 Whom all hold sacred.

FEMALE SER. To some other house,
 Instead of this, repair.

MEN. I am determined
 To enter : but comply with my request.

FEMALE SER. Be well assured thou art unwelcome here,
And shalt ere long by force be driven away.

MEN. Alas ! alas ! where are my valiant troops ?

FEMALE SER. Elsewhere, perhaps, thou wert a mighty man ;
But here art thou no longer such.

MEN. O Fortune,
How am I galled with undeserved reproach !

FEMALE SER. Why are those eyelids moist with tears, why
griev'st thou ?

MEN. Because I once was happy.

FEMALE SER. Then depart,
And mingle social tears with those thou lov'st.

MEN. But what domain is this, to whom belong
These royal mansions ?

FEMALE SER. Proteus here resides ;
This land is Egypt.

MEN. Egypt ? wretched me !
Ah, whither have I sailed !

FEMALE SER. But for what cause
Scorn'st thou the race of Nile ?

MEN. I scorn them not :
My own disastrous fortunes I bewail.

FEMALE SER. Many are wretched, thou in this respect
Art nothing singular.

MEN. Is he, the king
Thou speak'st of, here within ?

FEMALE SER. To him belongs
This tomb ; his son is ruler of this land.

MEN. But where is he : abroad, or in the palace ?

FEMALE SER. He's not within : but to the Greeks he bears
The greatest enmity.

MEN. Whence rose this hate,
Productive of such bitter fruits to me ?

FEMALE SER. Beneath these roofs Jove's daughter Helen
dwells.

MEN. What mean'st thou ? Ha ! what words with wonder
fraught
Are these which thou hast uttered ? O repeat them.

FEMALE SER. The child of Tyndarus, she who in the realm
Of Sparta erst abode.

MEN. Whence came she hither ?
How can this be ?

FEMALE SER. From Lacedæmon's realm.

MEN. When ? Hath my wife been torn from yonder cave ?

FEMALE SER. Before the Greeks, O stranger, went to Troy
Retreat then from these mansions, for within
Hath happened a calamitous event,
By which the palace is disturbed. Thou com'st
Unseasonably, and if the king surprise thee,

Instead of hospitable treatment, death
Must be thy portion. To befriend the Greeks
Though well inclined, yet thee have I received
With these harsh words, because I fear the monarch.

[Exit FEMALE SERVANT.]

MEN. What shall I say? For I, alas! am told
Of present sorrows added to the past.
Come I not hither, after having borne
From vanquished Troy my consort, whom I left
Within yon cave well guarded? Yet here dwells
Another Helen, whom that woman called
Jove's daughter. Lives there on the banks of Nile
A man who bears the sacred name of Jove?
For in the heavens there's only one. What country,
But that where glides Eurotas' stream beset
With waving reeds, is Sparta? Tyndarus' name
Suits him alone. But is there any land
Synonymous with Lacedæmon's realm,
And that of Troy? I know not how to solve
This doubt; for there are many, it appears,
In various regions of the world, who bear
Like appellations; city corresponds
With city; woman borrows that of woman;
Nor must we therefore wonder. Yet again
Here will I stay, though danger be announced
By yonder aged servant at the door:
For there is no man so devoid of pity
As not to give me food, when he the name
Of Menelaus hears. That dreadful fire
By which the Phrygian bulwarks were consumed
Is memorable, and I who kindled it
Am known in every land. I'll therefore wait
Until the master of this house return.
But I have two expedients, and will practise
That which my safety shall require; of soul
Obdurate, if he prove, in my wrecked bark
Can I conceal myself, but if the semblance
Which he puts on, be mild, I for relief
From these my present miseries, will apply.
But this of all the woes that I endure
Is the most grievous, that from other kings
I, though a king myself, should be reduced
To beg my food: but thus hath Fate ordained.
Nor is it my assertion, but a maxim
Among the wise established, that there's nought
More powerful than the dread behests of Fate.

HELEN, CHORUS, MENELAUS.

CHOR. I heard what yon prophetic maid foretold,
 Who in the palace did unfold
 The oracles ; that to the shades profound
 Of Erebus, beneath the ground
 Interred, not yet hath Menelaus ta'en
 His passage : on the stormy main
 Still tossed, he cannot yet approach the strand,
 The haven of the Spartan land :
 The chief, who now his vagrant life bewails,
 Without a friend, unfurls his sails,
 From Ilion's realm to every distant shore
 Borne o'er the deep with luckless oar.

HEL. I to this hallowed tomb again repair,
 Now I have heard the grateful tidings uttered
 By sage Theonoe, who distinctly knows
 All that hath happened ? for she says my lord
 Is living, and yet views the solar beams :
 But after passing o'er unnumbered straits
 Of ocean, to a vagrant's wretched life
 Full long inured, on these Ægyptian coasts,
 When he his toils hath finished, shall arrive.
 Yet there is one thing more, which she hath left
 Unmentioned, whether he shall come with safety.
 This question I neglected to propose,
 O'erjoyed when she informed me he yet lives ;
 She also adds, that he is near the land,
 From his wrecked ship, with his few friends, cast forth,
 O mayst thou come at length ; for ever dear
 To me wilt thou arrive. Ha ! who is that ?
 Am not I caught, through some deceitful scheme
 Of Proteus' impious son, in hidden snares ?
 Like a swift courser, or the madding priestess
 Of Bacchus, shall I not with hasty step
 Enter the tomb, because his looks are fierce
 Who rushes on, and strives to overtake me ?

MEN. On thee I call, who to the yawning trench
 Around that tomb, and blazing altars hiest
 Precipitate. Stay : wherefore dost thou fly ?
 With what amazement doth thy presence strike
 And almost leave me speechless !

HEL. O my friends,
 I suffer violence ; for from the tomb
 I by this man am dragged, who to the king
 Will give me, from whose nuptial couch I fled.

MEN. We are no pirates, nor the ministers
 Of lustful villany.

HEL. Yet is the vest
You wear unseemly.

MEN. Stay thy rapid flight,
Dismiss thy fears.

HEL. I stop, now I have reached
This hallowed spot.

MEN. Say, woman, who thou art ;
What face do I behold ?

HEL. But who are you ?
For I by the same reasons am induced

To ask this question.

MEN. Never did I see
A greater likeness.

HEL. O ye righteous gods !
For 'tis a privilege the gods alone

Confer, to recognize our long-lost friends,

MEN. Art thou a Grecian or a foreign dame ?

HEL. Of Greece: but earnestly I wish to know
Whence you derive your origin.

MEN. In thee
A wonderful resemblance I discern
Of Helen.

HEL. Menelaus' very features
These eyes in you behold, still at a loss
Am I for words t' express my thoughts.

MEN. Full clearly
Hast thou discovered a most wretched man.

HEL. O to thy consort's arms at length restored !

MEN. To what a consort ? O forbear to touch
My garment !

HEL. E'en the same, whom to your arms,
A noble bride, my father Tyndarus gave.

MEN. Send forth, O Hecate, thou orb of light,
Some more benignant spectre.

HEL. You in me
Behold not one of those who minister

At Hecate's abhorred nocturnal rites.

MEN. Nor am I sure the husband of two wives.

HEL. Say, to whom else in wedlock are you joined ?

MEN. To her who lies concealed in yonder cave,

The prize I hither bring from vanquished Troy.

HEL. You have no wife but me.

MEN. If I retain

My reason yet, these eyes are sure deceived.

HEL. Seem you not then, while me you thus behold,
To view your real consort ?

MEN. Though your person

Resemble hers, no positive decision

Can I presume to form.

HEL. Observe me well,
And mark wherein we differ. Who can judge
With greater certainty than you?

MEN. Thou bear'st
Her semblance, I confess.

HEL. Who can inform you
Better than your own eyes?

MEN. What makes me doubt
Is this; because I have another wife.

HEL. To the domains of Troy I never went:
It was my image only.

MEN. Who can fashion
Such bodies, with the power of sight endued?

HEL. Composed of ether, you a consort have,
Heaven's workmanship.

MEN. Wrought by what plastic god?
For the events thou speak'st of are most wondrous.

HEL. Lest Paris should obtain me, this exchange
Was made by Juno.

MEN. How couldst thou be here,
At the same time, and in the Phrygian realm?

HEL. The name, but not the body, can be present
At once in many places.

MEN. O release me;
For I came hither in an evil hour.

HEL. Will you then leave me here, and bear away
That shadow of a wife?

MEN. Yet, O farewell,
Because thou art like Helen.

HEL. I'm undone:
For though my husband I again have found,
Yet shall not I possess him.

MEN. My conviction,
From all those grievous toils I have endured
At Ilion, I derive, and not from thee.

HEL. Ah, who is there more miserable than I am?
My dearest friends desert me: I, to Greece,
To my dear native land, shall ne'er return.

MESSENGER, MENELAUS, HELEN, CHORUS.

MES. After a tedious search, O Menelaus,
At length have I with difficulty found you,
But not till over all the wide extent
Of this barbaric region I had wandered;
Sent by the comrades whom you left behind.

MEN. Have ye been plundered then by the barbarians?

MES. A most miraculous event hath happened,
Yet less astonishing by far in name
Than in reality.

MEN. Speak, for thou bring'st
Important tidings by this breathless haste.

MES. My words are these : in vain have you endured
Unnumbered toils.

MEN. Those thou bewail'st are ills
Of ancient date. But what hast thou to tell me ?

MES. Borne to the skies your consort from our sight
Hath vanished, in the heavens is she concealed,
Leaving the cave in which we guarded her,
When she these words had uttered : " O ye sons
Of hapless Phrygia, and of Greece : for me
Beside Scamander's conscious stream ye died,
Through Juno's arts, because ye falsely deemed
Helen by Phrygian Paris was possess'd :
But after having here remained on earth
My stated time, observing the decrees
Of Fate, I to my sire the liquid ether
Return : but Tyndarus' miserable daughter,
Though guiltless, hath unjustly been accused."
Daughter of Leda hail ! wert thou then here ?
While I as if thou to the starry paths
Hadst mounted, through my ignorance proclaimed
Thou from this world on rapid wings wert borne.
But I no longer will allow thee thus
To sport with the afflictions of thy friends ;
For in thy cause thy lord and his brave troops
On Ilion's coast already have endured
Abundant toils.

MEN. These are the very words
She uttered ; and by what ye both aver
The truth is ascertained. O happy day
Which gives thee to my arms !

HEL. My dearest lord,
O Menelaus, it is long indeed
Since I have seen you : but joy comes at last.
My friends, transported I receive my lord
Whom I once more with these fond arms enfold,
After the radiant chariot of the sun
Hath oft the world illumined.

MEN. I embrace
Thee too : but having now so much to say
I know not with what subject to begin.

HEL. Joy raises my exulting crest, these tears
Are tears of ecstasy, around your neck
My arms I fling with transport, O my husband,
O sight most wished for !

MEN. I acquit the Fates.
Since Jove's and Leda's daughter I possess,
On whom her brothers borne on milk-white steeds

Erst showered abundant blessings, when the torch
Was kindled at our jocund nuptial rite ;
Though from my palace her the gods conveyed.
But evil now converted into good
To me thy husband hath at length restored
My long-lost consort : grant, O bounteous Heaven,
That I these gifts of fortune may enjoy.

HEL. May you enjoy them, for my vows concur
With yours ; nor, of us two, can one be wretched
Without the other. O my friends, I groan
No longer, I no longer shed the tear
For my past woes : my husband I possess
Whom I from Troy expected to return
Full many, many years.

MEN. I still am thine,
And thee with these fond arms again enfold.
But oft the chariot of the sun revolved
Through his diurnal orbit, ere the frauds
Of Juno I discerned. Yet more from joy
Than from affliction rise the tears I shed.

HEL. What shall I say ? what mortal could presume
E'er to have hoped for such a blest event ?
An unexpected visitant once more
I clasp you to my bosom.

MEN. And I thee
Who didst appear to sail for Ida's town,
And Ilion's wretched turrets. By the gods,
Inform me, I conjure thee, by what means
Thou from my palace hither wert conveyed.

HEL. Alas ! you to the source of all my woes
Ascend, and search into most bitter tidings.

MEN. Speak : for whate'er hath been ordained by Heaven
Ought to be published.

HEL. I abhor the topic
On which I now am entering.

MEN. Yet relate
All that thou know'st ; for pleasing 'tis to hear
Of labours that are past.

HEL. I never went
To that barbarian youth's adulterous couch
By the swift oar impelled : but winged love
Those hapless spousals formed.

MEN. What god, what fate
Hath torn thee from thy country ?

HEL. O my lord,
The son of Jove hath placed me on the banks
Of Nile.

MEN. With what amazement do I hear
This wondrous tale of thy celestial guide !

HEL. Oft have I wept, and still the tear bedews
These eyes : to Juno, wife of Jove, I owe
My ruin.

MEN. Wherefore wished she to have heaped
Mischiefs on thee ?

HEL. Ye sources of whate'er
To me hath been most dreadful, O ye baths
And fountains, where those goddesses adorned
Their rival beauties, from whose influence rose
That judgment !

MEN. Were those curses on thy head
By Juno showered, that judgment to requite ?

HEL. To rescue me from Venus.

MEN. What thou mean'st
Inform me.

HEL. Who to Paris had engaged——

MEN. O wretched woman !

HEL. Wretched, wretched me !
Thus did she waft me to th' Egyptian coast.

MEN. Then in thy stead to him that image gave,
As thou inform'st me.

HEL. But alas ! what woes
Thence visited our wretched house ! ah mother !
Ah me !

MEN. What sayst thou ?

HEL. Leda is no more.
Around her neck she fixed the deadly noose
On my account, through my unhappy nuptials
O'erwhelmed with foul disgrace.

MEN. Alas ! But lives
Hermione our daughter ?

HEL. Yet unwedded,
Yet childless, O my husband, she bewails
My miserable 'spousals, my disgrace.

MEN. O Paris, who hast utterly o'erthrown
All my devoted house, these curst events,
Both thee, and myriads of the Grecian troops
With brazen arms refulgent, have destroyed.

HEL. But from my country in an evil hour,
From my loved native city, and from you,
Me hath the goddess driven, a wretch accursed
In that I left our home, and bridal bed,
Which yet I left not, for those base espousals.

CHOR. If ye hereafter meet with happier fortune,
This may atone for all ye have endured
Already.

MEN. To me too, O Menelaus,
Communicate a portion of that joy
Which I perceive, but know not whence it springs.

MEN. Thou too, old man, shalt in our conference share.

MES. Was not she then the cause of all the woes
Endured at Troy?

MEN. Not she: we were deceived
By those immortal Powers, whose plastic hand
Moulded a cloud into that baleful image.

MES. What words are these you utter? have we toiled
In vain, and only for an empty cloud?

MEN. These deeds were wrought by Juno, and the strife
'Twixt the three goddesses.

MES. But is this woman
Indeed your wife?

MEN. E'en she: and thou for this
On my assertion safely mayst depend.

MES. My daughter, O how variable is Jove,
And how inscrutable! for he with ease
Whirls us around, now here, now there; one suffers
Full many toils; another, who ne'er knew
What sorrow was, is swallowed up at once
In swift perdition, nor in Fortune's gifts
A firm and lasting tenure doth enjoy.
Thou and thy husband have endured a war,
Of slander thou, but he of pointed spears:
For by the tedious labours he endured
He nothing could obtain, but now obtains
The greatest and the happiest of all boons,
Which comes to him unsought. Thou hast not shamed
Thy aged father, and the sons of Jove,
Nor acted as malignant rumour speaks.
I now renew thy hymeneal rite,
And still am mindful of the torch I bore,
Running before the steeds, when in a car
Thou with this favoured bridegroom wert conveyed
From thy paternal mansion's happy gates.
For worthless is that servant who neglects
His master's interests, nor partakes their joys,
Nor feels for their afflictions. I was born
Indeed a slave, yet I with generous slaves
Would still be numbered, for although the name
I bear is abject, yet my soul is free.
Far better this, than if I had at once
Suffered two evils, a corrupted heart,
And vile subjection to another's will.

MEN. Courage, old man: for thou hast borne my
shield,
And in my cause endured unnumbered toils,
Sharing my dangers: now partake my joys;
Go tell the friends I left, what thou hast seen,
And our auspicious fortunes: on the shore

Bid them remain, till our expected conflict
Is finished ; and observe how we may sail
From this loathed coast ; that, with our better fortune
Conspiring, we, if possible, may 'scape
From these barbarians.

