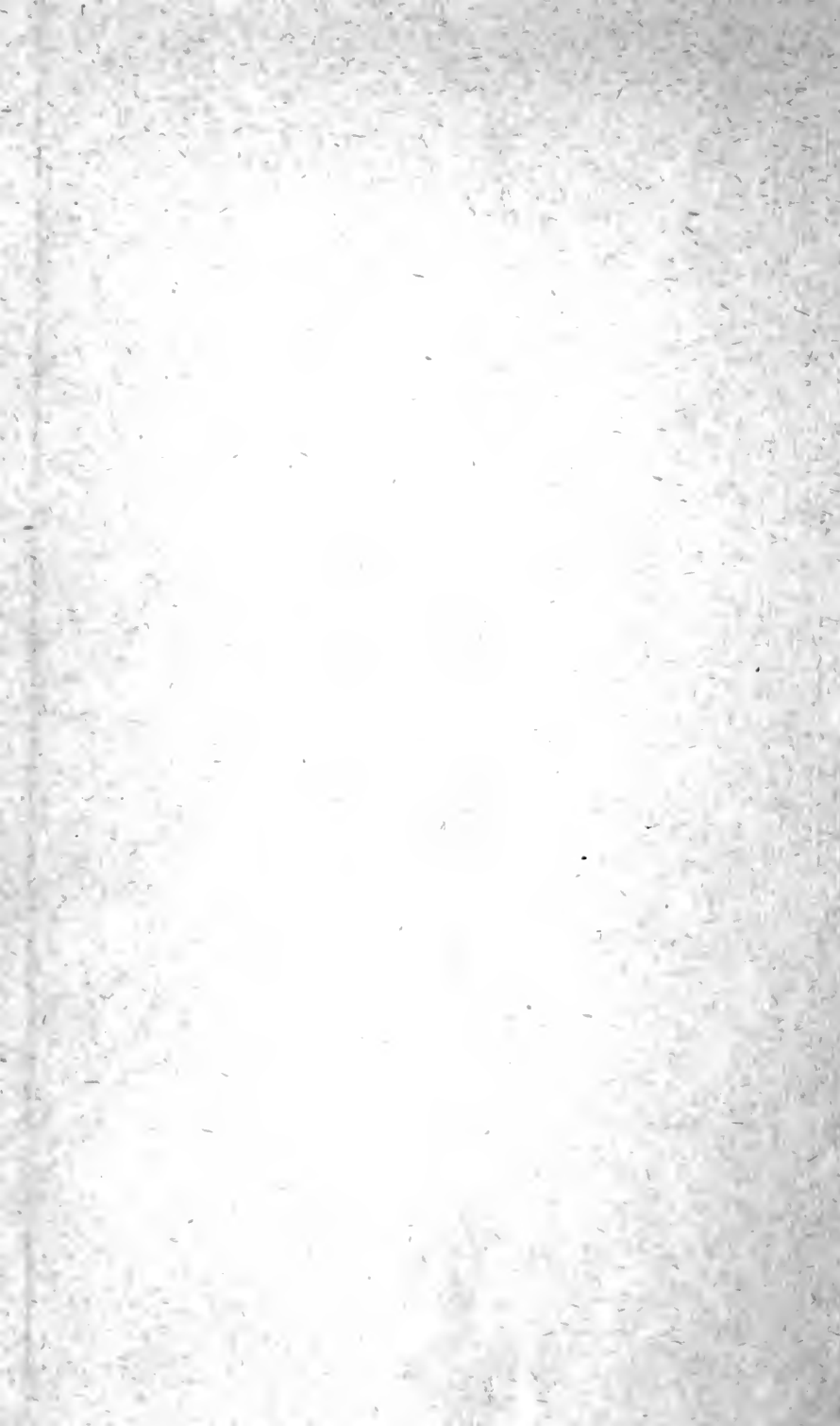


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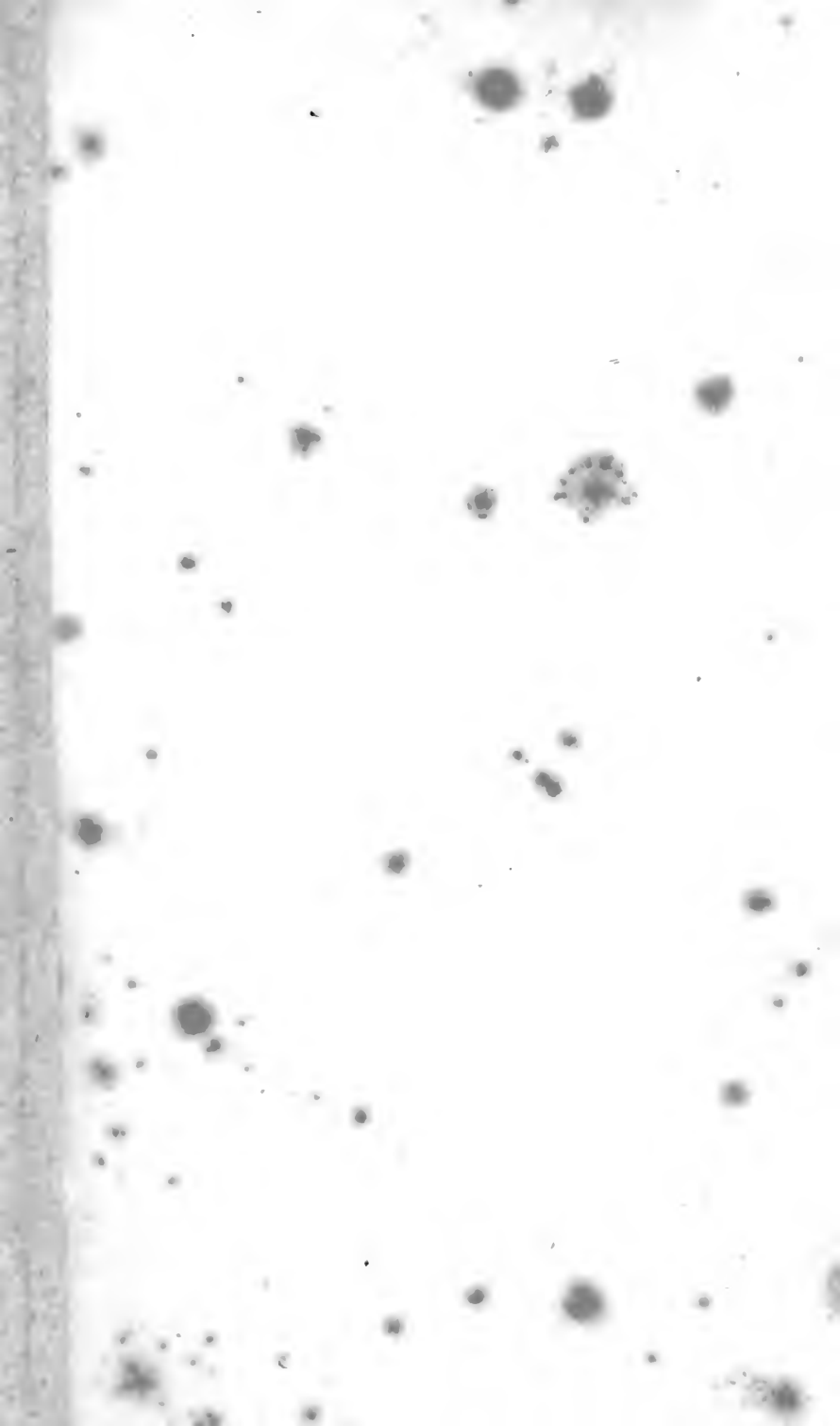


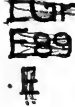
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THE HECUBA,  
ORESTES, PHŒNICIAN VIRGINS,

AND MEDEA

OF

**EURIPIDES;**

LITERALLY TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH PROSE,

FROM THE

TEXT OF PORSON.

THIRD EDITION, REVISED AND CORRECTED.

**OXFORD,**

TALBOYS AND WHEELER; AND LONGMAN, REES, ORME,  
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# HECUBA.

## PERSONS REPRESENTED.

GHOST OF POLYDORE.

HECUBA.

CHORUS OF FEMALE CAPTIVES.

POLYXENA.

ULYSSES.

TALTHYBIUS.

FEMALE ATTENDANT.

AGAMEMNON.

POLYMESTOR AND HIS CHILDREN.

*The scene lies before the Grecian tents, on the coast of the  
Thracian Chersonese.*



## THE ARGUMENT.



**AFTER** the capture of Troy, the Greeks put into the Chersonese over against Troas. But Achilles, having appeared by night, demanded one of the daughters of Priam to be slain. The Greeks therefore, in honour to their hero, tore Polyxena from Hecuba, and offered her up in sacrifice. Polymestor moreover, the king of the Thracians, murdered Polydore, a son of Priam's. Now Polymestor had received him from the hands of Priam, as a charge to take care of, together with some money. But when the city was taken, wishing to seize upon his wealth, he determined to despatch him, and disregarded the ill-fated friendship that subsisted between them; but his body being cast out into the sea, the wave threw him up on the shore before the tents of the captive women. Hecuba, on seeing the corse, recognized it; and having imparted her design to Agamemnon, sent for Polymestor to come to her with his sons, concealing what had happened, under pretence that she might discover to him some treasures hidden in Ilium. But on his arrival she slew his sons, and put out his eyes; but pleading her cause before the Greeks, she gained it over her accuser (Polymestor.) For it was decided that she did not begin the cruelty, but only avenged herself on him who did begin it.

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# HECUBA.

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## GHOST OF POLYDORE.

I AM present, having left the secret dwelling of the dead and the gates of darkness, where Pluto has his abode apart from the other Gods, Polydore, the son of Hecuba the daughter of Cisseus<sup>a</sup>, and Priam my sire, who after that the danger of falling by the spear of Greece threatened the city of the Phrygians, in fear, privately sent me from the Trojan land to the house of Polymestor, his Thracian friend, who cultivates the most fruitful soil of the Chersonese, ruling a warlike people with his spear<sup>b</sup>. But my father sends privately with me a large quantity of gold, in order that, if at any time the walls of Troy should fall, there might not be a lack of sustenance for his surviving children. But I was the youngest of the sons of Priam; on which account also he sent me privately from the land, for I was able neither to bear arms, nor the spear with my youthful arm. As long then indeed as the landmarks of the country remained erect, and the towers of Troy were

<sup>a</sup> Homer makes Dymas, not Cisseus, the father of Hecuba. Virgil however follows Euripides, the rest of the Latin poets Virgil.

<sup>b</sup> In the martial time of antiquity the spear was revered as something divine, and signified the chief command in arms, it was also the insigne of the highest civil authority: in this sense Euripides in other places uses the word *δέσπ.* See Hippol. 988.

unshaken, and Hector my brother prevailed with his spear, wretch that I was, I increased vigorously as some fair branch, by the nurture I received, at the hands of the Thracian, my father's friend. But after that both Troy and the life of Hector were put an end to, and my father's mansions razed to the ground, and himself falls at the altar built by the God, slain by the blood-polluted son of Achilles, the friend of my father slays me, wretched man, for the sake of my gold, and having slain me threw me into the surf of the sea, that he might possess the gold himself in his palace. But I am exposed on the shore, at another time on the ocean's surge, borne about by many ebbings and flowings of the waves, unwept, unburied; but at present I am hastening on my dear mother's account, having left my body, borne aloft this day already the third<sup>c</sup>, for so long has my wretched mother been present in this territory of the Chersonese from Troy. But all the Grecians, holding their ships at anchor, are sitting quiet on the shores of this land of Thrace. For Achilles the son of Peleus, appearing above his tomb, stayed all the army of the Grecians as they were directing homeward their sea-dipt oars; and asks to receive my sister Polyxena as a dear victim, and a tribute of honour to his tomb. And this he will obtain, nor will he be without this gift from his friends; and fate this day leads forth my sister to death. But my mother will see the two corsers of her two children, both mine and the unhappy virgin's; for I shall appear on a breaker before the feet of a female slave, that I wretched may obtain sepulture; for I have successfully

<sup>c</sup> *τριταῖος* properly signifies *triduanus*: here it is used for  *τρίτος*, the cardinal number for the ordinal. So also Hippol. 275.

Πῶς δ' οὐ, τριταίαν γ' οὖσ' ἄσπιτος ἡμέραν;

entreated those who have power beneath to find a tomb, and to fall into my mother's hands. As much then as I wish to have, shall be mine; but I will withdraw myself out of the way of the aged Hecuba, for she is advancing her step beyond the tent of Agamemnon, dreading my phantom. Alas! O my mother, who, from kingly palaces, hast experienced the day of slavery, how unfortunate art thou now, in the degree that thou wert once fortunate! but some one of the Gods counterpoising your state, destroys you on account of your ancient prosperity.

HECUBA. CHORUS.

HEC. Lead onward, ye Trojan dames, the old woman before the tent; lead onward, raising up one now your fellow slave, but once your queen; take me, bear me, conduct me, support my body, holding my aged hand; and I, leaning on the bending staff of my hand<sup>d</sup>, will hasten to put forward the slow motion of my joints. O lightning of Jove! O thou dusky night! why, I pray, am I thus disquieted in the night with terrors, with phantoms? O thou venerable Earth, the mother of black-winged dreams, I renounce the nightly vision, which regarding my son who is preserved in Thrace, and regarding Polyxena my dear daughter, in my dreams have I beheld, a fearful sight, I have learnt, I have understood. Gods of this land, preserve my son, who, my only son, and, as it were, the anchor of my

<sup>d</sup> Most interpreters render this, *leaning on the crooked staff with my hand*. Nor has Beck altered it in his Latin version, though he transcribed Musgrave's note. "σκολιῶ, σκίμπωνι] (for which Porson directs σκίπωνι,) Scipiones in universum recti sunt, non curvi. Loquitur igitur non de vero scipione, sed metaphoricè de brachio, quod ancillis innitens, scipionis usum præstabat; quodque, ob cubiti flexuram, σκολιὸν σκίμπωνα vocat."

house, inhabits the snowy Thrace under the protection of his father's friend. Some strange event will take place, some strain will come mournful to the mournful. Never did my mind so incessantly shudder and tremble. Where, I pray, ye Trojan dames, can I behold the divine spirit of Helenus, or Cassandra, that they may interpret my dreams! For I beheld a dappled hind torn by the blood-stained fang of the wolf, forcibly dragged from my bosom, a miserable sight. And dreadful this vision also; the spectre of Achilles came above the summit of his tomb, and demanded as a tribute of honour one of the wretched Trojan women. From my daughter then, from my daughter avert this fate, ye Gods, I implore you.

CHOR. Hecuba, with haste to thee I flew, leaving the tents of our lords, where I was allotted and ordained a slave, driven from the city of Troy, led captive of the Greeks by the point of the spear, not to alleviate aught of your sufferings, but bringing a heavy weight of tidings, and to thee, O lady, a herald of woe. For it is said that it has been decreed in the full council of the Greeks to make thy daughter a sacrifice to Achilles: for you know how that having ascended o'er his tomb he appeared in his golden arms and restrained the fleet ships, as they were setting their sails with their halliards, exclaiming in these words; "Where speed ye, Grecians, leaving my tomb unhonoured!" Then the waves of great contention clashed together, and a divided opinion went forth through the army of the Greeks; to some it appeared advisable to give a victim to his tomb, and to others it appeared not. But Agamemnon was studious to advance your good, preserving the love of the infuriated prophetess. But the two sons of Theseus, scions of

Athens, were the proposers of different arguments, but in this one opinion they coincided, to crown the tomb of Achilles with fresh blood; and declared they would never prefer the bed of Cassandra before the spear of Achilles. And the strength of the arguments urged on either side was in a manner equal, till that subtle adviser, that babbling knave<sup>e</sup>, honied in speech, pleasing to the populace, that son of Laertes, persuades the army, not to reject the suit of the noblest of all the Greeks on account of a captive victim, and not to put it in the power of any of the dead standing near Proserpine to say, that the Grecians departed from the plains of Troy ungrateful to the heroes who died for the state of Greece. And Ulysses will come only not now, to tear your child from your bosom, and to take her from your aged arms. But go to the temples, speed to the altars, sit a suppliant at the knees of Agamemnon, invoke the Gods, both those of heaven, and those under the earth; for either thy prayers will prevent thy being deprived of thy wretched daughter, or thou must behold the virgin falling before the tomb, dyed in blood gushing forth in a dark stream from her neck adorned with gold<sup>f</sup>.

HEC. Alas! wretched me! what shall I exclaim? what shriek shall I utter? what lamentation? miserable through miserable age, and slavery not to be endured, insupportable. Alas! who is there to defend me? what offspring, what city? The old man is gone. My chil-

<sup>e</sup> *that babbling knave*] Tzetzes on Lycophron, line 763. *κόπις, ὁ ῥήτωρ, καὶ ἔμπειρος, ὁ ὑπὸ πολλῶν πραγμάτων κεκομμένος.* In the Index to Lycophron *κόπις* is translated *scurra*.

<sup>f</sup> Amongst the ancients it was the custom for virgins to have a great quantity of golden ornaments about them, to which Homer alludes, II. B. 872.

"Ὀς καὶ χρυσὸν ἔχων πολέμονδ' ἔιν ἤντε κόρη. FORSON.

dren are gone. Whither shall I turn me? and whither shall I go? Where is any god or deity to succour me? O Trojan dames, bearers of evil tidings, bearers of woe, you have destroyed me utterly, you have destroyed me. Life in the light is no more desirable! O wretched foot, lead, lead an aged woman to this tent! O child, daughter of the most afflicted mother, come forth, come forth from the tent, hear thy mother's voice, that thou mayest know what a report I hear that concerns thy life.

HECUBA, POLYXENA, CHORUS.

POLYX. O mother, why dost thou call? proclaiming what new affliction hast thou frightened me from the tent, as a poor bird from its nest, with this alarm?

HEC. Alas! my child!

POLYX. Why address me in words of ill omen? This is an evil prelude.

HEC. Alas! for thy life.

POLYX. Speak, conceal it not longer from me. I fear, I fear, my mother; why I pray dost thou groan?

HEC. O child, child of an unhappy mother!

POLYX. Why sayest thou this?

HEC. My child, the common decree of the Greeks unites to slay thee at the tomb of the son of Pelcus.

POLYX. Alas, my mother! how are you relating unmeasurable ills? Tell me, explain to me all, my mother.

HEC. I declare, my child, the ill-omened report, they bring word that a decree has passed by the vote of the Greeks regarding thy life.

POLYX. O thou that hast borne affliction! O thou wretched on every side! O mother unhappy in your life, what most hated, and most unutterable calamity has



some destiny again sent against thee! 'This child is no longer thine; no longer indeed shall I miserable share slavery with miserable age. For as a mountain whelp or heifer shalt thou wretched behold me wretched torn from thine arms, and sent down beneath the darkness of the earth a victim to Pluto, where I shall lie bound in misery with the dead. But it is for thee indeed, my afflicted mother, that I lament in these mournful strains, but for my life, my wrongs, my fate, I mourn not; but death, a better lot, has befallen me.

CHOR. But see Ulysses advances with hasty step, to declare to thee, Hecuba, some new determination.

ULYSSES, HECUBA, POLYXENA, CHORUS.

ULYSS. Lady, I imagine that you are acquainted with the decree of the army, and the vote which has prevailed; nevertheless, I will declare it. It has been decreed by the Greeks to offer on the lofty mound of Achilles' tomb thy daughter Polyxena. But they order me to conduct and convey the damsel; but the son of Achilles is appointed to be the priest, and to preside over the rites. Do you know then what to do? Be not dragged away by violence, nor enter into a contest of strength with me, but acknowledge superior force and the presence of thy ills; it is wise to have proper sentiments even in adversity.

HEC. Alas! alas! the great trial is at hand, as it seems, of lamentation full, nor without tears; for I have not died in the state in which I ought to have died, nor hath Jove destroyed me, but preserves me, that I wretched may behold other misfortunes greater than any yet experienced. But if it be allowed slaves to put questions to the free, not offensive nor grating to the feelings,

it will be your part to be questioned, and ours who are asking to attend.

ULYSS. You have permission, ask freely, I grudge not the time.

HEC. Dost thou remember when thou camest a spy on Troy, disfigured by a vile dress, and from thine eyes drops caused by the fear of death bedewed thy beard?

ULYSS. I remember well; for it made no slight impression on my heart.

HEC. But Helen knew thee, and told me alone.

ULYSS. I remember the great danger I encountered.

HEC. And didst thou embrace my knees in thy humility?

ULYSS. So that my hand was numbed<sup>‡</sup> through fear on thy garments.

HEC. What then didst thou say, being then my slave?

ULYSS. Many arguments that I invented to save me from death.

HEC. Did I preserve thee then, and conduct thee safe from the land?

ULYSS. Yes, so that I now behold the light of the sun.

HEC. Art thou not then convicted of baseness by this conduct, who hast received benefits from me such as thou acknowledgest thyself, and doeſt us no good in return, but evil, as far as in thee lies? Odious is your race, as many of you as court honour from oratory before the populace; be ye not known to me, who care not to injure your friends, provided you say what is gratifying to the people. But plotting what dark design have they determined upon a decree of death against

<sup>‡</sup> This is the only sense that can be made of ἐνθανεῖν, and this sense seems strained: Brunck proposes ἐντρακῆναι for ἐνθανεῖν γι.

my child? Did fate impel them to offer human sacrifices at the tomb, where it were rather right to sacrifice cattle? Or does Achilles, desirous of devoting in his turn to death those that wrought his death, with a colour of justice meditate her destruction? But she has done him no ill: he should demand Helen as a sacrifice on his tomb; for she destroyed him, and brought him to Troy. But if some captive selected from the rest, and excelling in beauty, ought to die, this is not ours. For the daughter of Tyndarus is most preeminent in beauty, and has been found to be no less injurious than us. On the score of justice then I urge this argument; but with respect to what you ought to repay at my demand, hear: thou hast touched my hand, as thou ownest, and this aged cheek also, falling at my knees. Thy hand and knees I in return grasp, and re-demand the favour I granted you then, and beseech you, do not tear my child from my arms, nor kill her; enough have died already. In her I rejoice, and forget my misfortunes; she serves as my consolation in the stead of many things, she is my city, my nurse, my staff, the guide of my way. It becomes not those who have power to exercise their power in things wherein they ought not, nor should the fortunate imagine their fortune will last for ever. For I too have had my time of prosperity, but now have I ceased to be: one day wrenched from me all my happiness. But by thy beard which I supplicate, reverence me, pity me; go to the Grecian army, and remind them that it is a shameful thing to slay women whom ye have once spared, and that too dragging them from the altar. But shew mercy. But the laws of blood among you are laid down alike for the free and the slave. But your worth will carry with it persuasion, although your argu-

ments be bad; for the same words from those of little character, have not the same force as when they proceed from those of high reputation.

CHOR. What nature of man is there so obdurate, which on hearing thy groans, and thy long plaints of misery, would not let fall the tear?

ULYSS. Hecuba, be advised, nor through passion deem him thine enemy who gives thee good advice. I indeed am ready to preserve thy person through the means of which I was fortunate; and I say no other. But what I declared before all I will not deny, that, Troy being captured, we should give thy daughter as a victim to the noblest man of the army, who demands her; for in this many cities fail, when any man who is brave and zealous receives no more honour than those who are less valiant. But Achilles, O lady, is worthy of honour from us, a man who died most gloriously in behalf of the Grecian country. Were not then this disgraceful, if when living we treat him as a friend, but after he is dead we no longer treat him so? Well! what then will any one say, if there again should be an assembling of the army, and a contest with the enemy: "Shall we fight or preserve our lives, seeing that he who falls lies unhonoured?" But for me at least, living from day to day, although I have but little, that little is sufficient; but I would wish that my monument should be beheld crowned with honour, for the gratification is for a long time. But if thou sayest thou sufferest affliction, hear this in return from me. There are with us aged matrons, and hoary sires, not less wretched than thou art, and brides bereft of the noblest husbands, whose ashes this land of Troy conceals. Endure this. But we, if we injudiciously determine to honour the brave man, shall incur the

charge of folly. But you barbarians neither consider your friends as friends, nor do you hold up to admiration those who have died honourably; thus shall Greece be prosperous, but you shall experience fortune corresponding to your counsels.

CHOR. Alas! alas! how wretched is the state of slavery, and to endure indignities compelled by superior force.

HEC. O daughter, my words respecting thy death are vanished in the air, sent forth in vain; but thou, if thou hast greater powers of persuasion than thy mother, use all thy influence, uttering every note as the throat of the nightingale, that thou mayest not be deprived of life. But fall before the knees of Ulysses in all the eloquence of grief, and persuade him; thou hast a pretext, for he also hath children; so that he may be inclined to pity thy fortune.

POLYX. I see, Ulysses, that thou art hiding thy hand beneath thy robe, and turnest thy face away, that I may not touch thy beard. Be not afraid; thou hast avoided my supplication; for I will follow thee both on account of fate, and even wishing to die: but if I were not willing, I should appear base, and too fond of life. For wherefore should I live, whose father was monarch of all the Trojans; this my dawn of life. Then was I nurtured under fair hope, a bride for princes, having no small competition for my hand, to whose palace and hearth I should come. But I, wretched now, was mistress among the Trojan women, and conspicuous in the train of virgins, equal to goddesses, death only excepted. But now I am a slave; first of all the very name, not being familiar, persuades me to love death. Then perhaps I might meet with masters cruel in disposition, who will buy me for silver, the sister both of Hector and many

other heroes. And imposing the task of making bread in his palace, will compel me passing the day in misery, both to sweep the house, and stand at the loom. And some slave somewhere purchased will defile my bed, before wooed by princes. This never shall be. I will quit this light from mine eyes free, offering my body to Pluto. Lead on then, Ulysses, conduct me to death; for I see neither confidence of hope, nor of expectation, present to me that I can ever enjoy good fortune. But do thou, my mother, in no wise hinder me by your words or by your actions; but assent to my death before I meet with indignities unsuited to my rank. For one who has not been accustomed to taste misfortunes bears indeed, but grieves, to put his neck under the yoke. But he would be far more blessed in death than in life; for to live otherwise than honourably is a great burthen.

CHOR. It is a great and distinguishing feature among men to be born of generous parents, and the name of nobility of birth among the illustrious, proceeds from great to greater still.

HEC. You have spoken honourably, my daughter, but in that honourable dwells grief. But if the son of Peleus must be gratified, and you must escape blame, Ulysses, kill not her; but leading me to the pyre of Achilles, strike me, spare me not; I brought forth Paris, who destroyed the son of Thetis, having pierced him with his arrows.

ULYSS. The phantom of Achilles did not demand that thou, O aged lady, but that thy daughter here should die.

HEC. Do thou then at least slay me with my daughter, and there will be twice the libation of blood for the earth, and the dead who makes this request.