MES. Your commands, O king,
Shall be obeyed. But I perceive how vain
And how replete with falsehood is the voice
Of prophets : no dependence can be placed
Upon the flames that from the altar rise,
Or on the voices of the feathered choir.
It is the height of folly to suppose
That birds are able to instruct mankind.
For Calchas, to the host, nor by his words
Nor signs, declared, "I for a cloud behold
My friends in battle slain." The seer was mute,
And Troy in vain was taken. But perhaps
You will rejoin, "'Twas not the will of Heaven
That he should speak." Why then do we consult
These prophets ? We by sacrifice should ask
For blessings from the gods, and lay aside
All auguries. This vain delusive bait
Was but invented to beguile mankind.
No sluggard e'er grew rich by divination,
The best of seers are Prudence and Discernment.

[Exit MESSENGER.]

CHOR. My sentiments on prophets well accord
With those of this old man. He whom the gods
Th' immortal gods befriend, in his own house
Hath a response that never can mislead.

HEL. So be it. All thus far is well. But how
You came with safety, O unhappy man,
From Troy, 'twill nought avail for me to know ;
Yet with the sorrows of their friends, have friends
A wish to be acquainted.

MEN. Thou hast asked
A multitude of questions in one short
And blended sentence. Why should I recount
To thee our sufferings on the Ægean deep,
Those treacherous beacons, by the vengeful hand
Of Nauplius kindled on Eubœa's rocks,
The towns of Crete, or in the Libyan realm,
Which I have visited, and the famed heights
Of Perseus ? never could my words assuage
Thy curiosity, and, by repeating
My woes to thee, I should but grieve the more,
And yet a second time those sufferings feel.

HEL. You in your answer have been more discreet
Than I who such a question did propose.

But pass o'er all beside, and only tell me
How long you wandered o'er the briny main.

MEN. Year after year, besides the ten at Troy,
Seven tedious revolutions of the sun.

HEL. The time you speak of, O unhappy man,
Is long indeed : but from those dangers saved
You hither come to bleed.

MEN. What words are these ?
What dost thou mean ? O, how hast thou undone me !

HEL. Fly from these regions with your utmost speed ;
Or he to whom this house belongs will slay you.

MEN. What have I done that merits such a fate ?

HEL. You hither come an unexpected guest,
And are a hindrance to my bridal rite.

MEN. Is there a man then who presumes to wed
My consort ?

HEL. And with arrogance to treat me,
Which I, alas ! have hitherto endured.

MEN. Of private rank, in his own strength alone
Doth he confide, or rules he o'er the land ?

HEL. Lord of this region, royal Proteus' son.

MEN. This is the very riddle which I heard
From yonder female servant.

HEL. At which gate
Of this barbarian palace did you stand ?

MEN. Here, whence I like a beggar was repelled.

HEL. What, did you beg for food ! ah wretched me !

MEN. The fact was thus : though I that abject name
Assumed not.

HEL. You then know, it seems, the whole
About my nuptials.

MEN. This I know : but whether
Thou has escaped th' embraces of the king
I still am uninformed.

HEL. That I have kept
Your bed still spotless, may you rest assured.

MEN. How canst thou prove the fact ? if thou speak
truth
To me, it will give pleasure.

HEL. Do you see,
Close to the tomb, my miserable seat ?

MEN. I on the ground behold a couch : but what
Hast thou to do with that, O wretched woman ?

HEL. Here I a suppliant bowed, that I might 'scape
From those espousals.

MEN. Couldst thou find no altar,
Or dost thou follow the barbarian mode ?

HEL. Equally with the temples of the gods
Will this protect me.

MEN. Is not then my bark
Allowed to waft thee to the Spartan shore?
HEL. Rather the sword than Helen's bridal bed
Awaits you.

MEN. Thus should I of all mankind
Be the most wretched.

HEL. Let not shame prevent
Your 'scaping from this land.

MEN. And leaving thee,
For whom I laid the walls of Ilion waste?

HEL. 'Twere better than to perish in the cause
Of me your consort.

MEN. Such unmanly deeds
As these thou speak'st of would disgrace the chief
Who conquered Troy.

HEL. You cannot slay the king,
Which is perhaps the project you have formed.

MEN. Hath he then such a body as no steel
Can penetrate?

HEL. My reasons you shall know.
But it becomes not a wise man t' attempt
What cannot be performed.

MEN. Shall I submit
My hands in silence to the galling chain?

HEL. You know not how to act in these dire straits
To which we are reduced : but of some plot
Must we avail ourselves.

MEN. 'Twere best to die
In some brave action than without a conflict.

HEL. One only hope of safety yet remains.

MEN. By gold can it be purchased, or depends it
On dauntless courage, or persuasive words?

HEL. Of your arrival if the monarch hear not.

MEN. Who can inform him? he will never sure
Know who I am.

HEL. He hath a sure associate,
Within his palace, equal to the gods.

MEN. Some voice which from its inmost chambers
sounds?

HEL. No : 'tis his sister, her they call Theonoe

MEN. She bears indeed a most prophetic name;
But say, what mighty deeds can she perform?

HEL. All things she knows, and will inform her brother
That you are here.

MEN. We both, alas ! must die,
Nor can I possibly conceal myself.

HEL. Could our united supplications move her?

MEN. To do what action? Into what vain hope
Wouldst thou mislead me?

HEL. Not to tell her brother
That you are in the land.

MEN. If we prevail
Thus far, can we escape from these domains ?

HEL. With ease, if she concur in our design,
But not without her knowledge.

MEN. This depends
On thee : for woman best prevails with woman.
HEL. Around her knees these suppliant hands I'll twine.

MEN. Go then ; but what if she reject our prayer ?

HEL. You certainly must die ; and I by force
Shall to the king be wedded.

MEN. Thou betray'st me ;
That force thou talk'st of is but mere pretence.

HEL. But by your head that sacred oath I swear.

MEN. What sayst thou, wilt thou die, and never change
Thy husband ?

HEL. By the self-same sword : my corse
Shall lie beside you.

MEN. To confirm the words
Which thou hast spoken, take my hand.

HEL. I take
Your hand, and swear that after you are dead
I will not live.

MEN. And I will put an end
To my existence, if deprived of thee.

HEL. But how shall we die so as to procure
Immortal glory ?

MEN. Soon as on the tomb
Thee I have slain, myself will I destroy.
But first a mighty conflict shall decide
Our claims who to thy bridal bed aspire.
Let him who dares, draw near : for the renown
I won at Troy, I never will belie,
Nor yet returning to the Grecian shore
Suffer unnumbered taunts for having reft
Thetis of her Achilles, and beheld
Ajax the Telamonian hero slain,
With Neleus' grandson, though I dare not bleed
To save my consort. Yet on thy behalf
Without regret, will I surrender up
This fleeting life : for if the gods are wise
They lightly scatter dust upon the tomb
Of the brave man who by his foes is slain,
But pile whole mountains on the coward's breast.

CHOR. O may the race of Tantalus, ye gods,
At length be prosperous, may their sorrows cease !

HEL. Wretch that I am ! for such is my hard fate :
O Menelaus, we are lost for ever.

The prophetess Theonoe, from the palace
Comes forth : I hear the sounding gates unbarred.
Fly from this spot. But whither can you fly ?
For your arrival here, full well she knows,
Absent, or present. How, O wretched me,
Am I undone ! in safety you return
From Troy, from a barbarian land, to rush
Again upon the swords of fresh barbarians.

THEONOE, MENELAUS, HELEN, CHORUS.

THEON. [*to one of her Attendants.*]
Lead thou the way, sustaining in thy hand
The kindled torch, and fan the ambient air,
Observing every due and solemn rite,
That we may breathe the purest gales of Heaven.
Meanwhile do thou, if any impious foot
Have marked the path, with lustral flames efface
The taint, and wave the pitchy brand around,
That I may pass; and when we have performed
Our dutious homage to th' immortal powers,
Into the palace let the flame be borne,
Restore it to the Lares. What opinion
Have you, O Helen, of th' events foretold
By my prophetic voice ? Your husband comes,
Your Menelaus in this land appears,
Rest of his ships, and of your image rest.
'Scaped from what dangers, O unhappy man,
Art thou arrived, although thou know'st not yet
Whether thou e'er shalt to thy home return,
Or here remain. For there is strife in Heaven ;
And Jove on thy account this day will hold
A council ; Juno who was erst thy foe,
Now grown benignant, with thy consort safe
To Sparta would convey thee, that all Greece
May understand that the fictitious nuptials
Of Paris, were the baleful gift of Venus.
But Venus wants to frustrate thy return,
Lest she should be convicted, or appear
At least the palm of beauty to have purchased
By vending Helen for a wife to Paris.
But this important question to decide,
On me depends ; I either can destroy thee,
Which is the wish of Venus, by informing
My brother thou art here ; or save thy life
By taking Juno's side, and thy arrival
Concealing from my brother, who enjoined me
To inform him whensoever thou on these shores
Shouldst land. Who bears the tidings to my brother,

That Menelaus' self is here, to save me
From his resentment?

HEL. At thy knees I fall,
O virgin, as a suppliant, and here take
My miserable seat, both for myself,
And him whom, scarce restored to me, I see
Now on the verge of death. Forbear t' inform
Thy brother, that to these fond arms my lord
Again is come. O save him, I implore thee;
Nor gratify thy brother, by betraying
The feelings of humanity, to purchase
A wicked and unjust applause : for Jove
Detests all violence, he bids us use
What we possess, but not increase our stores
By rapine. It is better to be poor,
Than gain unrighteous wealth. For all mankind
Enjoy these common blessings, Air and Earth;
Nor ought we our own house with gold to fill,
By keeping fraudfully another's right,
Or seizing it by violence. For Hermes,
Commissioned by the blest immortal powers,
Hath, at my cost, consigned me to thy sire,
To keep me for this husband, who is here
And claims me back again : but by what means
Can he receive me after he is dead?
Or how can the Ægyptian king restore me
A living consort to my breathless lord?
Consider therefore, both the will of Heaven
And that of thy great father. Would the god,
Would the deceased, surrender up or keep
Another's right? I deem they would restore it.
Hence to thy foolish brother shouldst not thou
Pay more respect than to thy virtuous sire.
And sure if thou, a prophetess, who utter'st
Th' oracular responses of the gods,
Break'st through thy father's justice, to comply
With an unrighteous brother : it were base
In thee to understand each mystic truth
Revealed by the immortal powers, the things
That are, and those that are not ; yet o'erlook
The rules of justice. But O stoop to save
Me, miserable me, from all those ills
In which I am involved ; this great exertion
Of thy benignant aid, my fortunes claim.
For there is no man who abhors not Helen ;
'Tis rumoured through all Greece that I betrayed
My husband, and abode beneath the roofs
Of wealthy Phrygia. But to Greece once more
Should I return and to the Spartan realm ;

When they are told, and see, how to the arts
 Of these contending goddesses they owe
 Their ruin ; but that I have to my friends
 Been ever true, they to the rank I held
 'Midst chaste and virtuous matrons, will restore me :
 My daughter too, whom no man dares to wed,
 From me her bridal portion shall receive ;
 And I, no longer doomed to lead the life
 Of an unhappy vagrant, shall enjoy
 The treasures that our palaces contain.
 Had Menelaus died, and been consumed
 In the funereal pyre, I should have wept
 For him far distant in a foreign realm ;
 But now shall I for ever be bereft
 Of him who lives, and seem to have escaped
 From every danger. Virgin, act not thus ;
 To thee I kneel a suppliant ; O confer
 On me this boon, and emulate the justice
 Of your great sire. For fair renown attends
 The children, from a virtuous father sprung,
 Who equal their hereditary worth.

THEON. Most piteous are the words which you have
 spoken ;
 You also claim my pity : but I wish
 To hear what Menelaus yet can plead
 To save his life.

MEN. I cannot at your knees
 Fall prostrate, or with tears these eyelids stain :
 For I should cover all the great exploits
 Which I achieved at Ilion with disgrace,
 If I became a dastard ; though some hold
 'Tis not unworthy of the brave to weep
 When wretched. But this honourable part
 (If such a part can e'er be honourable)
 I will not act, because the prosperous fortunes
 Which erst were mine, are present to my soul.
 If then you haply are disposed to save
 A foreigner who justly claims his wife,
 Restore her, and protect us : if you spurn
 Our suit, I am not now for the first time,
 But have been often wretched, and your name
 Shall be recorded as an impious woman.
 These thoughts, which I hold worthy of myself,
 And just, and such as greatly must affect
 Your inmost heart, I at your father's tomb
 With energy will utter. Good old-man,
 Beneath this marble sepulchre who dwell'st,
 To thee I sue, restore my wife, whom Jove
 Sent hither to thy realm, that thou for me

Might'st guard her. Thou, I know, since thou art dead,
 Canst ne'er have power to give her back again :
 But she, this holy priestess, will not suffer
 Reproach to fall on her illustrious sire,
 Whom I invoke amid the shades beneath :
 For this depends on her. Thee too I call,
 O Pluto, to my aid, who hast received
 Full many a corse, which fell in Helen's cause
 Beneath my sword, and still retain'st the prize :
 Either restore them now to life, or force
 Her who seems mightier than her pious father,
 To give me back my wife. But of my consort
 If ye resolve to rob me, I will urge
 Those arguments which Helen hath omitted.
 Know then, O virgin, first I by an oath
 Have bound myself, your brother to encounter,
 And he, or I, must perish ; the plain truth
 Is this. But foot to foot in equal combat,
 If he refuse to meet me, and attempt
 To drive us suppliants from the tomb by famine,
 My consort will I slay, and with the sword
 Here on this sepulchre my bosom pierce,
 That the warm current of our blood may stream
 Into the grave. Thus shall our corpses lie
 Close to each other on this polished marble :
 To you eternal sorrow shall they cause,
 And foul reproach to your great father's name.
 For neither shall your brother wed my Helen,
 Nor any man beside : for I with me
 Will bear her ; if I cannot bear her home,
 Yet will I bear her to the shades beneath.
 But why complain ? If I shed tears, and act
 The woman's part, I rather shall become
 An object of compassion, than deserve
 To be esteemed a warrior. If you list,
 Slay me, for I can never fall inglorious.
 But rather yield due credence to my words,
 So will you act with justice, and my wife
 Shall I recover.

CHOR. To decide the cause
 On which we speak, belongs to thee, O virgin :
 But so decide as to please all.

THEON. By nature
 And inclination am I formed to act
 With piety, myself too I revere :
 Nor will I e'er pollute my sire's renown,
 Or gratify my brother by such means
 As might make me seem base. For from my birth,
 Hath justice in this bosom fixed her shrine :

And since from Nereus I inherited
 This temper, Menelaus will I strive
 To save. But now since Juno is disposed
 To be your friend, with her will I accord :
 May Venus be propitious, though her rites
 I never have partaken, and will strive
 For ever to remain a spotless maid.
 But I concur with thee, O Menelaus,
 In all thou to my father at his tomb
 Hast said : for with injustice should I act
 If I restored not Helen : had he lived,
 My sire on thee again would have bestowed
 Thy consort, and her former lord on Helen.
 For vengeance, in the shades of Hell beneath,
 And among all that breathe the vital air,
 Attends on those who break their plighted trust.
 The soul of the deceased, although it live
 Indeed no longer, yet doth still retain
 A consciousness which lasts for ever, lodged
 In the eternal scene of its abode,
 The liquid ether. To express myself
 Concisely, all that you requested me
 Will I conceal, nor with my counsels aid
 My brother's folly ; I to him shall show
 A real friendship, though without the semblance,
 If I his vicious manners can reform
 And make him more religious. Therefore find
 Means to escape yourselves ; for I will hence
 Depart in silence. First implore the gods ;
 To Venus sue, that she your safe return
 Would suffer ; and to Juno, not to change
 The scheme which she hath formed, both to preserve
 Your lord and you. O my departed sire,
 For thee will I exert my utmost might,
 That on thy honoured name no foul reproach
 May ever rest. [Exit THEONOE.]

CHOR. No impious man e'er prospered :
 But fairest hopes attend an honest cause.

HEL. O Menelaus, as to what depends
 Upon the royal maid, are we secure :
 But next doth it become you to propose
 Some means our safety to effect.

MEN. Now listen
 To me ; thou in this palace long hast dwelt,
 An inmate with the servants of the king.

HEL. Why speak you thus ? for you raise hopes as
 though
 You could do somewhat for our common good.

MEN. Canst thou prevail on any one of those

Who guide the harnessed steeds, to furnish us
With a swift car?

HEL. Perhaps I might succeed
In that attempt. But how shall we escape
Who to these fields and this barbarian land
Are strangers? An impracticable thing
Is this you speak of.

MEN. Well, but in the palace
Concealed, if with this sword the king I slay.

HEL. His sister will not suffer this in silence
If you attempt aught 'gainst her brother's life.