ULYSS. Thy daughter's death suffices; one must not

be heaped on another; would that we required not even this one.

HEC. There is a strong necessity for me to die with my daughter.

ULYSS. How so? for I am not aware of any master that I have.

HEC. As the ivy the oak, so will I clasp her.

ULYSS. Not so; if you will take the advice of your superiors in knowledge.

HEC. Never will I willingly quit my child here.

ULYSS. Nor will I leave this place without the virgin.

POLYX. Mother, be persuaded; and thou, son of Laertes, be gentle to a parent with reason moved to anger. But thou, O wretched mother, contend not with conquerors. Dost thou wish to fall on the earth, and to wound thy aged flesh dragged by violence, and to suffer the indignity of being stabbed by a youthful arm? which things you will suffer. Do not, I pray thee, for it is not seemly. But, my dear mother, give me thy beloved hand, and grant me to join cheek to cheek; since never hereafter, but now for the last time shall I behold the rays of the sun and his bright orb. Receive my last address, O mother! O thou that bearest me, I am going to the dark depths below.

HEC. And shall I, O daughter, be a slave in the light of day?

POLYX. Without the bridegroom, without the bridal song, which I ought to have obtained.

HEC. Mournful thou, my child; but I am a wretched woman.

POLYX. There shall I lie in darkness far from thee.

HEC. Alas me, what shall I do? where end my life?

POLYX. I shall die a slave, born of free parents.

HEC. But I bereft indeed of fifty children.

POLYX. What message shall I bear to Hector, and to thy aged husband?

HEC. Tell them that I am most miserable of all women.

POLYX. O ye breasts that tenderly nursed me.

HEC. O daughter of an untimely and unhappy fate.

POLYX. Farewell, O mother, farewell Cassandra too.

HEC. Others farewell, but this is not for thy mother.

POLYX. Farewell, my brother Polydore, amongst the warlike Thracians.

HEC. If he lives at least: but I doubt it, so unfortunate am I in every thing.

POLYX. He lives, and shall close thy dying eye.

HEC. I am dead, before my death, beneath my ills.

POLYX. Lead me, Ulysses, having-covered-my-face with a veil, since before I am sacrificed indeed, I am melted in heart at my mother's complaints, her also melt I by my lamentations. O light, for yet it is allowed me to express thy name, but I have no share in thee, except during the time that I am going between the sword and the pyre of Achilles.

HEC. Ah me! I faint; and my limbs fail me.—O daughter, touch thy mother, stretch forth thy hand—give it me—leave me not childless.—I am lost, my friends. Would that I might see the Spartan Helen, the sister of the twin sons of Jove, thus, for through her bright eyes that most vile woman destroyed the happy Troy.

CHOR. Gale, gale of the sea<sup>h</sup>, which waftest the swift barks bounding through the waves through the surge of the ocean, whither wilt thou bear me hapless? To whose mansion shall I come, a purchased slave? Or to the port of the Doric or Phthian shore, where they re-

<sup>h</sup> *λίμνη* is used for the *sea* in Troades 444; as also in Iliad N. 21. and Odyssey γ. 1. and in many other passages of Homer.



port that Apidanus, the most beautiful father of floods, enriches the plains? or wilt thou bear me hapless urged by the maritime oar, passing a life of misery in my prison-house, to that island<sup>i</sup> where both the first-born palm tree and the laurel shot forth their hallowed branches to their beloved Latona, emblem of the divine parturition? And with the Delian nymphs shall I celebrate in song the golden chaplet and bow of Diana? Or, in the Athenian city, shall I upon the saffron robe harness the steeds to the car of Minerva splendid in her chariot, representing them in embroidery upon the splendid looms of brilliant threads, or the race of Titans, which Jove the son of Saturn sends to eternal rest with his flaming lightning? Alas, my children! Alas, my ancestors, and my paternal land, which is overthrown, buried in smoke, captured by the Argive sword! but I indeed am<sup>k</sup> a slave in a foreign country, having left Asia the slave of Europe, having changed my bridal chamber for the grave.

TALTHYBIUS, HECUBA, CHORUS.

TAL. Tell me, ye Trojan dames, where can I find Hecuba, late the queen of Troy?

CHOR. Not far from thee, O Talthybius, she is lying stretched on the ground, muffled in her robes.

TAL. O Jupiter, what shall I say? Shall I say that thou beholdest mortals? or that they have to no end or purpose entertained false notions, who suppose the existence of a race of Deities, and that fortune has the sovereign control over men? Was not this the queen of the opulent Phrygians? Was not this the wife of the all-blest

<sup>i</sup> The construction is ἢ πορεύσεις με ἔνθα νάσων; for εἰς ἐκείνην τῶν νάσων, ἔνθα.

<sup>k</sup> κίκλημαι for εἰμί, not an unusual signification. Hippol. 2. θεὰ κίκλημαι Κύπρις.

Priam? And now all her city is overthrown by the spear, but she a captive, aged, childless, lies on the ground defiling her illfated head with the dust. Alas! alas! I too am old, but rather may death be my portion before I am involved in any such debasing fortune. Stand up, oh unhappy, raise thy side, and lift up thy hoary head.

HEC. Let me alone: who art thou that sufferest not my body to rest? why dost thou, whoever thou art, disturb me from my sadness?

TAL. I am here, Talthybius, the herald of the Greeks, Agamemnon having sent me for thee, O lady.

HEC. Hast thou come then, thou dearest of men, it having been decreed by the Greeks to slay me too upon the tomb? Thou wouldest bring dear news indeed. Then haste we, let us speed with all our might: lead on, old man.

TAL. I am here and come to thee, O lady, that thou mayest entomb thy dead daughter. Both the two sons of Atreus and the Grecian host send me.

HEC. Alas! what wilt thou say? Art thou not come for me as doomed to death, but to bring this cruel message? Thou art dead, my child, torn from thy mother; and I am childless as far as regards thee; oh! wretch that I am. But how did ye slay her? was it with becoming reverence? Or did ye proceed in your butchery as with an enemy, O old man? Tell me, though you will relate no pleasing tale.

TAL. Twice, O lady, thou desirest me to indulge in tears through pity for thy daughter; for both now whilst relating the mournful circumstance shall I bedew this eye, as did I then at the tomb when she perished. The whole host of the Grecian army was present before the tomb, at the sacrifice of thy daughter. But the son of

Achilles taking Polyxena by the hand, placed her on the summit of the mound; but I stood near him: and there followed a chosen band of illustrious youths in readiness to restrain with their hands thy daughter's struggles; then the son of Achilles took a full-crowned goblet of entire gold, and poured forth libations to his deceased father; and makes signal to me to proclaim silence through all the Grecian host. And I standing forth in the midst, thus spoke: "Be silent, O ye Greeks, let all the people remain silent; silence, be still:" and I made the people perfectly still. But he said, "O son of Peleus, O my father, accept these libations which have the power of soothing, and which speed the dead on their way; and come, that thou mayest drink the pure purple blood of this virgin, which both the army and myself offer unto thee: but be propitious to us, and grant us to weigh anchor, and to loose the cables of our ships, and to return each to his country, having met with a prosperous return from Troy." Thus much he said, and all the army joined in the prayer. Then taking by the hilt his sword fraught with gold, he drew it from its scabbard, and made signs to the chosen youths of the Greeks to hold the virgin. But she, when she perceived it<sup>1</sup>, uttered this speech: "O Argives, ye that destroyed my city, I die willingly; let none touch my body; for I will offer my neck to the sword with a good heart. But, by the Gods, let me go free while ye kill me, that I may die free, for to be classed as a slave among the dead, when a queen, is what I am ashamed of." But the people murmured assent, and King Agamemnon ordered the young men to quit the virgin; but they, soon as they heard the last words of him who had the seat of chief

<sup>1</sup> *When she perceived it.* ἐφράσθη, συνῆκεν, ἔγνω, ἐνόησεν. Hesych.

authority among them, let go their hold, and she, on hearing this speech of her lords, took her robe, and rent it, beginning from the top of her shoulder down to her waist: and shewed her breasts and bosom beauteous, as a statue's, and bending her knee on the ground, spoke words the most piteous ever heard. "Lo! strike, if this bosom thou desirest, O youth; or wouldest thou rather under the neck, here is this throat prepared." But he at once resolved and unresolved through pity of the virgin, cuts with the sword the passage of her breath; and fountains of blood burst forth. But she, e'en in death, shewed much care to fall decently, and to veil from the eyes of men what ought to be concealed. But after that she breathed forth her spirit under the fatal blow, not one of the Greeks exercised the samé offices; but some scattered leaves from their hands on the dead; some heap the funeral pile, bringing whole trunks of pines: but he that would not bring, heard rebukes of this sort from him that was thus employed: "Standest thou idle, thou man of most mean spirit? Hast in thy hand no robe, no ornament for the maiden? Hast thou nought to give to her so exceeding brave in heart and most noble in soul?" These things I tell thee of the death of thy daughter, but I behold thee at once the most happy, at once the most unhappy of all women in thine offspring.

CHOR. Dreadful calamities have risen fierce against the house of Priam; such the hard fate of the Gods.

HEC. O my poor child! which of my ills I shall first attend to, amidst such a multitude, I know not: for if I touch on any, another does not suffer me; and thence again some fresh grief draws me aside, succeeding miseries upon miseries. And now I cannot obliterate from

my mind thy sufferings, so as not to bewail them: but excess of grief hast thou taken away, having been reported to me as noble. Is it then no paradox, if land indeed naturally bad, when blest with a favourable season from heaven, bears well the ear; but good land, robbed of the advantages it ought to have, brings forth bad fruit: but ever among men, the bad by nature is nothing else but bad; the good always good, nor under misfortune does he degenerate from his nature, but is the same good man? Is it, that the parents cause this difference, or the education? The being brought up nobly hath indeed in it the knowledge and principles of goodness; but if one is acquainted well with this, he knows what is vicious, having already learnt it by the rules of virtue. And this indeed has my mind been ejaculating in vain. But do thou go, and signify these things to the Greeks, that no one be suffered to touch my daughter, but bid them keep off the multitude. In so vast an army the rabble are riotous, and the sailors' uncontrolled insolence is fiercer than fire; and he is evil, who does not evil. But do thou, my old attendant, taking an urn, fill it with sea water, and bring it hither, that I may wash my girl in her last bath, the bride no bride now, and the virgin no longer a virgin, wash her, and lay her out; according to her merits—whence can I? This I can not; but, as I can, I will, for what can I do! And collecting ornaments from among the captured women, who dwell beside me in these tents, if any one, unobserved by our new lords, has by her any stolen memorial of her home. O state of my house, O mansions once happy. O Priam, of vast wealth possessed, and supremely blest in thine offspring, and I too, this aged woman, the mother of such

children! How have we come to nothing, bereft of our former grandeur. And yet still forsooth we are elated, one of us in his gorgeous palaces; another, when honoured among his citizens. These are nothing. In vain the counsels of the mind, and the tongue's boast. He is most blest, to whom from day to day no evil happens.

#### CHORUS.

Against me was it fated that calamity, against me was it fated that woe should spring, when Paris first hewed the pine in Ida's forest, preparing to cut his way over the ocean surge to the bed of Helen, the fairest that the sun's golden beams shine upon. For toils, and fate more stern than toils, close us round: and from the folly of one came a public calamity fatal to the land of Simois, and woes springing from other woes: and when the dispute was decided, which the shepherd decided between the three daughters of the blessed Gods on Ida's top, for war, and slaughter, and the desolation of my palaces. And many a Spartan virgin at her home on the banks of the fair-flowing Eurotas sighs while bathed in tears; and many an aged matron strikes her hand against her hoary head, for her children who have perished, and tears her cheek making her nails all blood-stained with her wounds.

#### FEMALE ATTENDANT, CHORUS, HECUBA.

ATT. O attendants, where, I pray, is the all-wretched Hecuba, who surpasses the whole race of man and woman kind in calamities? no one shall wrest from her the crown.

CHOR. But what dost thou want, O wretch, in thy words of ill omen, for thy messages of woe never rest.

ATT. I bring this grief to Hecuba; but in calamity 'tis no easy thing for men to speak words of good import.

CHOR. And see, she is coming out of the house, and appears in the right time for thy words.

ATT. O all-wretched mistress, and yet still more wretched than I can express in words, thou art undone, and no longer beholdest the light, childless, husbandless, cityless, entirely destroyed.

HEC. Thou hast said nothing new, but hast reproached me who already know it: but why dost thou bring this corse of my Polyxena, whose sepulture was reported to me as in a state of active progress through the labours of all the Grecians?

ATT. She nothing knows, but is lamenting Polyxena, nor does she apprehend her new misfortunes.

HEC. O wretched me! dost bring hither the body of the frantic and inspired Cassandra?

ATT. She, whom thou mentionedst, lives; but thou dost not weep for him who is dead; but behold this corse cast naked on the shore, and look if it will appear to thee a wonder, and what thou little expectest.

HEC. Alas me! I do indeed see my son Polydore a corse, whom (*I fondly hoped*) the man of Thrace was preserving in his palace. Now am I lost indeed, I no longer exist. Oh my child, my child! Alas! I begin the Bacchic strain, having lately learned my woes from my evil genius.

ATT. Thou knowest then the calamity of thy son, O most unfortunate!

HEC. I see incredible evils, still fresh, still fresh: and my immeasurable woes follow one upon the other. No

longer will a day without a tear, without a groan, have part with me.

CHOR. Dreadful, oh! dreadful are the miseries that we endure!

HEC. O child, child of a wretched mother, by what fate art thou dead, by what hap liest thou here? by the hand of what man?

ATT. I know not: on the wave-washed shore I found him.

HEC. Cast up from the sea, or fallen by the blood-stained spear?

ATT. The ocean's billow cast him up from the deep on the smooth sand.

HEC. Woe is me! Now understand I the dream, the vision of mine eyes; the black-winged phantom has not flitted by me in vain, which I saw concerning thee, my child, who wert no longer in the light of day.

CHOR. But who slew him? canst thou, O skilled in dreams, declare him?

HEC. My friend, my friend, who curbs the steed in Thrace, where his aged father placed him for concealment.

CHOR. Ah me! what wilt thou say? Was it to possess his gold that he slew him?

HEC. Unutterable deeds, unworthy of a name, surpassing miracles, unhallowed, insufferable! Where are the laws of hospitality? O most accurst of men, how didst thou mar that skin, how sever with the cruel sword the limbs of this poor boy, nor didst feel pity!

CHOR. O hapless woman, how has the deity made thee by far the most wretched of mortals, whoever he



be that presses heavy on thee. But, my friends, let us henceforward be silent, for I see our lord Agamemnon advancing.

AGAMEMNON, CHORUS, HECUBA.

AGA. Why, Hecuba, delayest thou to come, and bury thy girl in her tomb, agreeably to what Talthybius told me, that no one of the Argives should be suffered to touch thy daughter. For our part we leave her alone, and touch her not; but thou art slow, whereat I am astonished. I am come therefore to fetch thee, for every thing there has been well and duly performed, if aught of well there be in this. Ah! what corse is this I see before the tent? some Trojan's too? for that it is no Grecian's, the robes that vest his limbs inform me.

HEC. (*aside*) Thou ill starr'd wretch! myself I mean, when I say "thou." O Hecuba, what shall I do? Shall I fall at the knees of Agamemnon here, or bear my ills in silence?

AGA. Why dost lament turning thy back upon me, and sayest not what has happened? Who is this?

HEC. (*aside*) But should he, thinking me a slave, an enemy, spurn me from his knees, I should be adding to my present sufferings.

AGA. No prophet I, so as to trace, unless by hearing, the path of thy counsels.

HEC. (*aside*) Am I not rather then putting an evil construction on this man's thoughts, whereas he has no evil intention towards me?

AGA. If thou art willing that I should nothing of this affair, thou art of a mind with me, for neither do I wish to hear.

HEC. (*aside*) I cannot without him take vengeance

for my children. Why do I thus deliberate? I must be bold, whether I succeed, or fail. Agamemnon, by these knees, and by thy beard I implore thee, and by thy blessed hand—

AGA. What thy request? Is it to pass thy life in freedom? for this is easy for thee to obtain.

HEC. Not this indeed; but so that I avenge myself on the bad, I am willing to pass my whole life in slavery.

AGA. And for what assistance dost thou call on me?

HEC. In none of those things which thou imaginest, O king. Seest thou this corse, o'er which I drop the tear?

AGA. I see it; thy meaning however I cannot learn from this.

HEC. Him did I once bring forth, him bore I in my bosom.

AGA. Is this indeed one of thy children, O unhappy woman?

HEC. It is, but not of the sons of Priam who fell under the walls of Troy.

AGA. Didst thou then bear any other besides those, O lady?

HEC. In vain, as it appears, this whom you see.

AGA. But where did he chance to be, when the city fell?

HEC. His father sent him out of the country, dreading his death.

AGA. Whither, having removed him alone of his children then alive?

HEC. To this country, where he was found a corse.

AGA. To him, who is king over this state, to Poly-mestor?

HEC. Hither was he sent, the guardian of gold, which proved most destructive to him.

AGA. By whose hand then is he dead, and having met with what fate?

HEC. By whom else should he? The hospitable Thracian slew him.

AGA. O wretch! was he so inflamed with the desire of obtaining the gold?

HEC. Even so, after he had heard of Troy's disasters.

AGA. And where didst thou find him, or who brought the body?

HEC. She, meeting with it on the sea shore.

AGA. In quest of it, or occupied in some other employment?

HEC. She was going to bring from the sea wherewith to bathe Polyxena.

AGA. This friend then, as it seems, murder'd him, and after that cast him out.

HEC. To toss upon the waves, thus gashing his body.

AGA. O thou unhappy from thy unmeasured ills.

HEC. I perish, no woe is left, O Agamemnon.

AGA. Alas! alas! What woman was ever so unfortunate!

HEC. There is none, except you reckon Misfortune herself. But for what cause I fall at thy knees, now hear: if I appear to you to suffer these ills justly, I would be reconciled to them; but if otherwise, be thou my avenger on this man, this most impious of false friends; who revering neither the Gods beneath<sup>m</sup> the

<sup>m</sup> The Gods beneath he despised, by casting him out without a tomb; the Gods above, as the guardians of the rites of hospitality.

earth, nor the Gods above, hath done this most unholy deed, having often partaken of the same table with me, and in the list of hospitality the first of my friends; and having met with whatever was due<sup>n</sup>, and having received a full consideration for his services<sup>o</sup>, slew him, and deigned not to give him a tomb, *which he might have given*, although he purposed to slay him, but cast him forth at the mercy of the waves. We indeed are slaves, and perhaps weak; but the Gods are strong, and strong the law, which governs them; for by the law we judge that there are Gods, and we live having justice and injustice strictly defined; which, if when referred to thee it be disregarded, and they shall suffer no punishment who slay their guests, or dare to pollute the hallowed statutes of the Gods, there is nothing equitable in the dealings of men. Beholding these things then in a base and proper light, reverence me; pity me, and, as the artist stands aside *to view a picture*, do thou view my living portrait, and see what woes I am enduring. Once was I a queen, but now I am thy slave; once was I blest in my children, but now aged, and at the same time childless, cityless, destitute, the most miserable of mortals. Alas me wretched! whither withdrawest thou my foot? It seems<sup>p</sup> I shall make no impression, wretch that I am. Why then do we mortals toil after all other sciences, as a matter of duty, and dive into them, but least of all strive to learn thoroughly Persuasion, the sole mistress o'er the minds of men, giving a price for her knowledge, that at some time we may have it in our

<sup>n</sup> *Whatever was due*, either on the score of friendship, or as an equivalent for his care and protection.

<sup>o</sup> Musgrave proposes to read *προμισθίαν* for *προμηθίαν*: the version above is in accordance with the scholiast and the paraphrast.

<sup>p</sup> See note on Medea 338.

power at once to persuade and obtain what we wish?—How then can any one hereafter hope that he shall be fortunate? So many children that I had, and now not one is left to me. But I am perishing a captive in base servitude, and yet see the smoke there leaping aloft from the city. And however this part of my argument may perchance be vain, the bringing forward love; still nevertheless it shall be urged. My daughter is wont to sleep by thy side, that prophetess, whom the Trojans call Cassandra. Where wilt thou shew that thy nights were nights of love, O king, or will my daughter receive any recompence for her most fond embraces, and I through her? For from the secret shade, and from night's joys the greatest delight is wont to spring to mortals. Now then attend. Thou seest this corse? Him assisting, thou wilt assist one joined to thee in affinity. One thing my speech wants yet. I would fain I had a voice in my arms, and hands, and in my hair, and in my footsteps, or by the skill of Dædalus, or some God, that each at once might hold thy knees, weeping, and imploring in all the strains of eloquence. O my lord, O greatest light of the Greeks, be persuaded; lend thy hand to avenge this aged woman, although she is of no consequence, yet avenge her. For it belongs to a good man to minister justice, and always and in every case to punish the bad.

CHOR. It is strange, how every thing happens to mortals, and laws determine even the fates, making the greatest enemies friends, and enemies of those who before were on good terms.

AGA. I, O Hecuba, have pity both on thee and thy son, thy misfortunes, and thy suppliant touch, and I am willing in regard both to the Gods and to justice that this impious host should give thee full revenge, provided

a way could be found, that both you might be gratified, and I might in the eyes of the army not seem to meditate this destruction against the king of Thrace for Cassandra's sake. For there is a point in which apprehension hath reached me. This man the army deems a friend, the dead an enemy; but if he is dear to thee, this is a private feeling, and does not affect the army. Wherefore consider, that thou hast me willing to labour with thee, and ready to assist thee, but backward, should I be murmured against among the Greeks.

HEC. Alas! no mortal is there, who is free. For either he is the slave of money or of fortune; or the populace of the city or the dictates of the laws constrain him to adopt manners not accordant with his natural inclinations. But since thou fearest, and payest too much regard to the multitude, I will liberate thee from this fear. For consent with me, if I meditate vengeance against the murderer of this youth, but do not act with me. But should any tumult or offer of assistance arise from out of the Greeks, when the Thracian feels the punishment he shall feel, suppress it, not appearing to do it for my sake: but of the rest be confident: I will dispose all things well.

AGA. How then? What wilt thou do? Wilt thou grasp the sword in thine aged hand, and strike the barbarian? or with poison wilt thou work, or with what assistance? What hand will conspire with thee? whence wilt thou procure friends?

HEC. These tents inclose an host of Trojan dames.

AGA. Meanest thou the captives, the booty of the Greeks?

HEC. With these will I avenge me of my murderer.

AGA. And how shall the victory over men be to women?

HEC. Numbers are powerful, with stratagem invincible.

AGA. Powerful, I grant; I mistrust however the race of women.

HEC. And why? Did not women slay the sons of Ægyptus<sup>9</sup>, and utterly extirpated the race of men from Lemnos<sup>r</sup>? But thus let it be. Give up this discussion. But grant this woman to pass in safety through the army. And do thou go to the Thracian host, and tell him, "Hecuba, once queen of Troy, sends for you on business of no less importance to yourself than to her, and your sons likewise, since it is of consequence that your children also should hear her words."—And do thou, O Agamemnon, as yet forbear to raise the tomb over the newly sacrificed Polyxena, that these two, the brother and the sister, the divided care of their mother, may, when reduced to ashes by one and the same flame, be interred side by side.

AGA. Thus shall it be. And yet, if the army could sail, I should not have it in my power to grant thy request: but now, for the deity breathes not prosperous gales, we must wait, watching for a calm voyage. But may things turn out well some way or other: for this is a general principle amongst all, both individuals in private and states, That the wicked man should feel vengeance, but the good man enjoy prosperity.

<sup>9</sup> The story of the daughters of Danaus is well known.

<sup>r</sup> Of this there are two accounts given in the Scholia. The one is, that the women of Lemnos being punished by Venus with an ill savour, and therefore neglected by their husbands, conspired against them and slew them. The other is found in Herodotus, Erato, chap. 138. see also Æschyl. Choephoræ, line 627. ed. Schutz.

## CHORUS.

O thou, my country of Troy, no longer shalt thou be called the city of the invincible, such a cloud of Grecians envelopes thee, with the spear, with the spear having destroyed thee. And thou hast been shorn of thy crown of turrets, and thou hast been discoloured by the dismal blackness of smoke; hapless city, no longer shall I tread my steps in thee.

In the midnight hour I perished, when after the feast balmy sleep is scattered over the eyes. And my husband from the song and cheerful sacrifice retired was sleeping peacefully in my bed, his spear on its peg, no more dreaming to behold the naval host of the Greeks treading the streets of Troy. But I was binding my braided hair with fillets fastened on the top of my head, looking into the round polished surface of the golden mirror, that I might get into my bed prepared for me. On a sudden a tumultuous cry penetrated the city; and this shout of exhortation was heard in the streets of Troy, "When indeed, ye sons of Grecians, when, *if not now*, will ye return to your homes having overthrown the proud citadel of Ilium!" And having left my dear bed, in a single robe, like a Spartan virgin, flying for aid to the venerable shrine of Diana, I hapless fled in vain. And I am dragged, after having seen my husband slain, to the ocean waves; and casting a distant look back upon my city, after the vessel had begun her way in her return to Greece, and divided me from the land of Troy, I wretched fainted through anguish. And consigning to curses Helen, the sister of the twin brothers, and the Idean shepherd, the ruthless Paris, since his marriage, no marriage, but some



Fury's hate hath utterly destroyed me far from my native land, and hath driven me from my home. Whom may the ocean refuse ever to bear back again; and may she never reach again her paternal mansion.

POLYMESTOR, HECUBA, CHORUS.

POLY. O Priam, thou dearest of men, and thou most dear Hecuba, at thy sight I weep for thee, and thy city, and thy daughter who has lately died. Alas! there is nothing secure, neither glory, nor when one is faring well is there a certainty that he will not fare ill. But the Gods mingle these things promiscuously to and fro, making all confusion, so that we through ignorance may worship them. But wherefore should I utter these complaints, which in no way tend to free thee from thy former calamities. But thou, if thou hast ought to blame for my absence, forbear; for I chanced to be afar off in the middle of my Thracian territories, when thou camest hither; but soon as I returned, as I was already setting out from my house, this maid of thine met me for the self-same purpose, and delivered thy message, which, when I had heard, I came.

HEC. O Polymestor, I am ashamed to look thee in the face, sunk as I am in such miseries; for before one, who has seen me in prosperity, shame overwhelms me, being in the state in which I now am, nor can I look upon thee with unmoved eyes. But impute not this to any enmity I bear thee; but there are other causes, and in some degree this law; "that women ought not to gaze at men."

POLY. And 'tis indeed no wonder; but what need hast thou of me? for what purpose didst thou send for me to come from home?

HEC. I am desirous of communicating a private affair of my own to thee and thy children; but order thy attendants to retire from these tents.