MEN. We have no ship in which we can escape;
For that which we brought hither, by the waves
Is swallowed up.

HEL. Now hear what I propose;
From woman's lips if wisdom ever flow.
Will you permit a rumour of your death
To be dispersed?

MEN. This were an evil omen:
But I, if any benefit arise
From such report, consent to be called dead
While I yet live.

HEL. That impious tyrant's pity
Our female choir shall move, with tresses shorn,
And chaunt funereal strains.

MEN. What tendency
Can such a project have to our deliverance?

HEL. I will allege that 'tis an ancient custom;
And of the monarch his permission crave,
That I on you, as if you in the sea
Had perished, may bestow a vacant tomb.

MEN. If he consent, how can this feigned interment
Enable us to fly without a ship?

HEL. I will command a bark to be prepared,
From whence into the bosom of the deep
Funereal trappings I may cast.

MEN. How well
And wisely hast thou spoken! but the tomb
If he direct thee on the strand to raise,
Nought can this scheme avail.

HEL. But I will say
'Tis not the usage, in a Grecian realm,
With earth to cover the remains of those
Who perished in the waves.

MEN. Thou hast again
Removed this obstacle: I then with thee
Will sail, and the funereal trappings place
In the same vessel.

HEL. 'Tis of great importance

That you, and all those mariners who 'scaped
The shipwreck, should be present.

MEN. If we find
A bark at anchor, with our falchions armed
In one collected band will we assail
And board it.

HEL. To direct all this, belongs
To you; but may the prosperous breezes fill
Our sails, and guide us o'er the billowy deep.

MEN. These vows shall be accomplished; for the gods
At length will cause my toils to cease: but whence
Wilt thou pretend thou heard'st that I was dead?

HEL. Yourself shall be the messenger; relate
How you alone escaped his piteous doom,
A partner of the voyage with the son
Of Atreus, and the witness of his death.

MEN. This tattered vest will testify my shipwreck.

HEL. How seasonable was that which seemed at first
To be a grievous loss! but the misfortune
May end perhaps in bliss.

MEN. Must I with thee
Enter the palace, or before this tomb
Sit motionless?

HEL. Here stay: for if the king
By force should strive to tear you hence, this tomb
And your drawn sword will save you. But I'll go
To my apartment, shear my flowing hair,
For sable weeds this snowy vest exchange,
And rend with bloody nails the livid cheeks:
For 'tis a mighty conflict, and I see
These two alternatives: if in my plots
Detected, I must die; or to my country
I shall return, and save your life. O Juno,
Thou sacred queen, who shar'st the couch of Jove,
Relieve two wretches from their toils; to thee
Our suppliant arms uplifting high t'wards Heaven
With glittering stars adorned, thy blest abode,
We sue: and thou, O Venus, who didst gain
The palm of beauty through my promised 'spousals,
Spare me, thou daughter of Dione, spare;
For thou enough hast injured me already;
Exposing not my person, but my name,
To those barbarians; suffer me to die,
If thou wilt slay me, in my native land.
Why art thou still insatiably malignant?
Why dost thou harass me by love, by fraud,
By the invention of these new deccits,
And by thy magic philtres plunge in blood
Our miserable house? If thou hadst ruled

With mildness, thou to man hadst been most grateful
 Of all the gods. I speak not this at random.
 [HELEN and MENELAUS retire behind the tomb.]

CHORUS.

ODE.

I. 1.

On thee who build'st thy tuneful seat
 Protected by the leafy groves, I call,
 O nightingale, thy accents ever sweet
 Their murmuring melancholy fall
 Prolong ! O come, and with thy plaintive strain
 Aid me to utter my distress,
 Thy woes, O Helen, let the song express,
 And those of Troy now levelled with the plain
 By Grecian might. From hospitable shores,
 Relying on barbaric oars,
 The spoiler Paris fled,
 And o'er the deep to Priam's realm with pride
 Bore his imaginary bride,
 Fancying that thou hadst graced his bed,
 To nuptials fraught with shame by wanton Venus led.

I. 2.

Unnumbered Greeks, transpierced with spears,
 Or crushed beneath the falling ramparts, bled :
 Hence with her tresses shorn, immersed in tears
 The matron wails her lonely bed,
 But Nauplius, kindling near th' Eubœan deep
 Those torches, o'er our host prevailed ;
 Though with a single bark the traitor sailed,
 He wrecked whole fleets against Caphareus' steep,
 And the Ægean coasts, the beacon seemed
 A star, and through Heaven's conclave gleamed,
 Placed on the craggy height.
 While flushed with conquest, from the Phrygian strand
 They hastened to their native land,
 Portentous source of bloody fight,
 The cloud by Juno formed, beguiled their dazzled sight.

II. 1.

Whether the image was divine.
 Drew from terrestrial particles its birth,
 Or from the middle region, how define
 By curious search, ye sons of earth ?

Far from unravelling Heaven's abstruse intents,
 We view the world tost to and fro,
 Mark strange vicissitudes of joy and woe,
 Discordant and miraculous events.
 Thou, Helen, art indeed the child of Jove.
 The swan, thy sire, inflamed by love,
 To Leda's bosom flew :
 Yet with imputed crimes malignant fame
 Though Greece arraigns thy slandered name.
 Of men I know not whom to trust,
 But what the gods pronounce have I found ever just.

II. 2.

Frantic are ye who seek renown
 Amid the horrors of th' embattled field,
 Who masking guilt beneath a laurel crown
 With nervous arm the falchion wield,
 Not slaughtered thousands can your fury sate.
 If still success the judgment guide,
 If bloody battle right and wrong decide,
 Incessant strife must vex each rival state :
 Hence from her home departs each Phrygian wife,
 O Helen, when the cruel strife
 Which from thy charms arose,
 One conference might have closed : now myriads dwell
 With Pluto in the shades of Hell,
 And flames, as when Jove's vengeance throws
 The bolt, have caught her towers and finished Ilion's woes.

THEOCLYMENUS, CHORUS (*HELEN and MENELAUS
 behind the tomb*).

THEOC. Hail, O thou tomb of my illustrious sire !
 For thee have I interred before my gate,
 That with thy shade I might hold frequent conference,
 O Proteus ; Theoclymenus thy son
 Thee, O my father, oft as he goes forth,
 Oft as he enters these abodes, accosts.
 But to the palace now convey those hounds
 And nets, my servants. I full many a time
 Have blamed myself, because I never punished
 With death such miscreants ; now I am informed
 That publicly some Greek to these domains
 Is come unnoticed by my guards, a spy,
 Or one who means to carry Helen off
 By stealth : but if I seize him, he shall die.
 Methinks I find all over : for the daughter
 Of Tyndarus sits no longer at the tomb,
 But from these shores hath fled, and now is crossing

The billowy deep. Unbar the gates, bring forth
 My coursers from the stalls, and brazen cars;
 Lest through my want of vigilance the dame
 Whom I would make my consort, should escape me,
 Borne from this land. Yet stay; for I behold
 Those we pursue still here beneath this roof,
 Nor are they fled. Ho! why in sable vest
 Hast thou arrayed thyself, why cast aside
 Thy robes of white, and from thy graceful head
 With ruthless steel thy glowing ringlets shorn,
 And wherefore bathed thy cheek with recent tears?
 Groan'st thou, by visions of the night apprized
 Of some calamity, or hast thou heard
 Within, a rumour that afflicts thy soul?

HEL. My lord (for I already by that name
 Accost you), I am utterly undone,
 My former bliss is vanished, and I now
 Am nothing.

THEOC. Art thou plunged into distress
 So irretrievable? what cruel fate
 Hath overtaken thee?

HEL. My Menelaus,
 (Ah, how shall I express myself?) is dead.

THEOC. Although I must not triumph in th' event
 Thou speak'st of, yet to me 'tis most auspicious.
 How know'st thou? Did Theonoe tell thee this?

HEL. She and this mariner, who when he perished
 Was present, both concur in the same tale.

THEOC. Is there a man arrived, who for the truth
 Of that account can vouch?

HEL. He is arrived:
 And would to Heaven that such auspicious fortune
 As I could wish attended him.

THEOC. Who is he?
 Where is he? I would know the real fact.

HEL. 'Tis he who stupefied with sorrow sits
 Upon the tomb.

THEOC. In what unseemly garb
 Is he arrayed, O Phœbus!

HEL. In that dress,
 Ah me! methinks my husband I behold.

THEOC. But in what country was the stranger born,
 And whence did he come hither?

HEL. He's a Greek,
 One of those Greeks who with my husband sailed.

THEOC. How doth he say that Menelaus died?

HEL. Most wretchedly, engulfed amid the waves.

THEOC. Where? as he passed o'er the barbarian
 seas?

HEL. Dashed on the rocks of Libya, which affords
No haven.

THEOC. But whence happened it, that he
This partner of his voyage did not perish?

HEL. The worthless are more prosperous than the brave.

THEOC. Where left he the wrecked fragments of his ship
When he came hither?

HEL. There, where would to Heaven
Perdition had o'ertaken him, and spared
The life of Menelaus.

THEOC. He, it seems,
Is then no more : but in what bark arrived
This messenger?

HEL. Some sailors, as he says,
By chance passed by, and snatched him from the waves.

THEOC. But where's that hateful pest which in thy stead
Was sent to Ilion?

HEL. Speak you of a cloud,
Resembling me? it mounted to the skies.

THEOC. O Priam, for how frivolous a cause
Thou with thy Troy didst perish!

HEL. In their woes
I too have been involved.

THEOC. But did he leave
Thy husband's corse unburied, or strew dust
O'er his remains?

HEL. He left them uninterred,
Ah, wretched me!

THEOC. And didst thou for this cause
Sever the ringlets of thy auburn hair?

HEL. Still is he dear, lodged in this faithful breast

THEOC. Hast thou sufficient reason then to weep
For this calamity?

HEL. Could you bear lightly
Your sister's death?

THEOC. No surely. But what means
Thy still residing at this marble tomb?

HEL. Why do you harass me with taunting words,
And why disturb the dead?

THEOC. Because, still constant
To thy first husband, from my love thou fliest.

HEL. But I will fly no longer : haste, begin
The nuptial rite.

THEOC. 'Twas long ere thou didst come
To this : but I such conduct must applaud.

HEL. Know you then how to act? let us forget
All that has passed.

THEOC. Upon what terms? with kindness
Should kindness be repaid.

- HEL. Let us conclude
The peace, and O be reconciled.
- THEOC. All strife
With thee I to the winds of heaven consign.
- HEL. Now, since you are my friend, I by those knees
Conjure you.
- THEOC. With what object in thy view,
To me an earnest suppliant dost thou bend?
- HEL. I my departed husband would inter.
- THEOC. What tomb can be bestowed upon the absent
Wouldst thou inter his shade?
- HEL. There is a custom
Among the Greeks established, that the man
Who in the ocean perishes——
- THEOC. What is it?
For in such matters Pelops' race are wise.
- HEL. To bury in their stead an empty vest.
- THEOC. Perform funereal rites, and heap the tomb
On any ground thou wilt.
- HEL. We in this fashion
Bury not the drowned mariner.
- THEOC. How then?
I am a stranger to the Grecian customs.
- HEL. Each pious gift due to our breathless friends
We cast into the sea.
- THEOC. On the deceased
What presents for thy sake can I bestow?
- HEL. I know not: for in offices like these
Am I unpractised, having erst been happy.
- THEOC. An acceptable message have you brought,
O stranger.
- MEN. Most ungrateful to myself
And the deceased.
- THEOC. What funereal rites on those
Ocean hath swallowed up, do ye bestow?
- MEN. Such honours as each individual's wealth
Enables us to pay him.
- THEOC. Name the cost.
And for her sake receive whate'er you will.
- MEN. Blood is our first libation to the dead.
- THEOC. What blood? inform me, for with your
instructions
I will comply.
- MEN. Determine that thyself,
For whatsoe'er thou giv'st will be sufficient.
- THEOC. The customary victims 'mong barbarians
Are either horse or bull.
- MEN. Whate'er thou giv'st,
Let it be somewhat princely.

THEOC. My rich herds
With these are amply furnished.

MEN. And the bier
Without the corse is borne in solemn state.

THEOC. It shall : but what is there beside which custom
Requires to grace the funeral.

MEN. Brazen arms :
For war was what he loved.

THEOC. We will bestow
Such presents as are worthy of the race
Of mighty Pelops.

MEN. And those budding flowers
Th' exuberant soil produces.

THEOC. But say, how
And in what manner ye these offerings plunge
Into the ocean.

MEN. We must have a bark
And mariners to ply the oars.

THEOC. How far
Will they launch forth the vessel from the strand ?

MEN. So far as from the shore thou scarce wilt see
The keel divide the waves.

THEOC. But why doth Greece
Observe this usage ?

MEN. Lest the rising billows
Cast back to land th' ablutions.

THEOC. Ye shall have
A swift Phœnician vessel.

MEN. This were kind,
And no small favour shown to Menelaus.

THEOC. Without her presence, cannot you perform
These rites alone ?

MEN. Such task or to a mother,
Or wife, or child, belongs.

THEOC. 'Tis then her duty,
You say, to bury her departed lord ?

MEN. Sure, piety instructs us not to rob
The dead of their accustomed dues.

THEOC. Enough :
On me it is incumbent to promote

Such virtue in my consort. I will enter
The palace, and from thence for the deceased
Bring forth rich ornaments ; with empty hands
You from this region will not I send forth,
That you may execute what she desires.
But having brought me acceptable tidings,
Instead of these vile weeds shall you receive
A decent garb and food, that to your country
You may return : for clearly I perceive

That you are wretched now. But torture not
Thy bosom with unprofitable cares,
O hapless woman, for thy Menelaus
Is now no more, nor can the dead revive.

MEN. Thee it behoves, O blooming dame, to love
Thy present husband, and to lay aside
The fond remembrance of thy breathless lord ;
For such behaviour suits thy fortunes best.
But if to Greece with safety I return,
That infamy which erst pursued thy name
I'll cause to cease, if thou acquit thyself
Of these great duties like a virtuous consort.

HEL. I will ; nor shall my husband e'er have cause
To blame me : you too, who are here, shall witness
The truth of my assertions. But within
Go lave your wearied limbs, O wretched man,
And change your habit ; for without delay
To you will I become a benefactress.
Hence too with greater zeal will you perform
The rites my dearest Menelaus claims,
If all due honours you from me receive.

[*Exeunt* THEOCLYMENUS, HELEN, and MENELAUS

CHORUS.

ODE.

I. 1.

O'er mountains erst with hasty tread
Did the celestial mother stray,
Nor stop where branching thickets spread,
Where rapid torrents crossed her way,
Or on the margin of the billowy deep ;
Her daughter whom we dread to name
She wept, while hailing that majestic dame,
Cymbals of Bacchus from the craggy steep
Sent forth their clear and piercing sound,
Her car the harnessed dragons drew ;
Following the nymph torn from her virgin crew.
Amidst her maidens swift of foot were found
Diana skilled the bow to wield,
Minerva, who in glittering state
Brandished the spear and raised her Gorgon shield ;
But Jove looked down from Heaven t' award another fate.

I. 2.

Soon as the mother's toils were o'er,
When she had finished her career,
And sought the ravished maid no more,
To caves where drifted snows appear,

By Ida's nymphs frequented, did she pass,
 And threw herself in sorrow lost,
 On rocks and herbage crusted o'er with frost,
 Despoiled the wasted champaign of its grass,
 Rendered the peasant's tillage vain,
 Consuming a dispeopled land
 With meagre famine ; Spring at her command
 Denied the flocks that sickened on the plain
 The leafy tendrils of the vine ;
 Whole cities died, no victims bled,
 No frankincense perfumed Heaven's vacant shrine ;
 Nor burst the current from the Spring's obstructed head.

II. 1.

Then ceased the banquet, wont to charm
 Both gods above and men below :
 The mother's anger to disarm,
 And mitigate the stings of woe,
 Till in these words Jove uttered his behests :
 " Let each benignant grace attend
 Sweet music's sympathizing aid to lend,
 And drive corrosive grief from Ceres' breast
 Indignant for her ravished child :
 Now, O ye Muses, with the lyre
 Join the shrill hymns of your assembled choir,
 The brazen trumpet fill with accents wild,
 And beat the rattling drums amain."
 Then first of the immortal band,
 Venus with lovely smile approved the strain,
 And raised the deep-toned flute in her enchanting hand.