POLY. Depart, for here to be alone is safe. Friendly thou art, this Grecian army too is friendly towards me; but it is for thee to signify, in what manner I, who am in good circumstances, ought to succour my friends in distress; since, on my part, I am ready.

HEC. First then tell me of my son Polydore, whom thou retainest, receiving him from mine, and from his father's hand, if he live; but the rest I shall enquire of thee afterwards.

POLY. He lives, and in good health; as far as regards him indeed thou art happy.

HEC. O my best friend, how well thou speakest, and how worthily of thyself.

POLY. What dost thou wish then to enquire of me in the next place?

HEC. Whether he remembers at all me, his mother?

POLY. Yes; and he even sought to come to thee by stealth.

HEC. And is the gold safe, which he brought with him from Troy?

POLY. It is safe, at least it is guarded in my house.

HEC. Preserve it therefore, nor covet the goods of others.

POLY. Certainly not. May I enjoy what is mine own, O lady.

HEC. Knowest thou then, what I wish to say to thee and thy children?

POLY. I do not: this shalt thou signify by thy speech.

HEC. Be my son loved by thee, as thou art now loved of me.

POLY. What is it, that I and my sons must know?

HEC. The ancient buried treasures of the family of Priam.

POLY. Is it this thou wishest me to inform thy son of?

HEC. Yes, certainly; through thee at least, for thou art a pious man.

POLY. What necessity then is there for the presence of these children?

HEC. 'Tis better, in case of thy death, that these should know.

POLY. Well hast thou thus said, and 'tis the wiser plan.

HEC. Thou knowest then where the temple of Minerva in Troy is,—

POLY. Is the gold there? but what is the mark?

HEC. A black rock rising above the earth.

POLY. Hast any thing farther to tell me of what is there?

HEC. No, but I wish thee to take care of some treasures, with which I came out of the city.

POLY. Where are they then? Hast thou them hidden beneath thy robes?

HEC. Amidst a heap of spoils they are preserved in this tent.

POLY. But where? These are the naval encampments of the Grecians.

HEC. The habitations of the captive women are private.

POLY. And is all secure within, and untenanted by men?

HEC. Not one of the Greeks is within, but we women only. But come into the tent, for the Greeks are de-

sirous of loosing the sheets of their vessels homewards from Troy; so that, having done every thing that thou oughtest, thou mayest go with thy children to that place, where thou hast given my son to dwell.

CHOR. Not yet hast thou suffered, but peradventure thou wilt suffer vengeance; as a man falling headlong into the gulf where no harbour is, shalt thou be hurled from thy dear heart, having lost thy life; \*for where the rites of hospitality coincide † with justice, and with the Gods, *on the villain who dares to violate these* destructive, destructive indeed impends the evil. But thy hopes will deceive thee, which thou entertainedst from this journey, which has brought thee, thou wretched man, to the deadly mansions of Pluto; but thou shalt quit thy life by no warrior's hand.

POLYMESTOR, HECUBA, SEMICHORUS.

POLY. Oh me! I am deprived of the sight of mine eyes.

\* Polymestor was guilty of two crimes, ἀδικίας and ἀσεβείας, for he had both violated the laws of men, and profaned the deity of Jupiter Hospitalis. Whence Agamemnon, v. 840, hints that he is to suffer on both accounts.

καὶ βούλομαι θεῶν θ' οὐνεκ' ἀνόσιον ζένον,  
καὶ τοῦ δικαίου, τήνδε σοι δοῦναι δίκην.

The Chorus therefore says, *Ubi contingit eundem et Justitiæ et Diis esse addictum, exitiale semper malum esse*; or, as the learned Hemsterheuyse has more fully and more elegantly expressed it, *Ubi, id est, in quo, vel in quem cadit et concurrat, ut ob crimen commissum simul et humanæ justitiæ et Decorum vindictæ sit obnoxius, ac velut oppignoratus; illi certissimum exitium imminet*. This sense the words give, if for οὐ, we read οὔ, i. e. in the sense of ὅπου. MUSGRAVE. Porson has followed this suggestion.

† συμπεσεῖν in unum coirc, coincidere. In this sense it is used also, Herod. Euterpe, chap. 49.

SEMI. Heard ye the shriek of the man of Thrace, my friends?

POLY. Oh me! there again—Oh my children, thy miserable butchery!

SEMI. My friends, some strange ills have been perpetrated within the tents.

POLY. But for all your nimble feet, ye never can escape me, for by my blows will I burst open the recesses of these tents.

SEMI. Behold he uses violently the weapon of his heavy hand. Will ye that we fall on; since the instant calls on us to be present with assistance to Hecuba and the Trojan dames?

HEC. Dash on, spare nothing, break down the gates, for thou never shalt replace the clear sight in those pupils, nor shalt thou behold alive those children which I have slain.

SEMI. What! hast thou vanquished the Thracian? and hast thou got the mastery over this host, my mistress? and hast thou done such deeds, as thou sayest?

HEC. Thou wilt see him quickly before the house, blind, with blind wandering steps approaching, and the bodies of his two children, whom I have slain with these most valiant Trojan women; but he has felt my vengeance; but he is coming as thou seest from the tent. But I will retire out of his way, and make good my retreat from the boiling rage of this most desperate Thracian.

POLY. Alas me! whither can I go? where stand? whither shall I direct my way, advancing my steps like the four-footed mountain beast on my hands and on my feet in pursuit? What new path shall I take in this direction or in that, desirous of seizing these

murderous Trojan dames, who have utterly destroyed me; O ye impious, impious Phrygian daughters! Ah, the accursed, in what corner do they shrink from me in flight? Would that thou, O Sun, could'st heal, could'st heal these bleeding lids of my eyes, and remove this gloomy darkness. Ah, hush, hush! I hear the carefully-concealed step of these women. Whither shall I direct my course in order that I may glut myself on the flesh and bones of these, making the wild beasts' banquet, inflicting vengeance on them, in return for the injuries done me. Wretch that I am! Whither, whither am I borne, having left my children deserted, for these fiends of hell to tear piece-meal, a mangled, bleeding savage prey to dogs, and a thing to cast out on the mountains? Where shall I stand? Whither turn? Whither go, as a ship setting her yellow canvass sails with her sea-washed palsers, rushing to this lair of death, the protector of my children?

CHOR. O miserable man, what intolerable evils have been perpetrated by thee! but on thee having done base deeds the God hath sent dreadful punishment, whoever he be that presses heavy on thee:

POLY. Alas! alas! O Thracian nation, brandishing the spear, warlike, bestriding the steed, nation ruled by Mars; O ye Greeks, sons of Atreus; I raise the cry, the cry, the cry; Come, come, hasten, I entreat you by the Gods. Does any hear, or will no one assist me? Why do ye delay? The women have destroyed me, the captive women. Horrible, horrible treatment have I suffered. Alas me for my ruin! Whither can I turn? Whither can I go? Shall I soar through the ethereal skies to the lofty mansion where Orion or Sirius dart from their eyes the flaming rays of fire; or shall I hapless rush to the gloomy shore of Pluto?

CHOR. It is pardonable, when any one suffers greater misfortunes than he can bear, for him to be desirous to quit a miserable life.

AGAMEMNON, POLYMESTOR, HECUBA, CHORUS.

AGA. I came having heard the clamour: for Echo the mountain's daughter, did not sound in gentle strains through the army causing a disturbance. But did we not know that the Phrygian towers are fallen beneath the Grecian spear, this tumult might have caused no little terror.

POLY. O my dearest friend, (for I know thee, Agamemnon, having heard thy voice,) seest thou what I am suffering?

AGA. Ah! wretched Polymestor, who hath destroyed thee? who made thine eyes sightless, having drowned their orbs in blood? And who hath slain these thy children? Sure, whoe'er it was, felt the greatest rage against thee and thy sons.

POLY. Hecuba with the female captives hath destroyed me—nay, not destroyed me, but more than destroyed me.

AGA. What sayest thou? Hast thou done this deed, as he affirms? Hast thou, Hecuba, dared this inconceivable act of boldness?

POLY. Ah me! what wilt thou say? Is she any where near me? Shew me, tell me where she is, that I may seize her in my hands, and tear piecemeal and mangle her body.

AGA. What ho! what are you doing?

POLY. By the Gods I entreat thee, suffer me to lay my raging hand upon her.

AGA. Forbear. And having banished this barbarous

deed from thy thoughts, speak ; that having heard both thee and her in your respective turns, I may decide justly, in return for what thou art suffering these ills.

POLY. I will speak then. There was a certain youth, the youngest of Priam's children, by name Polydore, the son of Hecuba ; him his father Priam sent to me from Troy to bring up in my palace, already presaging<sup>u</sup> the capture of Troy. Him I put to death. But for what cause I put him to death, with what policy and prudent forethought, now hear. I feared, lest the boy being left an enemy to thee, should collect the scattered remnants of Troy, and again people the city. And lest the Greeks having discovered that one of the sons of Priam was alive, should again direct an expedition against the Phrygian land, and after that should harass and lay waste the plains of Thrace ; and it might fare ill with the neighbours of the Trojans, under which misfortune, O king, we are now labouring. But Hecuba, when she had discovered her son's death, by such treachery as this lured me hither, as about to tell me of treasure belonging to Priam's family concealed in Troy, and introduces me alone with my sons into the tent, that no one else might know it. And I sat, having reclined on the centre of the couch ; but many Trojan damsels, some from the left hand, and others from the right, sat round me, as by an intimate friend, holding in their hands the Edonian looms, and praised these robes, looking at them in the light ; but others, beholding with admiration my Thracian spear, deprived me of my double ornament. But as many as were mothers caressed my children in their

<sup>u</sup> The verbal adjective in *τος* is almost universally used in a passive sense : *ὑποπτος*, however, in this place, is an exception to the rule, as are also *καλυπτῆς*, Soph. Antig. 1011. *μισππῶς*, Trachin. 446.



arms in seeming admiration, that they might be farther removed from their father, successively handing them from one to another: and then, midst their kind blandishments, what think you? in an instant, snatching from somewhere beneath their garments their daggers, they stab my children. But they having seized me in an hostile manner held my hands and feet; and if, wishing to succour my children, I raised my head, they held me by the hair: but if I attempted to move my hands, I wretched could effect nothing through the host of women. But at last, cruelty and worse than cruelty, they perpetrated dreadful things; for having taken their clasps they pierce and gore the wretched pupils of my eyes, then vanish in flight through the tent. But I having leaped out, like some exasperated beast, pursue the blood-stained wretches, searching every wall, as the hunter, casting down, rending. This have I suffered, while studious to advance thy interest, Agamemnon, and having killed thine enemy. But that I may not extend my speech to a greater length, if any one of those of ancient times hath reviled women, or if any one doth now, or shall hereafter revile them, I will comprise the whole when I say, that such a race neither doth the sea nor the earth produce, but he who is always with them knows it best.

CHOR. Be not at all insolent, nor, in thy calamities, thus comprehending the female sex, abuse them all. For of us there are many, some indeed are envied *for their virtues*, but some are by nature in the catalogue of bad things.

HEC. Agamemnon, it never were fitting among men that the tongue should have greater force than actions. But if a man has acted well, well should he speak; if on

the other hand basely, his words likewise should be unsound, and never ought he to be capable of speaking unjust things well. Perhaps indeed they who have brought these things to a pitch of accuracy are accounted wise, but they cannot endure wise unto the end, but perish vilely, nor has any one yet escaped this. And this in my prelude is what I have to say to thee. Now am I going to direct my discourse to this man, and I will answer his arguments. Thou, that assertest, that in order to rid the Greeks of their redoubled toil, and for Agamemnon's sake that thou didst slay my son? But in the first place, monstrous villain, never can the race of barbarians be friendly to the Grecians, never can this take place. But what favour wert thou so eagerly currying? wert thou about to contract an alliance, or was it that thou wert of kindred birth, or what pretext hadst thou? or were they about to ravage the crops of thy country, having sailed thither again? Whom, thinkest thou, wilt thou persuade of these things? The gold, if thou wert willing to speak truth, the gold destroyed my son, and thy base gains. For come, tell me this; how, when Troy was prosperous, and a tower yet girt around the city, and Priam lived, and the spear of Hector was in its glory, why didst thou not then, if thou wert willing to lay him under this obligation, bringing up my child, and retaining him in thy palace, why didst thou not then slay him, or go and take him alive to the Greeks? But when we were no longer in the light of prosperity, and the city by its smoke shewed that it was in the power of the enemy, thou slewest thy guest who had come to thy hearth? Now hear besides how thou wilt appear vile: thou oughtest, if thou wert the friend of the Greeks, to have given the gold, which

thou confessedst thou hast, not thine, but his, distributing to those who were in need, and had long been strangers to their native land. But thou never yet hadst the courage to part with it from thy hand, but having it, thou still art keeping it close in thine house. And yet, in bringing up my child, as it was thy duty to bring him up, and in preserving him, thou hadst had fair honour. For in adversity friends are most clearly proved good. But good circumstances have in every case their friends. But if thou wert in want of money, and he in a flourishing condition, my son had been to thee a vast treasure; but now, thou neither hast him for thy friend, and the benefit from the gold is gone, and thy sons are gone, and thou art—as thou art. But to thee, Agamemnon, I say; if thou aimest this man, thou wilt appear to be doing wrong. For thou wilt be conferring a benefit on a host, who is neither pious, nor faithful to those to whom he ought, not holy, not just. But we shall say that thou delightest in the bad, if thus thou actest: but I mean no offence to my lords.

CHOR. Ah! Ah! How do good deeds ever supply to men the source of good words!