II. 2.

The laws reproved such foul desire,
 Yet 'gainst religion didst thou wed ;
 Thy uncle caught love's baleful fire,
 And rushed to thy incestuous bed.
 Thee shall the mighty mother's wrath confound,
 Because, through thee, before her shrine
 No victims slain appease the powers divine.
 Great virtue have hinds' hides, and ivy wound
 Upon a consecrated rod ;
 And youths, with virgins in a ring,
 When high from earth with matchless force they spring,
 Loose streams their hair, they celebrate that god
 The Bacchanalian votaries own,
 And waste in dance the sleepless night.
 But thou, confiding in thy charms alone,
 Forgett'st the moon that shines with more transcendent
 light.

HELEN, CHORUS.

HEL. Within the palace, O my friends, we prosper
 For Proteus' royal daughter, in our schemes
 Conspiring when her brother questioned her
 About my lord, no information gave
 Of his arrival : to my interests true
 She said, that cold in death he views no longer
 The radiant sun. But now my lord hath seized
 A vengeful falchion, in that mail designed
 To have been plunged beneath the deep arrayed
 With nervous arm he lifts an orb'd shield,
 In his right hand protended gleams the spear,
 As if with me he was prepared to pay
 To the deceased due homage. Furnished thus
 With brazen arms, he's ready for the battle,
 And numberless barbarians will subdue
 Unaided, soon as we the ship ascend.
 Exchanging those unseemly weeds which clothe
 The shipwrecked mariner, in splendid robes
 Have I arrayed him, from transparent springs
 The laver filled, and bathed his wearied limbs
 But I must now be silent, for the man
 Who fancies I am ready to become
 His consort, leaves the palace. O my friends,
 In your attachment too I place my trust,
 Restrain your tongues, for we, when saved ourselves,
 If possible will save you from this thralldom.

THEOCLYMENUS, HELEN, MENELAUS, CHORUS.

THEOC. Go forth, in such procession as the stranger
 Directs you, O my servants, and convey
 These gifts funereal to the briny deep.
 But if thou dissapprove not what I say,
 Do thou, O Helen, yield to my persuasions,
 And here remain. For whether thou attend,
 Or art not present at the obsequies
 Of thy departed husband, thou to him
 Wilt show an equal reverence. Much I dread
 Lest hurried on by wild desire thou plunge
 Into the foaming billows, for the sake
 Of him on whom thou doat'st, thy former lord,
 Since thou his doom immoderately bewail'st
 Though he be lost, and never can return.

HEL. O my illustrious husband, I am bound
 To pay due honours to the man whom first
 I wedded, of our ancient nuptial joys
 A memory still retaining, for so well
 I loved my lord that I could even die

With him. But what advantage would result
 To the deceased, should I lay down my life?
 Yet let me go myself, and to his shade
 Perform each solemn rite. But may the gods,
 On you, and on the stranger who assists me
 In this my pious task, with liberal hand
 Confer the gifts I wish. But you in me
 Shall such a consort to your palace bear
 As you deserve, to recompense your kindness
 To me and Menelaus. Such events
 In some degree are measured by the will
 Of Fortune: but give orders for a ship
 To be prepared, these trappings to convey,
 So shall your purposed bounty be complete.

THEOC. [*to one of his Attendants.*]

Go thou, and furnish them a Tyrian bark
 Of fifty oars, with skilful sailors manned.

HEL. But may not he who decorates the tomb
 Govern the ship?

THEOC. My sailors must to him
 Yield an implicit deference.

HEL. This injunction
 Repeat, that they may clearly understand it.

THEOC. A second time, will I. and yet a third,
 Issue this self-same mandate, if to thee
 This can give pleasure.

HEL. May the gods confer
 Blessings on you, and prosper my designs!

THEOC. Waste not thy bloom with unavailing tears.

HEL. To you this day my gratitude will prove.

THEOC. All these attentions to the dead are nought
 But unavailing toil.

HEL. My pious care
 Not to those only whom the silent grave
 Contains, but to the living too extends.

THEOC. In me thou mayst expect to find a husband
 Who yields not to the Spartan Menelaus.

HEL. I censure not your conduct, but bewail
 My own harsh destiny.

THEOC. Bestow thy love
 On me, and prosperous fortunes shall return.

HEL. It is a lesson I have practised long,
 To love my friends.

THEOC. Shall I my navy launch,
 To join in these funereal rites?

HEL. Dread lord,
 Pay not unseemly homage to your vassals.

THEOC. Well! I each sacred usage will allow
 Practised by Pelops' race, for my abodes

Are undefiled with blood : thy Menelaus
 In Ægypt died not. But let some one haste
 And bid the nobles bear into my house
 The bridal gifts : for the whole earth is bound
 To celebrate in one consenting hymn
 My blest espousals with the lovely Helen.
 But go, embark upon the briny main,
 O stranger, and as soon as ye have paid
 All decent homage to her former lord
 Bring back my consort hither : that with me
 When you have feasted at our nuptial rite
 You to your native mansion may return,
 Or here continue in a happy state. [*Exit THEOCLYMENUS*]

MEN. O Jove, thou mighty father, who art called
 A god supreme in wisdom, from thy heaven
 Look down, and save us from our woes : delay not
 To aid us : for we drag the galling yoke
 Of sorrow and mischance : if with thy finger
 Thou do but touch us, we shall soon attain
 The fortune which we wish for, since the toils
 We have endured already are sufficient.
 Ye gods, I now invoke you, from my mouth
 So shall ye hear full many joyful accents
 Mixed with these bitter plaints : for I deserve not
 To be for ever wretched ; but to tread
 At length secure. O grant me this one favour,
 And make my future life completely blest.

[*Exeunt MENELAUS and HELEN.*]

CHORUS.

ODE.

I. I.

Swift bark of Sidon, by whose dashing oars
 Divided oft, the frothy billows rise,
 Propitious be thy voyage from these shores :
 In thy train the dolphins play,
 O'er the deep thou lead'st the way,
 While motionless its placid surface lies.
 Soon as Serenity the fair,
 That azure daughter of the main,
 Shall in this animating strain
 Have spoken : "To the gentle breeze of air
 Expand each undulating sail,
 Row briskly on before the gale,
 Ye mariners, in Perseus' ancient seat
 Till Helen rest her wearied feet."

I. 2.

Those sacred nymphs shall welcome thy return
 Who guard the portals of Minerva's fane
 Or speed the current from its murmuring urn :
 Choral dances of delight
 That prolong the jocund night,
 At Hyacinthus' banquet shalt thou join,
 Fair stripling, whom with luckless hand
 Unwitting did Apollo slay
 At games that crowned the festive day,
 Hurling his quoit on the Laconian strand ;
 To him Jove's son due honours paid :
 At Sparta too, that lovely maid
 Shalt thou behold, whom there thou left'st behind,
 Still to celibacy consigned.

II. 1.

O might we cleave the air, like Libyan cranes,
 Who fly in ranks th' impending wintry storm ;
 When their shrill leader bids them quit the plains,
 They the veteran's voice obey,
 O'er rich harvests wing their way,
 Or where parched wastes th' unfruitful scene deform.
 With lengthened neck, ye feathered race
 Who skim the clouds in social band,
 Where the seven Pleiades expand
 Their radiance, and Orion heaves his mace,
 This joyous embassy convey
 As near Eurotas' banks ye stray ;
 That Menelaus to his subject land
 Victorious comes from Phrygia's strand.

II. 2.

Borne in your chariot down th' ethereal height,
 At length, ye sons of Tyndarus, appear,
 While vibrates o'er your heads the starry light :
 Habitants of heaven above,
 Now exert fraternal love,
 If ever Helen to your souls was dear,
 A calm o'er th' azure ocean spread,
 Bridle the tempests of the main,
 Propitious gales from Jove obtain,
 Your sister snatch from the barbarian's bed :
 Commenced on Ida's hill, that strife,
 Embittered with reproach her life,
 Although she never viewed proud Ilion's tower
 Reared by Apollo's matchless power.

THEOCLYMENUS, MESSENGER, CHORUS.

MES. O king, I have discovered in the palace,
Events most inauspicious : what fresh woes
Is it my doleful office to relate !

THEOC. Say what hath happened ?

MES. Seek another wife,
For Helen hath departed from this realm.

THEOC. Borne through the air on wings, or with swift foot
Treading the ground ?

MES. Her o'er the briny main
From Ægypt's shores, hath Menelaus wafted,
Who came in person with a feigned account
Of his own death.

THEOC. O dreadful tale ! what ship
From these domains conveys her ? thou relat'st
Tidings the most incredible.

MES. The same
You to that stranger gave, and in one word
To tell you all, he carries off your sailors.

THEOC. How is that possible ? I wish to know :
For such an apprehension never entered
My soul, as that one man could have subdued
The numerous band of mariners, with whom
Thou wert sent forth.

MES. When from the royal mansion
Jove's daughter to the shore was borne, she trod
With delicate and artful step, pretending
To wail her husband's loss, though he was present,
And yet alive. But when we reached the haven,
Sidonia's largest vessel we hauled forth,
Furnished with benches, and with fifty oars ;
But a fresh series of incessant toil
Followed this toil ; for while one fixed the mast,
Another ranged the oars, and with his hand
The signal gave, the sails were bound together,
Then was the rudder fastened to the stern
With thongs, cast forth : while they observed us busied
In such laborious task, the Grecian comrades
Of Menelaus to the shore advanced,
Clad in their shipwrecked vestments. Though their form
Was graceful, yet their visages were squalid :
But Atreus' son, beholding their approach,
Under the semblance of a grief that masked
His treacherous purpose, in these words addressed them :
" How, O ye wretched sailors, from what bark
Of Greece that hath been wrecked upon this coast
Are ye come hither ? will ye join with us
In the funereal rites of Menelaus,

Whom Tyndarus's daughter, to an empty tomb
Consigns, though absent?" Simulated tears
They shed, and went aboard the ship, conveying
The presents to be cast into the sea
For Menelaus. But to us these things
Appeared suspicious, and we made remarks
Among ourselves upon the numerous band
Of our intruding passengers; but checked
Our tongues from speaking openly, through deference
To your commands. For when you to that stranger
Trusted the guidance of the ship, you caused
This dire confusion. All beside, with ease
Had we now lodged aboard, but could not force
The sturdy bull t' advance; he bellowing rolled
His eyes around, bending his back and low'ring
Betwixt his horns, nor dared we to approach
And handle him. But Helen's husband cried :
"O ye who laid Troy waste, will ye forget
To act like Greeks? why scruple ye to seize
And on your youthful shoulders heave the beast
Up to the rising prow, a welcome victim
To the deceased?" His falchion, as he spoke,
The warrior drew. His summons they obeyed,
Seized the stout bull, and carried him aboard :
But Menelaus stroked the horse's neck
And face, and with this gentle usage led him
Into the bark. At length when all its freight
The vessel had received, with graceful foot
Helen, the steps ascending, took her seat
On the mid deck ; and Menelaus near her,
E'en he who they pretended was no more.
But some on the right side, and on the left
Others in equal numbers, man to man
Opposed, their station took, their swords concealing
Beneath their garments. We distinctly heard
The clamorous sailors animate each other
To undertake the voyage. But from land
When a convenient distance we had steered,
The pilot asked this question : "Shall we sail,
O stranger, any farther from the coast,
Or is this right? for 'tis my task to guide
The vessel." He replied : "Enough for me."
Then seized with his right hand the falchion, leaped
Upon the prow, and standing o'er the bull
The victim (without mentioning the name
Of any chief deceased ; but as he drove
The weapon through his neck) thus prayed : "O Neptune,
Who in the ocean dwell'st, and ye chaste daughters
Of Nereus, to the Nauplian shore convey

Me and my consort, from this hostile land,
 In safety." But a crimson tide of blood,
 Auspicious to the stranger, stained the waves;
 And some exclaimed: "There's treachery in this voyage,
 Let us sail homewards, issue thy commands,
 And turn the rudder." But the son of Atreus,
 Who had just slain the bull, to his companions
 Called loudly: "Why delay, O ye the flower
 Of Greece, to smite, to slaughter those barbarians,
 And cast them from the ship into the waves?"
 But to your sailors our commander spoke
 A different language: "Will not some of you
 Tear up a plank, or with a shattered bench,
 Or ponderous oar, upon the bleeding heads
 Of those audacious foreigners our foes,
 Impress the ghastly wound?" But on their feet
 All now stood up; our hands with nautic poles
 Were armed, and theirs with swords: a tide of slaughter
 Ran down the ship. But Helen from the poop
 The Greeks encouraged: "Where is the renown
 Ye gained at Troy? display 'gainst these barbarians
 The same undaunted prowess." In their haste
 Full many fell, some rose again, the rest
 Might you have seen stretched motionless in death.
 But Menelaus, sheathed in glittering mail,
 Wherever his confederates he descried
 Hard pressed, rushed thither with his lifted sword,
 Driving us headlong from the lofty deck
 Into the waves, and forced your mariners
 To quit their oars. But the victorious king
 Now seized the rudder, and to Greece declared
 He would convey the ship: they hoisted up
 The stately mast: propitious breezes came;
 They left the land: but I from death escaping,
 Let myself gently down into the waves
 Borne on the cordage which sustains the anchor;
 My strength began to fail, when some kind hand
 Threw forth a rope, and brought me safe ashore,
 That I to you these tidings might convey.
 There's nought more beneficial to mankind
 Than wise distrust.

CHOR. I never could have thought
 That Menelaus who was here, O king,
 Could have imposed so grossly or on you
 Or upon us.

THEOC. Wretch that I am, ensnared
 By woman's treacherous arts! the lovely bride
 I hoped for, hath escaped me. If the ship
 Could be o'ertaken by our swift pursuit,

My wrongs would urge me with vindictive hand
To seize the strangers. But I now will punish
That sister who betrayed me ; in my house
Who when she saw the Spartan Menelaus,
Informed me not : she never shall deceive
Another man by her prophetic voice.

CHOR. Ho ! whither, O my sovereign, would you go,
And for what bloody purpose ?

THEOC. Where the voice
Of rigid justice summons me. Retire,
And stand aloof.

CHOR. Yet will not I let loose
Your garment ; for you hasten to commit
A deed most mischievous.

THEOC. Wouldst thou, a slave,
Govern thy lord ?

CHOR. Here reason's on my side.

THEOC. That shall not I allow, if thou refuse
To quit thy hold.

CHOR. I will not then release you.

THEOC. To slay that worst of sisters.

CHOR. That most pious.

THEOC. Her who betrayed me.

CHOR. Glorious was the fraud
That caused so just a deed.

THEOC. When she bestowed
My consort on another.

CHOR. On the man
Who had a better claim——

THEOC. But who is lord
Of what belongs to me ?

CHOR. Who from her sire
Received her.

THEOC. She by Fortune was bestowed
On me.

CHOR. But ta'en away again by Fate.

THEOC. Thou hast no right to judge of my affairs.

CHOR. If I but speak to give you better counsels.

THEOC. I am thy subject then, and not thy king.

CHOR. For having acted piously, your sister
I vindicate.

THEOC. Thou seem'st to wish for death.

CHOR. Kill me. Your sister you with my consent
Shall never slay ; I rather would yield up
My life on her behalf. It is most glorious
To generous servants for their lords to die.

CASTOR *and* POLLUX, THEOCLYMENUS, CHORUS.

CAS. *and* POI.. Restrain that ire that hurries thee away
Beyond the bounds of reason, O thou king
Of Ægypt's realm ; and listen to the voice
Of us twin sons of Jove, whom Leda bore
Together with that Helen who is fled
From thy abodes. Thou rashly hast indulged
Thine anger, for the loss of her whom Fate
Ne'er destined to thy bed. Nor hath thy sister
Theonoe, from th' immortal Nereid sprung,
To thee done any injury ; she reveres
The gods, and her great father's just behests.
For till the present hour, was it ordained
That Helen in thy palace should reside :
But when Troy's walls were from their bases torn,
And she had to the rival goddesses
Furnished her name, no longer was it fit
That she should for thy nuptials be detained,
But to her ancient home return, and dwell
With her first husband. In thy sister's breast
Forbear to plunge the sword, and be convinced
That she in this affair hath acted wisely.
We long ere this our sister had preserved,
Since Jove hath made us gods, but were too weak
At once to combat the behests of Fate,
And the immortal powers, who had ordained
That these events should happen. This to thee,
O Theoclymenus, I speak. These words
Next to my lovely sister, I address ;
Sail with your husband, for a prosperous breeze
Your voyage shall attend. We your protectors
And your twin brothers, on our coursers borne
Over the waves, will guide you to your country,
But after you have finished life's career,
You shall be called a goddess, shall partake
With us the rich oblations, and receive
The gifts of men : for thus hath Jove decreed.
But where the son of Maia placed you first,
When he had borne you from the Spartan realm,
And formed by stealth from the aerial mansions
An image of your person, to prevent
Paris from wedding you, there is an isle
Near the Athenian realm, which men shall call
Helen in future times, because that spot
Received you, when in secrecy conveyed
From Sparta. The Heavens also have ordained
The wanderer Menelaus shall reside
Among the happy islands. For the gods

To those of nobler minds no hatred bear ;
At their command though grievous toil await
The countless multitude.

THEOC. Ye sons of Jove
And Leda, I the contest will decline
Which I at first so violently urged,
Hoping your lovely sister to obtain,
And my own sister's life resolve to spare :
Let Helen to her native shores return,
If 'tis the will of Heaven : but be assured,
The same high blood ye spring from with the best
And chastest sister : hail then, for the sake
Of Helen with a lofty soul endued,
Such as in female bosoms seldom dwells.

CHOR. A thousand shapes our varying fates assume
The gods perform what least we could expect,
And oft the things for which we fondly hoped
Come not to pass ; but Heaven still finds a clue
To guide our steps through life's perplexing maze,
And thus doth this important business end.

ANDROMACHE.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

ANDROMACHE.	MOLOSSUS.
ATTENDANT.	PELEUS.
CHORUS OF PHITHIAN	NURSE OF HERMIONE.
WOMEN.	ORESTES.
HERMIONE.	MESSENGER.
MENELAUS.	THETIS.

SCENE.—THE VESTIBULE OF THETIS' TEMPLE BETWEEN
PHITHIA AND PHARSALIA IN THESSALY.

ANDROMACHE.

O THEBES, thou pride of Asia, from whose gate
I came resplendent with a plenteous dower,
To Priam's regal house, the fruitful wife
Of Hector : his Andromache was erst
An envied name : but now am I more wretched
Than any woman, or already born,
Or to be born hereafter ; for I saw
My husband Hector by Achilles slain,
And that unhappy son whom to my lord
I bore, Astyanax, from Troy's high towers
Thrown headlong ; when our foes had sacked the city,
Myself descended from a noble line
Of freeborn warriors, reached the Grecian coast,
On Neoptolemus that island prince
For the reward of his victorious arms
Bestowed : selected from the Phrygian spoils.
'Twixt Phthia and Pharsalia, in these fields,
I dwell, where Thetis from the haunts of men
Retreating, with her Peleus erst abode.
By Thessaly's inhabitants, this spot
Is from th' auspicious nuptials of that goddess
Called Thetidæum : here Achilles' son
Residing, suffers Peleus still to rule
Pharsalia's land, nor will assume the sceptre
While livethis aged grandsire. In these walls

A son, who to th' embraces of my lord
 Achilles' offspring, owes his birth, I bore,
 And though I had been wretched, a fond hope
 Still cherished, that while yet the boy was safe
 I some protection and relief might find
 In my calamities ; but since my lord
 (Spurning my servile couch) that Spartan dame
 Hermione espoused, with ruthless hate
 By her am I pursued ; for she pretends
 That I, by drugs endued with magic power,
 Administered in secret, make her barren
 And odious to her lord, because I wish
 To occupy this mansion in her stead,
 And forcibly to drive her from his couch,
 To which, at first I with reluctance came,
 But now have left it : mighty Jove can witness
 That I became the partner of his bed
 Against my own consent. But she remains
 Deaf to conviction, and attempts to slay me :
 In this design her father Menelaus
 Assists his daughter, he is now within,
 And on such errand left the Spartan realm :
 Fearing his rage, I near the palace take
 My seat, in Thetis' temple, that the goddess
 From death may save me ; for both Peleus' self,
 And the descendants of that monarch, hold
 This structure reared in memory of his wedlock
 With the fair Nereid, in religious awe.
 But hence, in secret, trembling for his life,
 My only child have I conveyed away,
 Because his noble father is not present
 To aid me, and avails not now to guard
 His son, while absent in the Delphic land,
 To expiate there the rage with which he sought
 The Pythian tripod, and from Phœbus claimed
 A reparation for his father's death.
 If haply he can deprecate the curses
 Attendant on his past misdeeds, and make
 The god propitious to his future days.

FEMALE ATTENDANT, ANDROMACHE.

ATT. My queen, for still I scruple not to use
 The same respectful title which I gave you
 When we in Ilion dwelt ; you and your lord
 While he was living, shared my duteous love,
 And now I with important tidings fraught
 To you am come, trembling indeed lest one
 Of our new rulers overhear the tale,

Yet greatly pitying your disastrous fate :
 For Menelaus and his daughter form
 Dire plots against you ; of these foes beware.

AND. O my dear fellow-servant (for thou shar'st
 Her bondage who was erst thy queen, but now
 Is wretched), ah ! what mean they ? what fresh schemes
 Have they devised to take away my life,
 Who am by woes encompassed ?

ATT. They intend,
 O miserable dame, to kill your son,
 Whom privately you from this house conveyed.

AND. Are they informed I sent the child away ?
 Ah me ! who told them ? in what utter ruin
 Am I involved !

ATT. I know not ; but thus much
 Of their designs I heard ; in quest of him
 Is Menelaus from these doors gone forth.

AND. Then am I lost indeed : for, O my child,
 These two relentless vultures mean to seize thee,
 And take away thy life, while he who bears
 A father's name, at Delphi still remains.

ATT. You had not fared so ill, I am convinced,
 If he were present, but now every friend
 Deserts you.

AND. Is there not a rumour spread
 Of Peleus' coming ?

ATT. He, though he were here,
 Is grown too old to aid you.

AND. More than once
 I sent to him.

ATT. Suppose you that he heeds
 None of your messengers ?

AND. What means this question ?
 Wilt thou accept such office ?

ATT. What pretext
 To colour my long absence from this house
 Shall I allege ?

AND. Full many are the schemes
 Which thou, who art a woman, can devise.

ATT. 'Twere dangerous ; for Hermione is watchful.

AND. Dost thou perceive the danger, and renounce
 Thy friends in their distress ?

ATT. Not thus : forbear
 To brand me with so infamous a charge ;
 I go ; for of small value is the life
 (Whate'er befall me) of a female slave.

[Exit ATTENDANT.]

AND. Proceed : meanwhile I to the conscious air
 Those plaints and bitter wailings will repeat,

On which I ever dwell. Unhappy women
 Find comfort in perpetually talking
 Of what they suffer. But my groans arise
 Not from one ill, but many ills : the walls
 Of my loved country razed, my Hector slain,
 And that hard fortune, in whose yoke bound fast,
 Thus am I fallen into th' unseemly state
 Of servitude. We never ought to call
 Frail mortals happy, at their latest hour
 Till we behold them to the shades descend.

ELEGY.

In Helen sure, to Troy's imperial towers
 Young Paris wafted no engaging bride,
 But when he led her to those nuptial bowers,
 Some fiend infernal crossed the billowy tide.

With brandished javelin and devouring flame,
 For her the Grecian warriors to thy shore,
 O Ilion, in a thousand vessels came,
 And drenched thy smould'ring battlements with gore.

Around the walls, my Hector, once thy boast,
 Fixed to his car, was by Achilles borne,
 And from my chamber hurried to the coast
 I veiled my head in servitude forlorn.

Much wept these streaming eyes, when in the dust
 My city, palace, husband, prostrate lay.
 Subject to fierce Hermione's disgust,
 Why should I still behold the hated day?

Harassed with insults from that haughty dame,
 Round Thetis' bust my suppliant arms I fling,
 And here with gushing tears bewail my shame,
 As from the rock bursts forth the living spring.

CHORUS, ANDROMACHE.

CHORUS.

ODE.

I. 1.

O thou, who seated in this holy space,
 Hast Thetis' temple thy asylum made,
 Though Phthia gave me birth, to aid
 Thee, hapless dame of Asiatic race,

I hither come; would I from direful harms
 Could guard, could heal the strife
 'Twixt thee and that indignant wife
 Hermione, whom ruthless discord arms
 To punish thee the rival of her charms,
 A captive, to the genial bed,
 Who by Achilles' son wert led.

I. 2.

Aware of fate, th' impending evil weigh,
 A helpless Phrygian nymph, thou striv'st in vain
 'Gainst her of Sparta's proud domain :
 Cease, to this sea-born goddess, cease to pray,
 And at her blazing shrine no longer stay :
 For how can it avail
 To thee with hopeless sorrow pale
 To suffer all thy beauties to decay,
 Because thy rulers with oppression sway ?
 Thou to superior might must bend.
 Why, feeble as thou art, contend ?

II. 1.

Yet hasten from the Nereid's lofty seat,
 Consider that thou tread'st a foreign plain,
 And that these hostile walls detain
 In strictest bondage thy reluctant feet,
 Here none of all those friends, that numerous band,
 Who shared thy greatness, is at hand,
 To cheer thee in these days of shame,
 O wretched, wretched dame.

II. 2.

A miserable matron thou art come
 From Troy to our abodes, unwilling guest ;
 Though mine the sympathizing breast.
 Yet I through reverence to our lords am dumb,
 Lest she, who springs from Helen, child of Jove,
 Should be a witness of that love
 Which I to thee whose griefs I share,
 Impelled by pity bear.

HERMIONE, ANDROMACHE, CHORUS.

HER. The gorgeous ornaments of gold, these brows
 Encircling, and the tissued robes I wear,
 I from Achilles', or from Peleus' stores,
 As chosen presents when I hither came.
 Received not, but from Sparta's realm, these gifts
 My father Menelaus hath bestowed

With a large dower, that I might freely speak
 Such is the answer which to you I make,
 O Phthian dames. But thou, who art a slave
 And captive, wouldst in these abodes usurp
 Dominion, and expel me ; to my lord
 Thy drugs have made me odious, hence ensues
 My barrenness: the Asiatic dames,
 For these abhorred devices are renowned ;
 But thee will I subdue, nor shall this dome
 Of the immortal Nereid, nor her altar
 Or temple save thee from impending death ;
 If either man or god should be disposed
 To rescue thee, 'twere fit, that to atone
 For the proud thoughts thou in thy happier days
 Didst nourish, thou shouldst tremble, at my knees
 Fall low, and sweep the pavement of my house,
 Sprinkling the waters from a golden urn.
 Know where thou art : no Hector governs here,
 No Phrygian Priam doth this sceptre wield ;
 This is no Chrysa, but a Grecian city.
 Yet thou, O wretched woman, art arrived
 At such a pitch of madness, that thou dar'st
 To sleep e'en with the son of him who slew
 Thy husband, and a brood of children bear
 To him whose hands yet reek with Phrygian gore,
 Such is the whole abhorred barbarian race ;
 The father with his daughter, the vile son
 With his own mother, with her brother too
 The sister, sins, friends by their dearest friends
 Are murdered ; deeds like these no wholesome law
 Prohibits : introduce not among us
 Such crimes, for 'tis unseemly that one man
 Possess two women ; the fond youth who seeks
 Domestic harmony, confines his love
 To one fair partner of the genial bed.

CHOR. The female sex are envious, and pursue
 With an incessant hatred those who share
 Their nuptial joys.

AND. Alas ! impetuous youth
 Proves baleful to mankind, and there are none
 Who act with justice in their blooming years.
 But what I dread is this, lest slavery curb
 My tongue, though I have many truths to utter :
 In this dispute with you, if I prevail,
 That very triumph may become my bane :
 For those of haughty spirits ill endure
 The most prevailing arguments when urged
 By their inferiors. Yet my better cause
 I will not thus betray. Say, youthful princess.

What reasons of irrefragable force
 Enable me to drive you from the couch
 Of your own lawful husband? to the Phrygians
 Is Sparta grown inferior, and hath fortune
 On us conferred the palm? Do you behold me
 Still free? elate with youth, a vigorous frame,
 The wide extent of empire I possess,
 And number of my friends, am I desirous
 To occupy these mansions in your stead,
 That in your stead I might bring forth a race
 Of slaves, th' appendages of my distress?
 Will any one endure (if you produce
 No children) that my sons should be the kings
 Of Phthia?—the Greeks love me for the sake
 Of Hector, I too was forsooth obscure,
 And not a queen, in Troy. Your husband's hate,
 Not from my drugs, but from your soul, unsuited
 For social converse, springs: there is a philtre
 To gain his love. Not beauty, but the virtues,
 O woman, to the partners of our bed
 Afford delight. But if it sting your pride
 That Sparta's a vast city, while you treat
 Scyros with scorn, amidst the poor, display
 Your riches, and of Menelaus speak
 As greater than Achilles; hence your lord
 Abhors you. For a woman, though bestowed
 On a vile mate, should learn to yield, nor strive
 For the pre-eminence. In Thrace o'erspread
 With snow, if you were wedded to a king,
 Who to his bed takes many various dames,
 Would you have slain them? you would cast disgrace
 On your whole sex by such unsated lust;
 Base were the deed: for though our souls are warmed
 With more intense desires than those of men
 We modestly conceal them. For thy sake
 I, O my dearest Hector, loved the objects
 Of thy affections, whene'er Venus' wiles
 Caused thee to err, and at my breast full oft
 Nourished thy spurious children, that in nought
 Thy joys I might embitter: acting thus
 I won him by my virtues. But you tremble
 E'en if the drops of Heaven's transparent dew
 Rest on your husband. Strive not to transcend
 Your mother in a wild excess of love,
 O woman. For the children, if endued
 With reason, such examples should avoid
 Of those who bore them, as corrupt the soul.

CHOR. As far as possible, O queen, comply
 With my advice, and in mild terms accost her.

HER. What mean'st thou by this arrogance of speech,
This vain debate, as if thou still wert chaste,
And I had strayed from virtue's path?

AND. The words
You have been using, now at least are void
Of modesty.

HER. O woman, may this breast
Harbour no soul like thine.

AND. Though bashful youth
Glow on your cheek, indecent is your language.

HER. Thou by thy actions more than by thy words
Hast proved the malice which to me thou bear'st.

AND. Why will you not conceal th' inglorious pangs
Of jealous love?

HER. What woman but resents
Such wrongs, and deems them great?

AND. The use some make
Of these misfortunes adds to their renown :
But shame waits those who are devoid of wisdom.

HER. We dwell not in a city where prevail
Barbarian laws.

AND. In Phrygia or in Greece
Base actions are with infamy attended.

HER. Though most expert in every subtle art,
Yet die thou must.

AND. Behold you Thetis' image
Turning its eyes on you?

HER. She loathes thy country
Where her Achilles treacherously was slain.

AND. Your mother Helen caused his death, not I.

HER. Wouldst thou retrace still farther the sad tale
Of our misfortunes?

AND. I restrain my tongue.

HER. Speak to me now on that affair which caused
My coming hither.

AND. All I say is this :
You have not so much wisdom as you need.

HER. From this pure temple of the sea-born goddess
Wilt thou depart?

AND. Not while I live : you first
Must slay, then drag me hence.

HER. I am resolved
How to proceed, and wait my lord's return
No longer.

AND. Nor will I before he come
Surrender up myself.

HER. With flaming brands
Hence will I drive thee, and no deference pay
To thy entreaties.

AND. Kindle them; the gods
Will view the deed.

HER. The scourge too is prepared.

AND. Transpierce this bosom, deluge with my gore
The altar of the goddess, you by her
Shall be at length o'ertaken.

HER. From thy cradle,
Trained up and hardened in barbarian pride,
Canst thou endure to die? from this asylum
Soon will I rouse thee by thy own consent,
I with such baits am furnished, but conceal
My purpose, which th' event itself ere long
Will make conspicuous. Keep a steady seat,
For though by molten lead thou wert enclosed
Hence would I rouse thee, ere Achilles' son,
Whom thou confid'st in, to this land return.

[Exit HERMIONE.]

AND. In him I place my still unshaken trust.
Yet is it strange that the celestial powers,
To heal the serpent's venom, have assigned
Expedients, but no remedy devised
Against an evil woman who surpasses
Or vipers' stings or the consuming flame :
Thus baleful is our influence on mankind.

CHORUS.

ODE.

I. 1.

The winged son of Maia and of Jove
To many sorrowful events gave birth,
And scattered discord o'er the bleeding earth,
When he through sacred Ida's piny grove
Guided the car of three immortal dames,
(The golden prize of beauty to obtain,
In hateful strife engaged, who urged their claims) ;
To where in his mean hut abode a lonely swain.

I. 2.

No sooner had they reached the destined bower,
Than in the limpid spring her snowy frame
Each goddess laved ; to Priam's son then came
With artful speeches of such winning power
As might beguile the rash and amorous boy :
Venus prevailed ; her words, though sweet their sound,
Proved of destructive consequence to Troy,
Whose stately bulwarks hence lie levelled with the ground.