AGÆ. Thankless my office to decide on others' grievances; but still I must, for it brings disgrace on a man, having taken a thing in hand, to give it up. But to me, be assured, thou neither appearest for my sake, nor for the sake of the Grecians to have killed this man thy guest, but that thou mightest possess the gold in thy palace. But thou talkest of thy advantage, when thou art in calamities<sup>x</sup>. Perhaps with you it is a slight thing to kill your

<sup>x</sup> Perhaps the preferable way is to make κακοῖσιν agree with ἀνθρώποις understood; that the sense may be, *You are a bad man to talk of your advantage as a plea for having acted thus.*

guests; but with us Grecians this thing is abhorred. How then, in giving my decision that thou hast not injured, can I escape blame? I cannot; but, as thou hast dared to do things dishonourable, endure now things unpleasant.

POLY. Alas me! worsted as it seems, by a woman who is a slave, I shall submit to the vengeance of my inferiors.

AGA. Will it not then be justly, seeing thou hast acted wrong?

POLY. Alas me! wretched on account of these children, and on account of my eyes.

HEC. Thou sufferest? but what do I? 'Thinkest thou I suffer not for my child?

POLY. Thou rejoicest in insulting me, O thou malicious woman.

HEC. For ought not I to rejoice on having avenged myself on thee?

POLY. But thou wilt not soon, when the liquid wave—

HEC. Shall bear me, *dost thou mean*, to the confines of the Grecian land?

POLY. —shall cover thee, having fallen from the shrouds.

HEC. From whom meeting with this violent leap?

POLY. Thyself shalt climb with thy feet up the ship's mast.

HEC. Having wings on my back, or in what way?

POLY. Thou shalt become a dog with a fiery aspect.

HEC. But how dost thou know of this my metamorphose?

POLY. Dionysius the Thracian prophet told it me.

HEC. But did he not declare to thee any of the evils which thou sufferest?

POLY. No: for, *if he had*, thou never wouldest thus treacherously have taken me.

HEC. 'Thence shall I conclude my life in death, or still live on?

POLY. Thou shalt die. But the name of thy tomb shall be—

HEC. Dost thou speak of it as in any way correspondent to my shape?

POLY. <sup>2</sup>The tomb of the wretched dog, a mark to mariners.

HEC. I heed it not, since thou at least hast felt my vengeance.

POLY. And it is fated too for thy daughter Cassandra to die.

HEC. I renounce these prophecies; I give them for thyself to bear.

POLY. Him shall his wife slay, a cruel guardian of his house.

HEC. Never yet may the daughter of Tyndarus have arrived at such madness.

POLY. Even this man himself, having lifted up the axe.

AGA. What ho! thou art mad, and art desirous of obtaining greater ills.

POLY. Kill me, for the murderous bath at Argos awaits thee.

*γ* Οανῆσά δ' ἢ ζῶσ' ἐνθάδ' ἐκπλήσω βίον; a similar expression occurs in the Anthologia.

σιγῶν παρέρχε τὸν ταλαίπωρον βίον,  
αὐτὸς σιωπῇ, τὸν χρόνον μιμήμενος,  
λαθὼν δὲ καὶ βιῶσεν· εἰ δὲ μὴ, θανάων.

<sup>2</sup> The place of her burial was called Cynosema, a promontory of the Thracian Chersonese. It was here that the Athenians gained a naval victory over the Peloponnesians and Syracusans, in the twenty-first year of the Peloponnesian war. Thucydides, book viii.

POLY. Will ye not, slaves, forcibly drag him from my presence.

POLY. Thou art galled at what thou hearest.

AGA. Will ye not stop his mouth?

POLY. Stop it: for the word is spoken.

AGA. Will ye not as quick as possible cast him out on some desert island, since he is thus, and past endurance insolent? But do thou, wretched Hecuba, go and bury thy two dead: and you, O Trojan dames, must approach your masters' tents, for I perceive that the gales are favourable for wafting us to our homes. And may we sail in safety to our native country, and behold our household and families in prosperity, having found rest from these toils.

CHOR. Come, my friends, to the harbour, and the tents, to undergo the tasks imposed by our masters. For necessity is relentless.

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# ORESTES.

PERSONS REPRESENTED.

ELECTRA.  
HELEN.  
HERMIONE.  
CHORUS.  
ORESTES.  
MENELAUS.  
TYNDARUS.  
PYLADES.  
A PHRYGIAN.  
APOLLO.



## THE ARGUMENT.

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ORESTES, in revenge for the murder of his father, took off Ægisthus and Clytemnestra; but having dared to slay his mother, he was instantly punished for it by being afflicted with madness. But on Tyndarus, the father of her who was slain, laying an accusation against him, the Argives were about to give a public decision on this question, "What ought he, who has dared this impious deed, to suffer?" By chance Menelaus, having returned from his wanderings, sent in Helen indeed by night, but himself came by day, and being entreated by Orestes to aid him, he rather feared Tyndarus the accuser; but when the speeches came to be spoken among the populace, the multitude were stirred up to kill Orestes. \* \* \* But Pylades, his friend, accompanying him, counselled him first to take revenge on Menelaus by killing Helen. As they were going on this project, they were disappointed of their hope by the Gods snatching away Helen from them. But Electra delivered up Hermione, when she made her appearance, into their hands; and they were about to kill her. When Menelaus came, and saw himself bereft by them at once of his wife and child, he endeavoured to storm the palace; but they, anticipating his purpose, threatened to set it on fire. Apollo, however, having appeared, said, that he had conducted Helen to the Gods, and commanded Orestes to take Hermione to wife, and Electra to dwell with Pylades, and, after that he was purified of the murder, to reign over Argos.

The scene of the piece is laid at Argos; but the Chorus consists of Argive women, intimate associates of Electra, who also come on enquiring about the calamity of Orestes. The play has a catastrophe rather suited to comedy. The opening scene of the play is thus arranged. Orestes is discovered before the palace of Agamemnon, fatigued, and, on account of his madness, lying on a couch, on which Electra is sitting by him at his feet. A difficulty has been started, why does not she sit at his head? for thus would she seem to watch more tenderly over her brother, if she sat nearer him. The poet, it is answered, seems to have made this arrangement on

account of the Chorus ; for Orestes, who had but just then and with difficulty gotten to sleep, would have been awakened, if the women that constituted the Chorus had stood nearer to him. But this we may infer from what Electra says to the Chorus, “ Σίγα, σίγα, λεπτόν ἴχνος ἀρβύλης.” It is probable then that the above is the reason of this arrangement.

The Play is among the most celebrated on the stage, but infamous in its morals ; for, with the exception of Pylades, all the characters are bad persons.

# ORESTES.



## ELECTRA.

**T**HERE is no word so dreadful to relate, nor suffering, nor heaven-inflicted calamity, the burthen of which human nature may not be compelled to bear. For Tantalus, the blest, (and I am not reproaching his fortune, *when I say this*;) the son of Jupiter, as they report, trembling at the rock which impends over his head, hangs in the air, and suffers this punishment, as they say indeed, because, although being a man, yet having the honour of a table in common with the Gods upon equal terms, he possessed an ungovernable tongue, a most disgraceful malady. He begat Pelops, and from him sprung Atreus, for whom the Goddess having carded the wool<sup>a</sup> spun the thread of contention, *and doomed him* to make war on Thyestes his relation; (why must I commemorate things unspeakable?) But Atreus then<sup>b</sup> killed his children—and feasted him. But from Atreus, for I pass over in silence the misfortunes which intervened, sprung Agamemnon, the illustrious, (if he

<sup>a</sup> *στίμματα, ἔρια, Schol.* “ eo quod colum cingant seu coronant,” Scapula explains it.

<sup>b</sup> “ *Then*” is not to be considered as signifying point of time, but it is meant to express *οὖν, continuativam*. See Hoogeveen de Particula *οὖν*, Sect. ii. §. 6.

was indeed illustrious,) and Menelaus; their mother Aërope of Crete. But Menelaus indeed marries Helen, the hated of the Gods, but King Agamemnon *obtained* Clytemnestra's bed, memorable throughout the Grecians: from whom we virgins were born, three from one mother, Chrysothemis, and Iphigenia, and myself Electra; and Orestes the male part of the family, from a most unholy mother, who slew her husband, having covered him around with an inextricable robe; the reason however it is not decorous in a virgin to tell; I leave this undeclared for men to consider as they will. But why indeed must I accuse the injustice of Phœbus? Yet persuaded he Orestes to kill that mother who brought him forth, a deed which gained not a good report from all men. But nevertheless he did slay her, as he would not be disobedient to the God. I also took a share in the murder, but such as a woman ought to take. As did Pylades also who perpetrated this deed with us. From that time wasting away, the wretched Orestes is afflicted with a grievous malady, but falling on his couch there lies, but his mother's blood whirls him to frenzy, (for I dread to mention those Goddesses, the Eumenides, who persecute him with terror.) Moreover this is the sixth day since his slaughtered mother was purified by fire as to her body. During which he has neither taken any food down his throat, he has not bathed his limbs, but covered beneath his cloke, when indeed his body is lightened of its disease, on coming to his right mind he weeps, but at another time starts suddenly from his couch, as a colt from his yoke. But it has been decreed by this city of Argos, that no one shall receive us who have slain a mother under their roof, nor at their fire, and that none shall speak to us;

but this is the appointed day, in the which the city of the Argives will pronounce their vote, whether it is fitting that we should die being stoned with stones, or having whet the sword, should plunge it into our necks. But I yet have some hope that we may not die, for Menelaus has arrived at this country from Troy, and filling the Nauplian harbour with his oars is mooring his fleet off the shore, having been lost in wanderings from Troy a long time: but the much-afflicted Helen has been sent before to our palace, having taken advantage of the night, lest any of those, whose children died under Ilium, when they saw her coming by day, might go so far as to stone her; but she is within, bewailing her sister, and the calamity of her family. She has however some consolation in her woes, for the virgin Hermione, whom Menelaus bringing from Sparta, left at our palace, when he sailed to Troy, and gave as a charge to my mother to bring up, in her she rejoices, and forgets her miseries. But I am looking at each avenue when I shall see Menelaus present, since, for the rest, we ride on slender power<sup>c</sup>, if we receive not some succour from him; the house of the unfortunate is an embarrassed state of affairs.

ELECTRA. HELEN.

HEL. O daughter of Clytemnestra and Agamemnon, O Electra, thou that hast remained a virgin a long time. How are ye, O wretched woman, both you, and your brother, the wretched Orestes, (he was the murderer of his mother)? For by thy converse I am not polluted,

<sup>c</sup> The original Greek phrase was *ἐλπίδος λεπτής*, which Euripides has changed to *ἀσθενοῦς ῥώμης*, though the other had equally suited the metre. But Euripides is fond of slight alterations in proverbs. PORSON.

transferring, as I do, the blame to Phœbus. And yet I groan the death of Clytemnestra, whom, after that I sailed to Troy (how did I sail, urged by the maddening fate of the Gods!) I saw not, but of her bereft I lament my fortune.

ELEC. Helen, why should I inform thee of things thou seest thyself here present, the race of Agamemnon in calamities. I indeed sleepless sit companion to the wretched corse, (for he is a corse, in that he breathes so little,) but at his fortune I murmur not. But thou a happy woman, and thy husband a happy man, have come to us, who fare most wretchedly.

HEL. But what length of time has he been lying on his couch?

ELEC. Ever since he shed his parent's blood.

HEL. Oh wretched, and his mother too, that thus she perished!

ELEC. These things are thus, so that he is unable to speak for misery.

HEL. By the Gods wilt thou oblige me in a thing, O virgin?

ELEC. As far as I am permitted by the little leisure I have from watching by my brother.

HEL. Wilt thou go to the tomb of my sister?

ELEC. My mother's tomb dost thou desire? wherefore?

HEL. Bearing the first offerings of my hair, and my libations.

ELEC. But is it not lawful for thee to go to the tomb of thy friends?

HEL. No, for I am ashamed to shew myself among the Argives.

ELEC. Late art thou discreet, then formerly leaving thine home disgracefully.

HEL. True hast thou spoken, but thou speakest not pleasantly to me.

ELEC. But what shame possesses thee among the Myceneans?

HEL. I fear the fathers of those who are dead under Ilium.

ELEC. For this is a dreadful thing; and at Argos thou art declaimed against by every one's mouth.

HEL. Do thou then grant me this favour, and free me from this fear.

ELEC. I cannot look upon the tomb of my mother.

HEL. And yet it is disgraceful for servants to bear these.

ELEC. But why not send thy daughter Hermione?

HEL. It is not well for virgins to go among the crowd.

ELEC. And yet she might repay the dead the care of her education.

HEL. Right hast thou spoken, and I obey thee, O virgin, and I will send my daughter, for thou sayest well. Come forth my child Hermione before the house, and take these libations in thine hand, and my hair, and, going to the tomb of Clytemnestra, leave there this mixture of milk and honey, and the froth of wine, and standing on the summit of the mound, say thus: "Helen, thy sister presents thee with these libations, in fear herself to approach thy tomb, and afraid of the populace of Argos:" and bid her hold kind intentions towards me, and thyself, and my husband, and towards these two miserable persons whom the God has destroyed. But promise all the offerings to the manes, whatever it is fitting that I should perform for a sister. Go, my child, hasten, and when thou hast offered the

libations at the tomb, remember to return back as speedily as possible.