II. 1.

When new-born Paris first beheld the light,
 Would that his mother, o'er her head, this brand
 Ordained by Heaven to fire his native land,
 Had cast, before he dwelt on Ida's height.
 Unheeded from the bay's prophetic shade
 Exclaimed Cassandra : " Let the child be slain ;
 Kill him, or Priam's empire is betrayed."
 Frantic she raved and sued to every prince in vain.

II. 2.

Deaf was each prince, or Ilion ne'er had felt
 The servile yoke, nor hadst thou, hapless fair,
 Beneath these roofs, encompassed by despair,
 And subject to a rigid master, dwelt.
 O had he died, the fated toil of Greece,
 That stubborn war through ten revolving years,
 Had roused no heroes from the lap of peace,
 Nor caused the widow's shrieks, the hoary father's tears.

MENELAUS, MOLOSSUS, ANDROMACHE, CHORUS.

MEN. Your son I hither bring, whom from this fane
 With secrecy, you to another house,
 Without my daughter's knowledge, had removed.
 You boasted that this image of the goddess
 To you, and those who hid him, would afford
 A sure asylum : but your deep-laid craft,
 O woman, cannot baffle Menelaus.
 If you depart not hence, he in your stead
 Shall be the victim ; therefore well revolve
 Th' important question ; had you rather die,
 Or, with his streaming gore, let him atone
 The foul offence 'gainst me and 'gainst my daughter
 By you committed ?

AND. Thou, O vain opinion,
 Hast with renown puffed up full many men
 Who were of no account. I deem those blest
 On whom with truth such honour is bestowed :
 But them who by fallacious means obtain it
 I hold unworthy of possessing fame,
 When all their seeming wisdom but arises
 From Fortune's gifts. Thou with the bravest chiefs
 Of Greece, from Priam erst didst wrest his Troy ;
 E'en thou who art so mean as to inspire
 Thy daughter with resentment 'gainst a child,
 And strive with me a miserable captive :
 Unworthy of thy conquest over Troy

Thee do I hold, and Troy yet more disgraced
By such a victor. Some indeed there are
To all appearance upright, who awhile
Outwardly glitter, though they in their hearts
Are on a level with the worthless bulk
Of mortals, and superior but in wealth
Whose power is great. This conference let us end
O Menelaus, be it now supposed
I by thy daughter am already slain :
'Twill be impossible for her to 'scape
From the pollution ruthless murder brings ;
Thou too by many tongues wilt be accused
Of this vile deed, with her will they confound
Thee the abettor. But if I preserve
My life, are ye resolved to slay my son ?
How will the father tamely bear the death
Of his loved offspring ? he was not esteemed
At Troy so void of courage. He is gone
Whither his duty calls. Soon will the chief
Act worthy of the race from which he springs,
The hoary Peleus, and his dauntless sire
Achilles, he from these abodes will cast
Thy daughter forth, and when thou to another
In marriage giv'st her, what hast thou to say
On her behalf ? " That from a worthless lord
Her wisdom drove her ? " This would be a falsehood
Too gross. But who would wed her ? till grown grey
In widowhood, shall she beneath thy roofs
Fix her loathed residence ? O wretched man,
The rising conflux of unnumbered woes
Behold'st thou not ? hadst thou not rather find
Thy daughter wronged by concubines, than suffering
Th' indignities I speak of ? we from trifles
Such grievous mischiefs ought not to create ;
Nor if we women are a deadly bane,
To the degenerate nature of our sex
Should men conform. If I pernicious drugs
Have to thy daughter ministered, and been,
As she pretends, the cause of her abortion,
Immediately will I without reluctance,
And without grovelling at this altar's base,
To any rigid punishment submit
Inflicted by thy son-in-law, from whom
I surely merit as severe revenge
For having made him childless. Such am I :
But in thy temper I perceive one cause
Of just alarm, since in that luckless strife
About a woman, and a vile one too,
Thou the famed Phrygian city didst destroy.

CHOR. Too freely hast thou spoken, in a tone
Which ill becomes thy sex, and that high soul
The bounds of wisdom hath o'erleaped.

MEN.

O woman,

So small an object, as you rightly judge,
Deserves not the attention of my realm,
Nor that of Greece. But learn this obvious truth :
To any man whate'er he greatly needs,
Is of more worth by far than taking Troy.
My daughter I assist, because I deem it
A wrong of great importance should she lose
Her bridal rights : for every woman looks
On all beside as secondary ills :
But if she from her husband's arms be torn,
Seems rest of life itself. That Phthia's prince
Direct my servants, and that his obey
Me and my race, is fitting : for true friends
Have no distinct possessions, but hold all
In common. While I wait for the return
Of her long absent lord, should I neglect
My daughter's interests, I were weak, not wise.
But leave this shrine of Thetis : for the child
Shall if you bleed escape th' impending doom :
Him, if you die not, will I slay, since fate
Of you or him the forfeit life demands.

AND. Ah me ! a bitter and unwelcome choice
Of life on terms like these hast thou proposed ;
Wretch that I am ! for whether I decline
Or make such option, I am wretched still.
O thou, who by a trifling wrong provoked,
Committ'st great crimes, attend : for what offence
Wouldst thou bereave me of my life ? what city
Have I betrayed ? what child of thine destroyed ?
What mansion fired ? I to my master's bed
By force was dragged : yet me alone, not him
The author of that crime, thou mean'st to slay.
Thou, the first cause o'erlooking, on th' effect
Which it produces, vent'st thy rage. What woes
Encompass wretched me ! alas ! my country !
How dreadful are the wrongs which I endure !
But wherefore was I doomed to bear a child,
And to the burden under which I groan
Add a new burden ? what delight can life
To me afford ? or on what fortunes past
Or present should I turn these eyes which saw
The corse of Hector by the victor's car
Whirled round the walls, and wretched Troy a heap
Of blazing ruins ? I meantime a slave
By my dishevelled hair was dragged aboard
The Argive navy ; when I reached the coast

Of Phthia, and cohabited with those
 Who slew my Hector ; (but why lavish plaints
 On past calamities, without deploring
 Or taking a due estimate of those
 Which now impend ?) I had this only son
 My life's last comfort left, and they who take
 Delight in deeds of cruelty, would slay him ;
 Yet to preserve my miserable life
 He shall not perish : for auspicious hopes,
 Could he be saved, his future days attend :
 But if I died not for my son, reproach
 Would be my portion. Lo ! I leave the altar
 And now am in thy hands, stab, slay me, bind,
 Strain hard the deadly noose. My son, thy mother,
 To rescue thee from an untimely grave,
 Descends the shades beneath ; if thou escape
 The ruthless grasp of fate, remember me
 How miserably I suffered ; and with kisses,
 At his return, when thou goest forth to meet
 Thy father, when a flood of tears thou shedd'st,
 And cling'st around him with those pliant arms,
 Inform him how I acted. All men hold
 Their children dear as life ; but he who scorns them
 Because he ne'er experienced what it is
 To be a father, though with fewer griefs
 Attended, but enjoys imperfect bliss.

[Kisses, and advances from the altar.]

CHOR. I with compassion to this moving tale
 Have listened ; for distress, to all mankind,
 Though strangers, must seem piteous : but on thee,
 O Menelaus, 'tis incumbent now
 To reconcile thy daughter, and this captive,
 That she may from her sorrows be released.

MEN. Seize her, and bind her hands ; for she shall hear
 No pleasing language : I proposed to slay
 Your son, that you might leave that hallowed altar
 Of Thetis, and thus craftily induced you
 To fall into my hands, and meet your death ;
 Be well assured, such is the present state
 Of your affairs : as for that boy, on him
 My daughter shall pass judgment, or to kill,
 Or spare him : but now enter these abodes,
 That you may learn, slave as you are, to treat
 Those who are free no longer with disdain.

AND. Thou hast o'erreached me by thy treacherous arts ;
 Alas ! I am betrayed.

MEN. Proclaim these tidings
 To all men ; for I shall not contradict them.

AND. By those who dwell beside Eurotas' stream
 Are such base frauds called wisdom ?

MEN. Both at Troy
And there, 'tis just the injured should retaliate.
AND. Believ'st thou that the gods are gods no longer,
Nor wield the bolt of vengeance?

MEN. We must look
To that : but you shall die.

AND. And wilt thou seize
This unfledged bird, to slay him?

MEN. No, I will not,
But give him to my daughter, who must act
As she thinks fit.

AND. Then how, alas, my son !
Can I sufficiently bewail thy fate?

MEN. "Him," 'twas but now with arrogance you said,
"Auspicious hopes attend."

AND. Ye worst of foes
To all mankind, inhabitants of Sparta !
Expert in treacherous counsels, still devising
New falsehoods, curst artificers of mischief,
Your paths are crooked, yet though void of worth,
Through Greece by circumspection ye uphold
An undeserved pre-eminence. What crimes,
What murders, what a thirst for abject gain
Characterize your realm ! with specious tongue
Uttering a language foreign to your heart,
Are ye not ever caught ? Perdition seize you !
Death is less grievous than thou deem'st to me
Who date my utter ruin from that hour
When Ilion's wretched city was involved
In the same fate with my illustrious lord,
Whose spear oft drove thee trembling from the field
Into thy ships : but now against his wife
A formidable warrior art thou come
To murder me : strike, for this coward tongue
Shall never leave thine and thy daughter's shame
Unpublished. If in Sparta thou art great,
So was I erst in Ilion ; but exult not
In my disasters, for on thee ere long
The same reverse of fortune may attend.

CHORUS.

ODE.

I. I.

'Two rival consorts ne'er can I approve,
Or sons, the source of strife, their birth who owe
To different mothers ; hence connubial love
Is banished, and the mansion teems with woe.

One blooming nymph let cautious husbands wed,
And share with her alone an unpolluted bed.

I. 2.

No prudent city, no well-governed state,
More than a single potentate will own ;
Their subjects droop beneath the grievous weight
When two bear rule, and discord shakes the throne ;
And if two bards awake their sounding lyres
E'en the harmonious Muse a cruel strife inspires,

II. 1.

To aid the bark, when prosperous gales arise,
Two jarring pilots shall misguide the helm :
Weak is a multitude when all are wise,
One simpler monarch could have saved the realm.
Let a sole chief the house or empire sway,
And all who hope for bliss their lord's behests obey.

II. 2.

This truth hath Menelaus' daughter shown,
Furious she comes the victim to destroy ;
And, that their blood may nuptial wrongs atone,
The Phrygian captive, and that hapless boy,
With impious rage unjust would cause to bleed ;
May pity, awful queen, thy lifted arm impede !

But I before these doors behold the pair
On whom the fatal sentence now is passed.
Thou wretched dame, and wretched child who diest
Because thy mother to a foreign bed
By force was dragged, in her imputed guilt
Thou wert not an accomplice, thou thy lords
Hast not offended.

AND. To the realms beneath,
Lo, I am hurried, with these bloody hands
Fast bound in galling chains.

MOL. I too, O mother,
Under thy wing, to those loathed shades descend
A victim. O ye lords of Phthia's land,
And thou, my father, succour those thou lov'st.

AND. Cling to thy mother's bosom, O my child,
Together let us die.

MOL. Ah me ! how grievous
My sufferings are ! too clearly I perceive
That I, and thou my mother, both are wretched.

MEN. Go both together to th' infernal realm :
For ye from hostile turrets hither came.
Although the cause why you and he must bleed
Is not the same, my sentence takes away

Your life, and my Hermione's your son's.
 The highest folly were it to permit
 A foe to live and vex us, whom with ease
 We might despatch, and from our house remove
 Such danger.

AND. O my husband, would to Heaven
 I had thy arm to aid me ; and thy spear,
 Thou son of Priam.

MOL. Wretched me ! what charm
 Can I devise t' avert impending fate ?

AND. My son, implore the mercy of our lord
 Claspings his knees.

MOL. Dear monarch, spare my life,

AND. Tears from these eyes burst forth like trickling drops
 By the sun's heat forced from a solid rock,
 Wretch that I am !

MOL. What remedy, alas !
 For these dire evils can my soul devise ?

MEN. Why dost thou idly grovel at my feet
 With fruitless supplications, while I stand
 Firm as a rock, or as th' un pitying wave ?
 Such conduct serves my interests : no affection
 To thee I bear, because my morn of life
 Was wasted in the conflict, ere I took
 Troy and thy mother, whose society
 Thou in the realms of Pluto shalt enjoy.

PELEUS, MENELAUS, ANDROMACHE, MOLOSSUS, CHORUS.

CHOR. Peleus, I see, draws near, his aged feet
 With eager haste advancing.

PEL. You, and him
 Who stands presiding o'er a murderous deed,
 What means this uproar that disturbs the house,
 I question, and what practices are these
 Ye carry on unauthorized by law ?
 O Menelaus, stay thy furious hand,
 And let not execution thus outstrip
 All righteous judgment. O my friends, lead on ;
 For such a dread emergency appears
 T' admit of no delay. Could I regain
 That youthful vigour which I erst enjoyed
 As prosperous breezes aid the floating sails,
 This captive would I favour. Say, what right
 Have they to bind your hands, and drag along
 You and your son ? for like the bleating mother,
 Led forth to slaughter with her lamb, you perish,
 While I and your unwitting lord are absent.

AND. They, as thou seest, O venerable man,
 Me and my son thus bear to instant death.

What shall I say to thee, whom I with speed
 Not by one single messenger but thousands
 Have sent for? sure thou, of the fatal strife
 In these divided mansions, with his daughter,
 To which I owe my ruin, must have heard :
 And from the violated shrine of Thetis,
 Who bore to thee a noble son, the goddess
 Whom thou rever'st e'en now with brutal force
 Me have they torn, nor judged my cause, nor wait
 For absent Neoptolemus, but, knowing
 That I and that this child who hath committed
 No fault, are left alone and unprotected,
 Would slay us both. But, O thou aged man,
 Thus prostrate on my knees, to thee I sue,
 And, though this hand must not presume to touch
 Thy honoured beard, conjure thee by the gods,
 Rescue us, or to thy eternal shame
 Both he and I must miserably bleed.

PEL. My orders are that you those galling chains
 Unbind and loose her hands, else will I make
 The disobedient weep.

MEN. But I, your equal,
 Who have much more authority o'er her,
 Forbid them.

PEL. Com'st thou hither to direct
 My household? is it not enough for thee
 To rule thy Spartans?

MEN. Her I took at Troy.

PEL. She, to reward his valour, was bestowed
 Upon my grandson.

MEN. Doth not all he owns,
 To me, and what is mine, to him belong?

PEL. For honest purposes, but not for crimes
 And murderous violence.

MEN. You ne'er shall take her
 Out of my hands.

PEL. Thy head I with this sceptre
 Will smite.

MEN. Draw near; if you presume to touch me,
 Soon shall you rue such outrage.

PEL. O thou villain,
 Sprung from a race of impious sires, what right
 To be accounted an illustrious man,
 And numbered with the truly brave, hast thou,
 Who by a Phrygian wanderer wert deprived
 Of thy fair consort, after thou hadst left
 Thy house unbarred and destitute of guards,
 As if thou in thy mansions hadst possessed
 A virtuous dame, though she of all her sex

Was the most dissolute ? nor if she would
Can any Spartan nymph be chaste ? for wandering
From their own homes, distinguished by bare legs,
And zoneless vest, they with young men contend
In swiftness and in wrestling ; I such customs
Hold in abhorrence. Is there any room
For wonder if the women prove unchaste
Whom thus you educate ? thy Helen ought
To have proposed these questions, ere she left
Her native realm, regardless of thy love,
And by that youthful paramour seduced,
Wantonly fled into a foreign land.
Yet for her sake didst thou that numerous host
Of Greeks collect, and lead them to assail
The Phrygian ramparts. Thou that beauteous dame
Shouldst rather have despised, nor in her cause
Wielded the javelin, when thou found'st her worthless,
But suffered her in Ilion to remain,
And sent rich gifts to Paris on these terms,
That to thy house she never should return.
But thou, instead of suffering these just motives
To make their due impression on thy soul,
Full many valiant warriors hast destroyed,
Made th' aged matron childless, and deprived
Of his illustrious sons the hoary sire.
Numbered with those who owe to thee thy ruin
Am wretched I : for like some evil genius
In thee do these indignant eyes behold
The murderer of Achilles : thou alone,
Save by the missile shaft, unwounded cam'st
From Ilion's hostile shores ; in burnished chests
Didst thou bear thither the same glittering arms
Which thou bear'st back again. Before he wedded,
I warned my grandson to form no connection
With thee, nor into these abodes admit
The brood of that adult'ress ; for the daughters
Their mother emulate in deeds of shame.
Look well to this, ye suitors, and select
The damsel with maternal worth endued.
Then with what scorn didst thou thy brother treat,
Commanding him 'gainst reason to transgress,
And sacrifice his daughter. Thou such fears,
Lest thou that execrable wife shouldst lose,
Didst entertain. When thou hadst taken Troy,
This too I urge against thee, though thou hadst
Thy consort in thy power, thou didst not slay her,
But when her throbbing bosom thou beheld'st
Didst cast away thy sword, receive her kisses,
And soothe the fears of her who had betrayed thee.