ELEC. [*alone.*] O Nature, what a great evil art thou among men, and the safeguard of those who possess thee with virtue! For see, how she has shorn off the extremities of her hair, in order to preserve her beauty; but she is the same woman she always was. May the Gods detest thee, for that thou hast destroyed me, and this man, and the whole state of Greece; oh wretch that I am! But my dear friends that accompany me in my lamentations are again present; perhaps they will disturb the sleeper from his slumber, and will melt my eyes in tears when I behold my brother raving.

ELECTRA, CHORUS.

ELEC. O most dear women, proceed with a gentle foot, make no noise, let there be heard no sound. For your friendliness is very kind, but to awake him will be a calamity to me. Hush, hush—gently advance the tread of thy sandal, make no noise, let there be heard no sound. Move onward from that place—onward from before the couch.

CHOR. Behold, I obey.

ELEC. St! st! Speak to me, my friend, as the breathing of the soft reed pipe.

CHOR. See, I utter a voice low as an under note.

ELEC. Aye, thus come hither, come hither, approach quietly—go quietly: tell me, for what purpose, I pray, are ye come? For he has fallen on his couch, and been sleeping some time.

CHOR. How is he? Give us an account of him, my friend.

ELEC. What fortune can I say of him? and what his



calamities? still indeed he breathes, but sighs at short intervals.

CHOR. What sayest thou? Oh, the unhappy man!

ELEC. You will kill him if you move his eyelids, now that he is taking the sweetest enjoyment of sleep.

CHOR. Unfortunate on account of these most angry deeds from heaven! oh! wretched on account of thy sufferings!

ELEC. Alas! alas! Apollo himself unjust, then spoke unjust things, when at the tripod of Themis he commanded the unhallowed inauspicious murder of my mother.

CHOR. Dost thou see? he moves his body in the robes that cover him.

ELEC. You by your cries, O wretch, have disturbed him from his sleep.

CHOR. I indeed think he is sleeping yet.

ELEC. Wilt you not depart from us? wilt you not bend your footsteps back from the house, ceasing this noise?

CHOR. He sleeps.

ELEC. Thou sayest well.

CHOR. Venerable, venerable Night, thou that dispensest sleep to languid mortals, come from Erebus; come, come, borne on thy wings to the house of Agamemnon; for by our griefs and by our sufferings, we are quite undone, undone.

ELEC. Ye were making a noise.

CHOR. No.

ELEC. Silently, silently repressing the high notes of your voice, apart from his couch, you will enable him to have the tranquil enjoyment of sleep.

CHOR. Tell us; what end to his miseries awaits him?

**ELEC.** Death; but what else can? for he has no appetite for food.

**CHOR.** Death then is manifestly before him.

**ELEC.** Phœbus offered us as victims, when he commanded<sup>d</sup> the dreadful, abhorred murder of our mother, that slew our father.

**CHOR.** With justice indeed, but not well.

**ELEC.** Thou hast died, thou hast died, O mother, O thou that didst bring me forth, but hast killed the father, and the children of thy blood. We perish, we perish, even as two corpses. For thou art among the dead, and the greatest part of my life is passed in groans, and wailings, and nightly tears; marriageless, childless, behold, how like a miserable wretch do I drag out my existence for ever!

**CHOR.** O virgin Electra, approach near, and look that thy brother has not died unobserved by thee; for by this excessive quiet he doth not please me.

#### ORESTES, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

**ORES.** O precious balm of sleep, thou that relievest my malady, how pleasant didst thou come to me in the time of need! O divine oblivion of my sufferings, how wise thou art, and the goddess to be supplicated by all in distress!—whence, in heaven's name, came I hither? and how brought? for I remember not things past, bereaved, as I am, of my senses.

**ELEC.** My dearest brother, how didst thou delight me when thou didst fall asleep! wilt thou I touch thee, and raise thy body up?

**ORES.** Raise me then, raise me, and wipe the clotted foam from off my wretched mouth, and from my eyes.

<sup>d</sup> εοῦς—δύναται δὲ καὶ ἀποδοῦς. SCHOL.

ELEC. Behold, the task is sweet, and I refuse not to administer to a brother's limbs with a sister's hand.

ORES. Lay thy side by my side, and remove the squalid hair from my face, for I see but imperfectly with my eyes.

ELEC. O wretched head, sordid with ringlets, how art thou disordered from long want of the bath!

ORES. Lay me on the couch again; when my fit of madness gives me a respite, I am feeble and weak in my limbs.

ELEC. Behold, the couch is pleasant to the sick man, an irksome thing to keep, but still a necessary one.

ORES. Again raise me upright—turn my body.

CHOR. Sick persons are hard to be pleased from their feebleness.

ELEC. Wilt thou set thy feet on the ground, putting forward thy long-discontinued<sup>e</sup> step? In all things change is sweet.

ORES. Yes, by all means; for this has a semblance of health, but the semblance is good, though it be distant from the truth.

ELEC. Hear now therefore, O my brother, while yet the Furies suffer thee to have thy right faculties.

ORES. Wilt thou tell any news? and if good indeed, thou art conferring pleasure; but if it pertain at all to mischief—I have enough distress.

ELEC. Menelaus has arrived, the brother of thy father, but his ships are moored in the Nauplian bay.

ORES. How sayest? Is he come, a light in mine

<sup>e</sup> Perhaps this interpretation of *χρόνιον* is better than "slow," for the considerate Electra would hardly go to remind her brother of his infirmities.

and thy sufferings, a man of kindred blood, and that hath received benefits from our father?

ELEC. He is come; take this a sure proof of my words, bringing with him Helen from the walls of Troy.

ORES. Had he been saved alone, he had been more blest. But if he brings his wife, he has arrived with a mighty evil.

ELEC. Tyndarus begat an offspring of daughters, a conspicuous mark for blame, and infamous throughout Greece.

ORES. Do thou then be unlike the bad, for it is in thy power. And not only say, but also hold these sentiments.

ELEC. Alas! my brother, thine eye rolls wildly; quick art thou changed to madness, so late in thy senses.

ORES. O mother, I implore thee, urge not on me those Furies gazing blood, horrid with snakes, for these, these are leaping around me.

ELEC. Remain, O wretched man, calmly on thy couch, for thou seest none of those things, which thou fanciest thou seest plainly.

ORES. O Phœbus, these dire goddesses in the shape of dogs will kill me, these gorgon-visaged ministers of hell.

ELEC. I will not let thee go, but, putting my arm around thee, will stop thy starting into those unfortunate convulsions.

ORES. Loose me. Thou art one of my Furies, and seizest me by the middle, that thou mayest hurl me into Tartarus.

ELEC. Oh! wretched me! what assistance can I obtain, since we have on us the vengeful wrath of heaven!

ORES. Give me my bow of horn, the gift of Phœbus, with which Apollo said I should repel the Fiends, if they appalled me by their maddened raging.

ELEC. Shall any God be wounded by mortal hand?

ORES. *Yes. She shall*, if she will not depart from my sight . . . . Hear ye not—see ye not the winged shafts impelled from the distant-wounding bow? Ha! Ha! Why tarry ye yet? Skim the high air with your wings, and impeach the oracles of Phœbus.—Ah! why am I thus disquieted, heaving my panting breath from my lungs? Whither, whither have I wandered from my couch? For from the waves again I see a calm—Sister, why weepest, hiding thine eyes beneath thy vest? I am ashamed to have thee a partner in my sufferings, and to give a virgin trouble through my malady. Pine not away on account of my miseries: for thou indeed didst assent to this; but the shedding of my mother's blood was accomplished by me: but I blame Apollo, who, after having instigated me to a most unholy act, with words indeed consoled me, but not with deeds. But I think that my father, had I, beholding him, asked him if it were right for me to slay my mother, would have put forth many supplications, beseeching me by this beard not to impel my sword to the slaughter of her who bore me, if neither he thereby could be restored to life, and I thus wretched must go through such miseries. And now then unveil thyself, my sister, and cease from tears, even though we be very miserable: but when thou seest me desponding, do thou restrain my distraction, and that which preys upon my mind, and console me; but when thou groanest, it becomes my duty to come to thee, and suggest words of comfort. For these are the good offices friends ought to render each other.

But go thou into the house, O unfortunate sister, and, stretched at full length, compose thy sleepless eyelids to sleep, and take refreshment, and pour the bath upon thy fair skin. For if thou forsakest me, or gettest any illness by continually sitting by me, we perish; for thee I have my only succour, by the rest, as thou seest, abandoned.

ELEC. This cannot be: with thee will I choose to die, with thee to live; for it is the same: for if thou shouldst die, what can I do, a woman? how shall I be preserved, alone and destitute? without a brother, without a father, without a friend: but if it seemeth good to thee, these things it is my duty to do: but recline thy body on the bed, and do not to such a degree conceive to be real whatever frightens and startles thee from the couch, but keep quiet on the bed strewn for thee. For though thou be not ill, but only seem to be ill, still this even is an evil and a distress to mortals.

#### CHORUS.

Alas! alas! O swift-winged, raving<sup>f</sup> Goddesses, who keep up the dance, not that of Bacchus, with tears and groans. You, dusky Eumenides, you, that fly through the wide extended air, executing vengeance, executing slaughter, you do I supplicate, I supplicate; suffer the offspring of Agamemnon to forget his furious madness; alas! for his sufferings. What were they that eagerly grasping at, thou unhappy perishest, having received from the tripod the oracle which Phœbus spake, on that pavement, where are said to be the recesses in the

<sup>f</sup> Πονηράδες. The Furies have this epithet from Potnia, a town in Bœotia, where Glaucus's horses, having eaten of a certain herb and becoming mad, tore their own master in pieces. SCHOL.

midst of the globe! O Jupiter, what pity is there? what is this contention of slaughter that comes persecuting thee wretched, to whom some evil genius casts tear upon tear, transporting to thy house the blood of thy mother which drives thee frenzied! Thee I bewail, I bewail, great prosperity is not lasting among mortals; but, as the sail of the swift bark, some deity having shaken him, hath sunk him in the voracious and destructive waves of tremendous evils, as in the waves of the ocean. For what family ought I to reverence yet before that sprung from divine nuptials, sprung from Tantalus?—But lo! the king! the prince Menelaus, is coming! but he is very easily discernible from the elegance of his person, as king of the house of the Tantalidæ.

O thou that didst direct the army of a thousand vessels to Asia's land, hail! but thou comest hither with good fortune, having obtained the object of thy wishes from the Gods.

MENELAUS, ORESTES, CHORUS.

MEN. O palace, in some respect indeed, I behold thee with pleasure, coming from Troy, but in other respect I groan when I see thee. For never yet saw I any other house more completely encircled round with lamentable woes. For I was made acquainted with the misfortune that befel Agamemnon, and his death, by what death he perished at the hands of his wife, when I was landing my ships at Malea; but from the waves the prophet of the mariners declared unto me, the foreboding Glaucus the son of Nereus, an unerring God, who told me thus in evident form standing by me. “ Menelaus, thy brother lieth dead, having fallen

“ in his last bath, which his wife prepared.” But he filled both me and my sailors with many tears; but when I come to the Nauplian shore, my wife having already landed there, expecting to clasp in my friendly embraces Orestes the son of Agamemnon, and his mother, as being in prosperity, I heard from some fisherman<sup>s</sup> the unhallowed murder of the daughter of Tyndarus. And now tell me, maidens, where is the son of Agamemnon, who dared these terrible deeds of evil? for he was an infant in Clytemnestra’s arms at that time when I left the palace on my way to Troy, so that I should not know him, were I to see him.

ORES. I, Menelaus, am Orestes, whom thou seekest, I of my own accord will declare my evils. But first I touch thy knees in supplication, putting up prayers from my mouth, not using the sacred branch<sup>h</sup>: save me. But thou art come in the very season of my sufferings.

MEN. O ye Gods, what do I behold! whom of the dead do I see!

ORES. Aye! well thou sayest the dead; for in my state of suffering I live not; but see the light.

MEN. Thou wretched man, how disordered thou art in thy squalid hair!

ORES. Not the appearance, but the deeds torment me.

MEN. But thou glarest dreadfully with thy shrivelled eye-balls.

ORES. My body is vanished, but my name has not left me.

<sup>s</sup> ἀλίτυπων, ἀλιών, οἱ ταῖς κόπαις τύπτουσι τὴν θάλασσαν. SCHOL.

<sup>h</sup> ἀφύλλον. Alluding to the branch, which the ancients used to hold in token of supplication.



MEN. Alas, thy uncomeliness of form which has appeared to me beyond conception!

ORES. I am he, the murderer of my wretched mother.

MEN. I have heard; but spare a little the recital of thy woes.

ORES. I spare it; but in woes the deity is rich to me.

MEN. What dost thou suffer? What malady destroys thee?

ORES. The conviction that I am conscious of having perpetrated dreadful deeds.

MEN. How sayest thou? Plainness, and not obscurity is wisdom.

ORES. Sorrow is chiefly what destroys me,—

MEN. She is a dreadful goddess, but sorrow admits of cure.

ORES. And fits of madness in revenge for my mother's blood.

MEN. But when didst first have the raging? what day was it then?

ORES. That day in which I heaped the tomb on my mother.

MEN. What? in the house, or sitting at the pyre?

ORES. As I was guarding by night lest any one should bear off her bones<sup>i</sup>.

MEN. Was any one else present, who supported thy body?

ORES. Pylades, who perpetrated with me the vengeance and death of my mother.

<sup>i</sup> “κατὰ τὴν νύκτα πέπονθα τηρῶν τὴν ἀναίρεσιν, καὶ τὴν ἀνάληψιν. “τῶν ὀστέων, τουτέστιν, ἵνα μὴ τις ἀφέληται ταῦτα.” *Paraph.* Heath translates it, *watchfully observing, till her bones were collected.*

MEN. But by what visions art thou thus afflicted?