CHOR. Among mankind,

MEN. Why do we speak in such exalted terms

Of aged men, as if they were endued
With wisdom, though in former days supposed
By the whole Grecian race to judge aright ?
When you, O Peleus, who derive your birth
From an illustrious sire, and with my house
So nearly are connected, hold a language
Disgraceful to yourself, and slander me,
For a barbarian dame, whom from this land
You ought to banish far beyond the Nile,
Beyond the Phasis, and applaud my vengeance ;
Because she comes from Asiatic shores,
Where many valiant Grecian chiefs lie slain.
And hath in part been guilty of the blood
Of your famed son ; for Paris, by whose shaft,
Transpierced, Achilles perished, was the brother,
And she the wife of Hector : yet you enter
The same abode with her, the genial board
With her partake, allow her to bring forth
Under your roofs an execrable brood.
These mischiefs both to you and me, old man,
Foreseeing, have I snatched her from your hands
With a design to kill her. But, O say,
(For there is nought of meanness in our holding
This conference), if my daughter bear no child,
And she have sons, will you appoint them lords
Of this your Phthian land ? shall they who spring
From a barbarian race, o'er Greeks bear rule ?
Am I, because I hate injustice, void

Of understanding, and are you discreet?
 Reflect on this ; had you bestowed your daughter
 On any citizen, were she thus treated,
 Would you sit down and bear her wrongs in silence?
 I deem you would not. Why then with such harshness
 Speak you in favour of a foreign dame
 Against your nearest friends? as great a right
 To vengeance as her husband, hath the wife
 Whom her lord injures : for while he whose doors
 An unchaste consort enters, in his hands
 Hath power to right himself, a woman's strength
 Lies only in her parents and her friends.
 My daughter, therefore, am I bound to aid :
 You show the marks of age : for while you talk
 Of that famed war I waged, you more befriend me
 Than if you had been silent. Deep in woe
 Was Helen plunged, not by her own consent
 But by the gods : and this event hath proved
 To Greece most advantageous, for its sons
 Who knew not how till then to wield the spear,
 Grew valiant. From experience, best of tutors,
 Men gather all the knowledge they possess.
 But when I saw my consort, in forbearing
 To take away her life, I acted wisely :
 And would that you had done like me, nor slain
 Your brother Phocus ; this to you I speak
 Through mere benevolence, and not in wrath :
 But if resentment o'er your soul usurp
 An empire, such intemperance of the tongue
 Will be in you more shameful, while my wishes
 I by a prudent forethought shall attain.

CHOR. Now both desist (for this were better far)
 From such unprofitable strife of words,
 O ye will both offend.

PEL. Ah me ! through Greece
 What mischievous opinions have prevailed !
 When with the spoils of vanquished foes, the host
 A trophy rear, they think not how 'twas gained
 By those brave soldiers who endure the toil
 Of battle, while their general bears away
 All the renown : though he was only one
 Who stood 'midst thousands brandishing his spear,
 Nor any single combatant surpassed,
 He gains a larger portion of applause.
 The venerable rulers of a city,
 Placed in exalted stations, yet devoid
 Of any real merit, overlook
 The populace, though many in the crowd
 Of their inferiors are more wise than they,

If haply courage and an honest zeal
 Unite to place them in the public view.
 Thou and thy brother thus are swollen with pride,
 From having led those troops to conquer Troy,
 And triumph in the sufferings of your friends.
 But henceforth will I teach thee not to look
 On Paris, Ida's shepherd, as a foe,
 More terrible than Peleus. If with speed
 Thou quit not these abodes, and take away
 Thy childless daughter, my indignant grandson,
 By her dishevelled hair around the palace
 Will drag this barren dame, who stung with envy,
 Cannot endure the fruitful mother's joys.
 But, if she prove so luckless as to bare
 No issue, ought she therefore to deprive us
 Of our posterity? Begone, ye slaves,
 That I may see who dares obstruct my loosing
 Her hands. Rise up: though trembling with old age,
 Your chains can I unbind. O worthless man,
 Hast thou thus galled her hands? didst thou suppose
 Thou held'st a bull or lion in the snare?
 Or didst thou shudder lest she should snatch up
 A sword, and wreak just vengeance on thy head?
 Come hither to these sheltering arms, my child,
 Unbind thy mother's chains; in Phthia, thee
 I'll educate, to them a bitter foe.
 Should Sparta's sons by the protended spear
 Obtain no fame, nor in th' embattled field
 Their prowess signalize, be well assured
 Ye have no other merit.

CHOR. Old men talk
 With freedom, and their vehemence of soul
 Is hard to be restrained.

MEN. Extremely prone
 Are you to slander; much against my will
 I came to Phthia, and am here resolved
 That I will neither do nor suffer aught
 Disgraceful: but to my own home with speed
 Am I returning, and have little time
 In vain debates to lavish: for a city
 Not far from Sparta's gates and erst a friend
 Is waging war against us: I would lead
 My hardy squadrons forth t' assail the foe,
 And utterly subdue them. To my wish
 Soon as this great affair I shall have settled,
 Hither will I return, and face to face,
 When I my reasons to my son-in-law
 Have in the clearest terms proposed, will hear
 What he can urge; and if he punish her,

And for the future courteously to me
 Demean himself, from me he in return
 Shall meet with courtesy ; but if he rage,
 He of my rage the dire effects shall feel :
 For still such treatment as his deeds deserve
 Shall he experience. But I am not hurt
 By these injurious words of yours ; for like
 Some disembodied ghost, you have a voice,
 Although you are not able to do aught
 But merely speak.

[*Exit* MENELAUS.]

PEL. Lead on, my boy ; here take
 Thy station under these protecting arms ;
 And thou too, O thou miserable dame,
 Driven hither by the furious storm ; at length
 Into a quiet haven are ye come.

AND. On thee and thy descendants may the gods
 Shower every blessing, venerable man,
 For having saved this child, and wretched me ;
 Yet O beware, lest in some lonely spot
 They suddenly assail us, and by force
 Drag me away, perceiving thou art old,
 That I am a weak woman, and my son
 Is but an infant : all precautions use,
 Else we, who have escaped them, may again
 Be caught.

PEL. Forbear to utter, in such language
 As this, the dictates of a woman's fear.
 Advance, who dares to touch you ? he shall weep.
 For with the blessing of th' immortal gods,
 And by unnumbered troops of valiant horse,
 And infantry supported, I bear rule
 Over the Phthian land. I am robust,
 Nor, as you deem, impaired by palsied age.
 Were I, opposed in battle, but to look
 On such a man as this, old as I am,
 An easy conquest soon should I obtain.
 Superior is the veteran, if with courage
 Inspired, to many youths : for what avails
 A vigorous body with a coward's heart ?

[*Exeunt* PELEUS, ANDROMACHE, and MOLOSSUS.]

CHORUS.

ODE.

I.

My wish were this ; or never to be born,
 Or to descend from generous sires, and share
 The blessings which attend a wealthy heir.
 If heaviest woes assail, ne'er left forlorn

Without a friend are they of nobler race,
 Hereditary trophies deck their head :
 The records of the brave with joy we trace,
 No distant age their memory can efface,
 For virtue's torch unquenched pours radiance o'er the dead.

II.

Better is conquest, when we gain our right
 By no reproachful means, no deeds of shame,
 Than if to envy we expose our fame,
 And trample on the laws with impious might.
 Such laurels which at first too sweetly bloom,
 Ere long are withered by the frost of time,
 And scorn pursues their wearers to the tomb.
 I in my household or the state presume
 To seek that power alone which rules without a crime.

III.

O veteran, sprung from Æacus, thy spear
 Chilled the Lapithæ with fear,
 And from their hills the Centaurs drove.
 When glory called, and prosperous gales
 Swelled the Argo's daring sails,
 Intrepid didst thou pass that strait
 Where ruin oft the crashing bark attends,
 And ocean's foam descends
 From the Symplegades' obstructing height.
 Next didst thou land on perjured Ilion's shore,
 With Hercules illustrious son of Jove,
 Then first its bulwarks streamed with gore :
 Till crowned with fame a partner of his toil,
 Europe again thou sought'st and Phthia's frozen soil.

THE NURSE OF HERMIONE, CHORUS.

NUR. How doth a rapid series of events
 The most disastrous, O my dearest friends,
 This day invade us ! for within these doors
 Hermione my mistress, by her sire
 Forsaken, and grown conscious of the guilt
 She hath incurred, by that attempt to murder
 Andromache and her unhappy son,
 Resolves to die, because she dreads, lest fired
 With indignation at her guilt, her lord
 Should cast her forth with scorn, or take away
 Her life, because she purposed to have slain
 The innocent. The servants who attend
 Can hardly by their vigilance prevent her
 From fixing round her neck the deadly noose,
 Or snatch the dagger from her hand, so great

Is her affliction, and she now confesses
That she has done amiss. My strength's exhausted
In striving to withhold my royal mistress
From perishing by an ignoble death.
But enter ye these mansions, and attempt
To save her life, for strangers can persuade
Far better than old friends.

CHOR. We hear the voice
Of her attendants from within confirm
Th' intelligence thou hither cam'st to bring :
That hapless woman seems just on the point
Of showing with what rage she by her guilt
Is hurried on : for lo, she rushes forth
From yon abodes, already hath she 'scaped
Her servants' hands, and is resolved to die.

HERMIONE, NURSE, CHORUS.

HER. Ah me ! these ringlets how will I tear off,
How rend my cheeks !

NUR. What mean'st thou, O my daughter ?
Wilt thou thus injure that fair frame ?

HER. Away,
O thou slight veil, I pluck thee from my head,
And toss thy scattered fragments in the air.

NUR. Cover thy bosom with the decent robe.

HER. Why with a robe my bosom should I hide ?
The crimes I have committed 'gainst my lord
Are clear, well known, and cannot be concealed.

NUR. Griev'st thou because thou hast formed schemes
to slay
Thy rival ?

HER. I with many groans bewail
Those hostile darings, execrable wretch,
Wretch that I am, an object of just hate
To all mankind.

NUR. Thy husband such offence
Will pardon.

HER. From my hand why didst thou snatch
The sword ? Restore, restore it, O my friends,
That I this bosom may transpierce. Why force me
To quit yon pendant noose ?

NUR. In thy distraction
Shall I forsake and leave thee thus to die ?

HER. Where shall I find (inform me, O ye Fates)
The blazing pyre, ascend the craggy rock,
Plunge in the billows, or amidst the woods
On a steep mountain waste the life I loathe,
That after death the gods beneath may take me
To their protection ?

CHOR. Why wouldst thou make efforts
So violent? some mischiefs sent by Heaven
Sooner or later visit all mankind.

HER. Me like a stranded bark, thou, O my sire,
Hast left forsaken and without an oar.
To thee I owe my ruin. I no longer
In these my bridal mansions can reside.
To the propitious statues of what God
With suppliant haste shall I repair, or fall
At a slave's knees, myself an abject slave?
I from the land of Phthia, like a bird
Upborne on azure wings, would speed my flight,
Or imitate that ship whose dashing oars
'Twixt the Cyanean straits first urged their way.

NUR. As little, O my daughter, can I praise
That vehemence which caused thee to transgress
Against the Trojan dame, as these thy fears
Which are immoderate. For such slight offence
Thy lord, misled by the pernicious tongue
Of a barbarian woman, from his couch
Will not expel thee: for thou art not his
By right of conquest, borne from vanquished Troy;
But thee, the daughter of a mighty king,
He with abundant dower, and from a city
Most flourishing, received: nor will thy sire,
His child forsaking, as thou dread'st, permit thee
To be cast forth: but enter these abodes,
Nor show thyself without, lest some affront
Thou shouldst receive if haply thou art seen
Before these doors. [Exit NURSE.]

CHOR. Behold a man, whose dress
Is of such different fashion that it speaks
The foreigner, comes swiftly from the gate.

ORESTES, HERMIONE, CHORUS.

ORE. Is this th' abode of great Achilles' son,
The regal mansion, O ye foreign dames?

CHOR. It is as thou hast said. But who art thou
That ask'st this question?

ORE. Agamemnon's son,
And Clytemnestra's; but my name's Orestes:
I to Dodona, th' oracle of Jove,
Am on my road; but since I now have reached
The land of Phthia, first would I inquire
How fares Hermione, the Spartan dame,
My kinswoman; doth she yet live and prosper?
For though from me far distant be the land
In which she now resides, she still is dear.

HER. O son of Agamemnon, who thus make

Your seasonable appearance, like the haven
 To mariners amidst a furious storm,
 Take pity, I implore you by those knees,
 On me a wretch whose inauspicious fortunes
 You witness. Hence around your knees I fling
 These arms, which ought to prove of equal force
 With hallowed branches by the suppliant borne.

ORE. What's this? am I deceived? or do my eyes
 Indeed behold the queen of these abodes,
 And Menelaus' daughter?

HER. Th' only child
 Whom to the Spartan monarch Helen bore.
 Mistake me not.

ORE. O Phœbus, healing power,
 Protect us! But what dire mischance hath happened?
 Or from the gods, or human foes, proceed
 The evils thou endur'st?

HER. Some from myself,
 But others from the husband whom I wedded
 The rest from one of the immortal gods.
 I utterly am ruined.

ORE. What afflictions
 Can any woman who's yet childless feel
 But those which from her nuptial union spring?

HER. Hence these distempers of the soul arise,
 And well do you anticipate my words.

ORE. Enamoured with another, is thy lord
 False to thy bed?

HER. He loves a captive dame,
 The wife of Hector.

ORE. This of which thou speak'st
 Is a great evil, when one man possesses
 Two wives.

HER. 'Twas thus, till I avenged the wrong.

ORE. Didst thou with arts familiar to thy sex
 Plot 'gainst thy rival's life?

HER. I would have killed
 Her and her spurious son.

ORE. Hast thou despatched them?
 Or were they screened from their impending fate?

HER. Old Peleus to these worthless objects showed
 Too great a reverence.

ORE. Was there any friend
 Ready to aid thee in the purposed slaughter?

HER. My sire, who for this cause from Sparta came.

ORE. Yet by that aged man was he subdued?

HER. Abashed he fled, and left me here alone.

ORE. I understand thee well: thy husband's wrath
 Thou fear'st for what thou'st done.

HER.

The fact you know :

Hence justly will he take away my life.
 What can be said? yet by immortal Jove,
 Our grandsire, I conjure you, send me far
 From these domains, or to my father's house.
 Had but these walls a voice, they would proclaim
 The sentence of my exile, for the land
 Of Phthia hates me. If my lord return
 From Phœbus' oracle, for the misdeeds
 I have committed, he will strike me dead,
 Or force me to become that harlot's slave
 Whom erst I ruled.

ORE.

By some will it be asked
 Whence then into such errors didst thou fall?

HER. My ruin I derive from the admission
 Of these vile women, who inflamed my pride
 By uttering these rash words : " Wilt thou endure
 Beneath thy roof that odious slave who shares
 Thy bridal couch? by Juno, awful queen,
 I would not suffer such a wretch to breathe
 In my polluted chamber." When I heard
 The language uttered by these crafty sirens,
 Artificers of mischief, who, to suit
 Their purpose, in persuasive strains displayed
 The power of eloquence, I was puffed up
 With folly : for what need had I to hold
 My lord in reverence while possessed of all
 That I could wish? abundant wealth was mine,
 O'er these abodes I reigned, and any children
 I to my husband might hereafter bare
 Would be legitimate ; but hers, by mine
 In strict subjection held, a spurious race.
 But never, never (I this truth repeat)
 Should wedded men, who have the gift of reason,
 Let women have a free access, and visit
 Their consort. For they teach her evil lessons :
 Urged by the hopes of lucre, one corrupts
 Her chastity ; a second hath already
 Transgressed herself, and wishes that her friend
 May be as vicious : many by their lust
 Are led astray : hence to their husband's house
 A train of mischief rises. Guard the doors
 Of your abodes with locks and massive bars ;
 Since from the intrusion of these female guests,
 No good, but mischiefs numberless ensue.

CHOR. Thou to thy tongue hast given too free a
 scope

In thus aspersing the whole female race :
 Thy present woes indeed our pardon claim ;

Yet every woman is in duty bound
To gloss o'er the misconduct of her sex.

ORE. Wisdom pertained to him who taught mankind
To hear the reasons by both parties urged
In a debate. Aware of the confusion
In these abodes, and of the strife 'twixt thee
And Hector's wife, I stayed not to observe
Whether thou in this house wouldst still remain,
Or through a fear of yonder captive dame
Abandon it : I therefore hither came,
Nor waited for intelligence from thee.
And if a satisfactory account
Of thy proceedings thou to me canst give,
I will convey thee hence. For thou, who erst
Wert mine, with this thy present husband liv'st,
'Through the perfidious conduct of thy sire,
Who ere he entered the domains of Troy
Affianced thee to me, and then to him
Who now possesses thee, again engaged,
If he the Phrygian city should subdue.
But I forgive thy father for this wrong,
When hither great Achilles' son returned,
And to the bridegroom sued that he would loose
Thy plighted hand ; of all my various fortunes
Informing him, and of my present woes ;
How feasible it were for me to wed
Among my friends, but that for such an exile
As I am, driven from my paternal throne,
'Twould not be easy to obtain a consort
In any foreign land : on this he grew
More arrogant, and bitterly reproached me
Both with my mother's murder, and those Furies
Whose blood-stained visages inspire dismay.
By the misfortunes of my house bowed down
To earth, I grieved indeed, but grieving bore
The weight of these calamities, and reft
Of thee my bride, reluctantly departed.
But since thy fortunes now have undergone
A change so unexpected, and involved
In woe, thou stand'st aghast ; from these abodes
Thee will I take and to thy sire convey.
For wondrous is the force of kindred ties ;
And in misfortunes nought exceeds the friend
Who from the self-same house derives his birth.

HER. My father will take care how to dispose
Of me in marriage, nor is it my province
Such question to decide. But, O convey me
From these loathed mansions with the utmost speed,
Lest when my husband at his first return

Enters the doors, he intercept my flight ;
Or, hearing that I leave his grandson's house,
Pelex pursue me with his rapid steeds.

ORE. Be of good cheer against that aged man,
And from thy furious lord, Achilles' son,
Who treated me with scorn, fear nought ; this hand
Hath with such cautious artifice prepared
For him th' inevitable snares of death,
Of which no previous mention will I make :
But when it is accomplished, this exploit
Shall on the rock of Delphi be proclaimed.
I who my mother slew, if th' armed friends
Whom I have station'd in the Pythian realm
Observe their oaths, will teach him that he ought
To have abstained from wedding any dame
Betrothed to me. He in an evil hour
Shall claim atonement for his father's death
Of Phœbus mighty king ; nor shall repentance
For these audacious blasphemies avail
To save the miscreant on whose impious head
Apollo wreaks just vengeance ; by his wrath
O'ertaken, and entangled in my snares,
He wretchedly shall perish. For the gods
Subvert the prosperous fortunes of their foes
Nor suffer pride to rear her towering crest.

[*Exeunt ORESTES and HERMIONE.*]

CHORUS.

ODE.

I. 1.

Phœbus, thou god who with a mound
Of stately towers didst Ilion's rock surround ;
And thou, O Neptune, ruler of the main,
Borne swiftly by thy azure steeds
In a light car, who cleav'st the watery plain ;
After exerting with unwearied toil
Such skill as human works exceeds,
'Gainst wretched Troy when Mars his javelin bore,
Why, faithless to that chosen soil,
Left ye your city drenched in gore ?

I. 2.

The steeds ye yoked on Simois' banks
Whirled many a chariot through the broken ranks ;
No hero gathered in that stubborn fray
One laurel to adorn his head :
Phrygia's illustrious rulers swept away,

Took their last voyage to a distant shore,
 And mingled with the vulgar dead,
 While the polluted altars ceased to gleam
 Upwafting to the skies no more
 Their frankincense in odorous steam.

II. 1.

Slain by his wife Atrides fell ;
 His furious son sent to the shades of Hell
 The murderess, and returned th' unnatural deed,
 That fatal stroke the god approved,
 His oracles ordained that she should bleed,
 When young Orestes at the inmost shrine
 Was by a heavenly impulse moved,
 His hands in gore maternal to imbrue.
 O Phœbus, O thou power divine,
 How shall I think th' assertion true ?

II. 2.

In Greece doth many a dame complain
 Chaunting rude dirges for her children slain ;
 Others their native land reluctant leave,
 And to a foreign lord are brought.
 Nor yet hast thou alone just cause to grieve,
 Nor to thy friends hath Heaven's peculiar hate
 These signal miseries wrought :
 Victorious Greece still feels as deep a wound,
 From whence the thunderbolt of fate
 Through Phrygia scattered deaths around.

PELEUS, CHORUS.

PEL. Answer my questions, O ye Phthian dames,
 For doubtful is the rumour I have heard,
 That Menelaus' daughter, when she left
 This house departed from the realm. I come
 Anxious to learn if this account be true.
 For 'tis their duty who remain at home
 To guard the fortunes of their absent friends.

CHOR. What thou hast heard, O Peleus, is the truth,
 And ill would it become me to conceal
 The woes in which I deeply am involved :
 Our royal mistress from these walls is fled.

PEL. What feared she ? say.

CHOR. The anger of her lord,
 Lest he from these abodes should cast her forth.

PEL. Because she plotted to have slain the boy ?

CHOR. E'en so it was. Yon captive too she dreaded,

PEL. But from these mansions did she go, attended,
 Or by her father or by whom ?

CHOR. The son
Of Agamemnon from this land conveyed her.

PEL. What are his views ? to take her for his bride ?

CHOR. Thy grandson too he meditates to slay.

PEL. Stationed in secret ambush, or resolved
To meet the dauntless warrior face to face ?

CHOR. Beneath Apollo's unpolluted fane
With Delphi's citizens.

PEL. Atrocious crime !
Ah me ! will no one with his utmost speed
Go to the altar of the Pythian god,
And to our friends disclose what passes here,
Ere by his foes Achilles' son is slain ?

MESSENGER, PELEUS, CHORUS.

MES. What evil tidings do I bring to you,
O aged man, and all my master's friends !

PEL. By a sad presage which affects my soul
I of th' impending evil am forewarned.

MES. Know then, O Peleus, that your wretched grandson
Is now no more, with such unnumbered wounds
He by the Delphic citizens transpierced,
And by that stranger from Mycene died.

CHOR. Alas ! alas ! but what resource is left
For thee, thou hoary veteran ? do not fall ;
Raise thyself up.

PEL. To very nothing now
Am I reduced, I utterly am ruined :
The power of speech deserts me, and these limbs
Forget their office.

MES. Hear me, and from earth
Arise, if, with th' assistance of your friends,
You for this murder wish to be revenged.

PEL. How hast thou compassed wretched me, who stand
On the last verge of spiritless old age,
O cruel fate ! say how the only son
Of my deceased, my only son, was slain.
These tidings though unwelcome would I hear.

MES. After we reached Apollo's sacred realm,
While thrice the chariot of the sun performed
Its bright career, we satiated our eyes
With viewing all around. The circumstance
Which raised suspicion first, was this : the people
Who dwell within the temple of the god
Held frequent meetings, and in crowds assembled.
Meanwhile the son of Agamemnon went
Through the whole city, and in every ear
Whispered malignant words like these : " Behold

Him who is visiting the hallowed shrine
Of Phœbus piled with gold, the treasures given
By all mankind ; the miscreant comes again
On the same purpose which first drew him hither,
To overthrow the temple of the god.”
Through the whole city hence an evil rumour
Went forth, and all the magistrates, to whom
The holy treasures were consigned, assembled,
In secret councils held, and placed a guard
Behind the massive columns in the fane.
We, unapprized of this, meantime had caught
Some sheep, that fed amid Parnassus’ grove,
And with our Delphic friends and Pythian seers
Approached the altar : some one said : “ Young man,
What vows on thy behalf shall we address
To Phœbus ? for what purpose art thou come ? ”
He answered ; “ To the god I wish to make
A due atonement for my past offence,
Because I erst from him with impious tongue
Claimed satisfaction for my father’s blood.”
Hence d d Orestes’ calumnies appear
To have great weight, suggesting that my lord
Spoke an untruth, and that he hither came
With vile designs. Beneath the holy roof,
That to Apollo he might offer up
His prayers in that oracular abode,
He now advanced, and as they blazed, observed
The victims : here a troop with falchions armed
Screened by the branching laurels stood ; the son
Of Clytemnestra was the sole contriver
Of all these stratagems. Our lord stood forth,
And, in the sight of this insidious band,
Adored the god : while they with their keen swords,
Ere he discerned them, pierced Achilles’ son
Unsheathed in mail. He instantly retreated ;
For he as yet had by no deadly wound
Been smitten ; but snatched up in his retreat
Those glittering arms which near the portals hung,
And stood a champion terrible to view,
Close to the blazing altar : with loud voice
He questioned the inhabitants of Delphi :
“ Me who a pious votary hither come,
Why, or for what offences, would ye slay ! ”
Although the number of his foes was great,
None of them answered, but all hands hurled stones :
On every side assaulted by a storm
Thick as the falling snows, he warded off,
Extending the broad margin of his shield,
Each missile weapon : but of no avail

Was this resistance : for the spear, the shaft,
 The dart, were thrown at once, and at his feet
 Mixed instruments of sacrifice lay scattered.
 Th' agility with which your grandson shunned
 The blows they aimed, was wondrous to behold :
 They in a circle gathering round, closed in,
 Nor gave him space to breathe, till from the altar
 Descending with a leap like that which bore
 The hapless Grecian chief to Phrygia's coast,
 He rushed among them : like a flock of doves
 Who see the hawk appear, they turned and fled :
 In heaps on heaps promiscuous, many fell,
 Some in the narrow passage wounded lay,
 While others o'er them trampled, and their groans
 Unholy echoed through the hallowed dome.
 But, tranquil as the waters in a calm,
 In golden arms my lord resplendent stood,
 Till from the inmost sanctuary burst forth
 A deep-toned voice of horror, which impelled
 The recreant warriors to renew the fight :
 Achilles' son then smitten through the flank
 With a keen sword, by one of Delphi fell,
 Who slew him, yet ignobly, with the aid
 Of multitudes. But after he to earth
 Was fallen, what sword transpierced him not, what hand
 Threw not a stone to smite him ? his whole frame,
 So graceful erst, was with unnumbered wounds
 Disfigured : till at length his mangled corse,
 Which stained the altar's basis, from the fane
 Drenched with the blood of victims they cast forth.
 But gathering up with speed, his loved remains
 To you we bear, O venerable man,
 That o'er them you may shed the plenteous tear,
 And grace them with sepulchral rites. Thus Phœbus,
 Who prophesies to others, mighty king,
 And deals out justice to th' admiring world,
 Hath on Achilles' son revenged himself,
 And, like some worthless human foe, revived
 An ancient grudge : how then can he be wise ?

[Exit MESSENGER.]

CHOR. But lo ! our royal master, from the land
 Of Delphi borne, approaches these abodes !
 Wretched was he, by such untimely doom
 O'ertaken : nor art thou, O aged man,
 Less wretched than the slaughtered youth : for thou
 Into thy doors receiv'st Achilles' son,
 But not as thou couldst wish ; thou too art fallen
 Into affliction's snare.

PEL.

What piteous object,

Ah me ! do I behold, and with these hands
 Receive into my house ! we are undone,
 We are undone, O thou Thessalian city ;
 I have no children, no descendants left,
 To occupy these mansions. On what friend
 Shall I a wretched sufferer turn my eyes,
 And hope to find relief ? O thou dear face,
 Ye cheeks, ye hands ! thee would to Heaven that fate
 In those embattled fields of Troy had slain
 Beside the waves of Simois !

CHOR. He in death
 Hence would have found renown ; thou too, old man,
 Wouldst have been happier.

PEL. Thou, O wedlock, wedlock,
 These mansions and my city hast o'erthrown.
 My grandson, through the inauspicious nuptials
 By thee contracted, would to heaven my gates
 Had ne'er received that execrable fiend
 Hermione, thy bane ! O had she first
 With thunderbolts been smitten ! nor hadst thou,
 Presumptuous mortal, charged the Delphic god
 With having aimed the shaft which slew thy sire !

CHOR. I will awake the sad funereal dirge,
 And wailing pay to my departed lord
 Such customary tribute as attends
 The shades of mighty chiefs,

PEL. Ah me ! at once
 With misery and old age bowed down to earth,
 I shed th' incessant tear.

CHOR. Thus hath the god
 Ordained, the god's vindictive arm hath wrought
 All these calamities.

PEL. O most beloved,
 This house, ah me ! a desert hast thou left,
 And me a miserable old man made childless.

CHOR. Before thy children, O thou aged man,
 Thou shouldst have died.

PEL. Shall I not rend my hair,
 And beat with desperate hands this hoary head ?
 O city ! Phœbus hath of both my sons
 Deprived me.

CHOR. O thou miserable old man,
 What evils hast thou witnessed and endured !
 How wilt thou pass the remnant of thy life ?

PEL. Childless, forlorn, no period to my woes
 Can I discover, but till death must drink
 The bitter potion.

CHOR. Sure the gods in vain
 Showered blessings on thy nuptials.

PEL. Fled and withered
Is all our ancient pomp.

CHOR. Alone thou mov'st
Around thy lonely house.

PEL. I have no city.
Thee, O my sceptre, to the ground I cast,
And from yon dreary caverns of the main,
Daughter of Nereus, me wilt thou behold
Utterly ruined, grovelling in the dust.

CHOR. Ha ! who was it that moved ? what form divine
Do I perceive ? look there ! ye nymphs, attend,
With rapid passage through the fleecy clouds
Borne onward, some divinity arrives
At Phthia's pastures, famed for generous steeds.

THETIS, PELEUS, CHORUS.

THE. O Peleus, mindful of the ties which bound
Our plighted love, I hither from the house
Of Nereus come, and with these wholesome counsels
Begin ; despair not, though thy present woes
Are grievous : for e'en I who should have borne
A race of children such as ne'er might cause
My tears to stream, have lost the son who crowned
Our hopes, Achilles, swift of foot, the first
Of Grecian heroes. But to thee, the motives
Which brought me hither, will I now relate ;
O listen to my voice. Back to that altar
Devoted to the Pythian god, convey
This body of Achilles' slaughtered son,
And bury it ; so shall his tomb declare
The murderous violence Orestes' band
Committed : but yon captive dame, I mean
Andromache, on Helenus bestowed
In marriage, in Molossia's land must dwell,
And her young son, the only royal branch
Which of the stem of Æacus remains ;
From him in long succession shall a race
Of happy kings Molossia's sceptre wield :
Nor will our progeny, O aged man,
Be utterly extinct, when blended thus
With Ilion, still protected by the gods.
Though by Minerva's stratagems it fell.
But, as for thee, that thou mayst know the blessing
Of having wedded me, who am by birth
A goddess and the daughter of a god,
From all the ills which wait on human life
Releasing, thee immortal will I make
And incorruptible ; with me a goddess
In Nereus' watery mansions thou a god

Hereafter shalt reside, and from the waves
 Emerging with dry feet, behold our son
 Achilles, to his parents justly dear,
 Inhabiting that isle whose chalky coasts
 Are laved by the surrounding Euxine deep.
 But go to Delphi's city by the gods
 Erected, thither bear this weltering corse,
 And when thou hast interred it, to this land
 Return, and in that cave which through the rock
 Of Sepia time hath worn, thy station keep
 Till from the waves I with my sister choir
 The fifty Nereids come, to bear thee hence.
 Thou must endure the woes imposed by fate,
 For thus hath Jove ordained. But cease to grieve
 For the deceased: for by the righteous gods
 The same impartial sentence is awarded
 To the whole human race, and death's a debt
 Which all must pay.

PEL. Hail, venerable dame,
 Daughter of Nereus, my illustrious wife :
 For what thou dost is worthy of thyself,
 And of thy progeny. I cease to grieve
 At thy command, O goddess, and will go,
 Soon as my grandson's corse I have interred,
 To Pelion's cave, where first thy beauteous form
 I in these arms received. The man whose choice
 Is by discretion guided, should select
 A consort nobly born, and give his daughters
 To those of virtuous families, nor wish
 To wed a damsel sprung from worthless sires,
 Though to his house a plenteous dower she bring :
 So shall he ne'er incur the wrath of Heaven.

CHOR. A thousand shapes our varying fates assume,
 The gods perform what we could least expect,
 And oft the things for which we fondly hoped
 Come not to pass : but Heaven still finds a clue
 To guide our steps through life's perplexing maze.
 And thus does this important business end.

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