ORES. I appear to behold three virgins like the night.

MEN. I know whom thou meanest, but am unwilling to name them.

ORES. Yes: for they are awful; but forbear from speaking such high polished words<sup>k</sup>.

MEN. Do these drive thee to distraction on account of this kindred murder?

ORES. Alas me for the persecutions, with which wretched I am driven!

MEN. It is not strange that those who do strange deeds should suffer them.

ORES. But we have whereto we may transfer the criminality<sup>l</sup> of the mischance.

MEN. Say not the death of *thy father*; for this is not wise.

ORES. Phœbus, who commanded us to perpetrate the slaying of our mother.

MEN. Being more ignorant than to know equity, and justice.

ORES. We are servants of the Gods, whatever those Gods be.

MEN. And then does not Apollo assist thee in thy miseries?

ORES. He is always about to do it, but such are the Gods by nature.

<sup>k</sup> The old reading was ἀπαίδευτα. The meaning of the present reading seems to be, "Yes, they are awful 'tis true, but still however you need not be so very scrupulous about naming them."

<sup>l</sup> ἀναφορά was a legal term, and signified the line of defence adopted by the accused, when he transferred the charge brought against himself to some other person.—See Demosthenes in Timocr.

MEN. But how long a time has thy mother's breath gone from her?

ORES. This is the sixth day since; the funeral pyre is yet warm.

MEN. How quickly have the Goddesses come to demand of thee thy mother's blood!

ORES. I am not wise, but a true friend to my friends.

MEM. But what then doth the revenge of thy father profit thee?

ORES. Nothing yet; but I consider what is in prospect in the same light as a thing not done.

MEN. But regarding the city how standest thou, having done these things?

ORES. We are hated to that degree, that no one speaks to us.

MEN. Nor hast thou washed thy blood from thy hands according to the laws?

ORES. *How can I?* for I am shut out from the houses, whithersoever I go.

MEN. Who of the citizens thus contend to drive thee from the land?

ORES. *Æax*<sup>m</sup>, imputing to my father the hatred which arose on account of Troy.

MEN. I understand. The death of Palamede takes its vengeance on thee.

ORES. In which at least I had no share—but I perish by the three.

MEN. But who else? Is it perchance one of the friends of *Ægisthus*?

ORES. They persecute me, whom now the city obeys.

MEN. But does the city suffer thee to wield *Agamemnon's* sceptre?

<sup>m</sup> *Æax* was Palamede's brother.

ORES. How should they? who no longer suffer us to live.

MEN. Doing what, which thou canst tell me as a clear fact?

ORES. This very day sentence will be passed upon us.

MEN. To be exiled from this city? or to die? or not to die?

ORES. To die, by being stoned with stones by the citizens.

MEN. And dost thou not fly then, escaping beyond the boundaries of the country?

ORES. *How can we?* for we are surrounded on every side by brazen arms.

MEN. By private enemies, or by the hand of Argos?

ORES. By all the citizens, that I may die—the word is brief.

MEN. O unhappy man! thou art come to the extreme of misfortune!

ORES. On thee my hope builds her escape from evils, but, thyself happy, coming among the distressed, impart thy good fortune to thy friends, and be not the only man to retain a benefit thou hast received, but undertake also services in thy turn, paying their father's kindness to those to whom thou oughtest. For those friends have the name, not the reality, who are not friends in adversity.

CHOR. And see the Spartan Tyndarus is toiling hither with his aged foot, in a black vest, and shorn, his locks cut off in mourning for his daughter.

ORES. I am undone, O Menelaus! Lo! Tyndarus is coming towards us, to come before whose presence most of all men's, shame covereth me, on account of what has been done. For he used to nurture me when

I was little, and satiated me with many kisses, dandling in his arms Agamemnon's boy, and Leda with him, honouring me no less than the twin-born of Jove. For which, O my wretched heart and soul, I have given no good return: what dark veil can I take for my countenance? what cloud can I place before me, that I may avoid the glances of the old man's eyes?

TYNDARUS, MENELAUS, ORESTES, CHORUS.

TYND. Where, where can I see my daughter's husband Menelaus? For as I was pouring my libations on the tomb of Clytemnestra, I heard that he was come to Nauplia with his wife, safe through a length of years. Conduct me, for I long to stand by his hand and salute him, seeing my friend after a long lapse of time.

MEN. O hail! old man, who sharest thy bed with Jove.

TYND. O hail! thou also, Menelaus, my dear relation,—ah! what an evil is it not to know the future! This dragon here, the murderer of his mother, glares before the house his pestilential gleams—the object of my detestation—Menelaus, dost thou speak to this unholy wretch?

MEN. Why not? he is the son of a father who was dear to me.

TYND. What? was he sprung from him, being such as he is?

MEN. He was; but, though he be unfortunate, he should be respected.

TYND. Having been a long time with barbarians, thou art thyself turned barbarian.

MEN. Nay! it is the Grecian fashion always to honour one of kindred blood.

TYND. *Yes*, and also not to wish to be above the laws.

MEN. Every thing proceeding from necessity is considered as subservient to her<sup>n</sup> among the wise.

TYND. Do thou then keep to this, but I'll have none of it.

MEN. *No*, for anger joined with thine age, is not wisdom.

TYND. With this man what controversy can there be regarding wisdom? If what things are virtuous, and what are not virtuous, are plain to all, what man was ever more unwise than this man? who did not indeed consider justice, nor applied to the common existing law of the Grecians. For after that Agamemnon breathed forth his last, struck by my daughter on the head, a most foul deed, (for never will I approve of this,) it behoved him indeed to lay against her a sacred charge of bloodshed, following up the accusation, and to cast his mother from out of the house; and he would have taken the wise side in the calamity, and would have kept to law, and would have been pious. But now has he come to the same fate with his mother. For with justice thinking her wicked, himself has become more wicked in slaying his mother.

But thus much, Menelaus, will I ask thee: If the wife that shared his bed were to kill him, and his son again kills his mother in return, and he that is born of him shall expiate the murder with murder, whither then will the extremes of these evils proceed? Well did our fathers of old lay down these things; they suffered not him to come into the sight of their eyes, nor to their

<sup>n</sup> And therefore we are not to impeach the *man*. Some would have δούλον to bear the sense of ἐουλοποιόν, *enslaves*, and therefore cannot be avoided.

converse, who was under an attainder<sup>o</sup> of blood; but they made him atone by banishment; they suffered however none to kill him in return. For always were one about to be attainted of murder, taking the pollution last into his hands. But I hate indeed impious women, but first among them my daughter, who slew her husband. But never will I approve of Helen thy wife, nor would I speak to her, neither do I commend<sup>p</sup> thee for going to the plain of Troy on account of a perfidious woman. But I will defend the law, as far at least as I am able, putting a stop to this brutish and murderous practice, which is ever destructive both of the country and the state.—For what feelings of humanity hadst thou, thou wretched man, when she bared her breast in supplication, thy mother? I indeed, though I witnessed not that scene of misery, melt in my aged eyes with tears through wretchedness. One thing however goes to the scale of my arguments; thou art both hated by the Gods, and sufferest vengeance of thy mother, wandering about with madness and terrors: why must I hear by the testimony of others, what it is in my power to see? That thou mayest know then *once for all*, Menelaus, do not things contrary to the Gods, through thy wishes to assist this man. But suffer him to be slain by the citizens with stones, or set not thy foot on Spartan ground. But my daughter in dying met with justice, but it was not fitting that she should die by him<sup>q</sup>. In

<sup>o</sup> ἔχω for ἔνοχος εἶμι.

<sup>p</sup> Ζηλῶ, τὸ μακαρίζω. ἐντᾶνθα δὲ ἀντὶ τοῦ ἐπαινω. SCHOL.

<sup>q</sup> Conf. Ter. Eun. Act. v. Sc. 2.

Non de dignum, Chærea,  
Fecisti; nam si ego digna hac contumelia  
Sum maxime, at tu indignus, qui faceres, tamen.

other respects indeed have I been a happy man, except in my daughters, but in this I am not happy.

CHOR. He is enviable, who is fortunate in his children, and has not on him notorious calamities.

ORES. O old man I tremble to speak to thee, wherein I am about to grieve thee and thy mind. But I am unholy in that I slew my mother; but holy at least in another point of view, having avenged my father. Let then thine age, which hinders me through fear from speaking, be removed out of the way of my words, and I will go on in a direct path; but now do I fear thy grey hairs. What could I do? for oppose the facts, two against two. My father indeed begat me, but thy daughter brought me forth, a field receiving the seed from another; but without a father there never could be a child. I reasoned therefore with myself, that I should assist the prime author of my birth rather than the aliment which under him produced me. But thy daughter, (I am ashamed to call her mother,) in secret and unchaste nuptials, had approached the bed of another man; of myself, if I speak ill of her, shall I be speaking, but yet will I tell it. Ægisthus was her secret husband in her palace. Him I slew, and after him I sacrificed my mother, doing indeed unholy things, but avenging my father. But as touching those things for which thou threatenest that I must be stoned, hear, how I shall assist all Greece. For if the women shall arrive at such a pitch of boldness as to murder the men, making good their escape with regard to their children, seeking to captivate their pity by their breasts, it would be as nothing with them to slay their husbands, having any pretext that might chance; but I having done dreadful things, (as thou sayest,) have put a stop to this



law, but hating my mother deservedly I slew her, who betrayed her husband absent from home in arms, the generalissimo of the whole land of Greece, and kept not her bed undefiled. But when she perceived that she had done amiss, she inflicted not vengeance on herself, but, that she might not suffer vengeance from her husband, punished and slew my father. By the Gods, (in no good cause have I named the Gods, pleading against a charge of murder,) had I by my silence praised my mother's actions, what would he the deceased have done to me? To my mother indeed the Furies are present as allies, but would they not be present to him, who has received the greater injury? Would he not, detesting me, have haunted me with the Furies? Thou then, O old man, by begetting a bad daughter, hast destroyed me; for through her boldness deprived of my father, I became a matricide. Dost see? Telemachus slew not the wife of Ulysses, for she married not a husband on a husband, but her marriage-bed remains unpolluted in the palace. Dost see? Apollo, who, dwelling in his habitation in the midst of the earth, gives the most clear oracles to mortals, by whom we are entirely guided, whatever he may say, on him relying slew I my mother. 'Twas he who erred, not I: what could I do? Is not the God sufficient for me, who transfer *the deed* to him, to do away with the pollution? Whither then can any fly for succour, unless he that commanded me shall deliver me from death? But say not these things have been done "not well;" but say "not fortunately" for us who did them. But to whatsoever men their marriages are well established, there is a happy life, but to those to whom they fall not out well, with regard to their affairs both at home and abroad they are unfortunate.

CHOR. Women were born always to be in the way of what may happen to men, to the making of things unfortunate.

TYND. Since thou art bold, and yieldest not to my speech, but thus answerest me so as to grieve my mind, thou wilt rather inflame me to urge thy death. But this I shall consider a handsome addition to those labours for which I came, *namely*, to deck my daughter's tomb. For going to the multitude of the Argives assembled, I will rouse the state willing and not unwilling, to pass the sentence of being stoned on thee and on thy sister; but she is worthy of death rather than thee, who irritated thee against her mother, always pealing in thine ear words to increase thy hatred, relating dreams she had of Agamemnon, and this also, that the infernal Gods detested the bed of Ægisthus; for even here *on earth* it were hard *to be endured*; until she set the house in flames with fire more strong than Vulcan's.—Menelaus, but to thee I speak this, and will moreover perform it. If thou regard my hate, and my alliance, ward not off death from this man in opposition to the Gods; but suffer him to be slain by the citizens with stones, or set not thy foot on Spartan ground. Thus much having heard, depart, nor choose the impious for thy friends, passing over the pious.—But, O attendants, conduct us from this house.

ORES. Depart, that the remainder of my speech may reach this man uninterrupted by the clamours of thy age: Menelaus, whither dost thou roam in thought, entering on a double path of double care?

MEN. Suffer me; having some thoughts within myself, I am perplexed to which side of fortune to turn me.

ORES. Do not make up thy opinion, but having first heard my words, then deliberate.

MEN. Say on; for thou hast spoken rightly; but there are seasons where silence may be better than talking, and there are seasons, where talking may be better than silence.

ORES. I will speak then forthwith: Long speeches have the preference before short ones, and are more plain to hear. Give thou to me nothing of what thou hast, O Menelaus, but what thou hast received from my father, return; I mean not riches—yet riches, which are the most dear of what I possess, if thou wilt preserve my life. Am I unjust? I ought to receive from thee, instead of this evil, something contrary to what justice demands; for Agamemnon my father having collected Greece in arms, in a way justice did not demand, went to Troy, not having erred himself, but in order to set right the error, and injustice of thy wife. This one thing indeed thou oughtest to give me for one thing, but he, as friends should for friends, of a truth exposed his person for thee toiling at the shield, that thou mightest receive back thy wife. Repay me then this kindness for that which thou receivedst there, toiling for one day in standing as my succour, not completing ten years. But the sacrifice of my sister, which Aulis received, this I suffer thee to have; do not kill Hermione, *I ask it not*. For, I being in the state in which I now am, thou must of necessity have the advantage, and I must suffer it to be so. But grant my life to my wretched father, and my sister's, who has been a virgin a long time. For dying I shall leave my father's house destitute. Thou wilt say "impossible:" this is the very thing *I have been urging*, it be-

hoves friends to help their friends in misfortunes. But when the God gives prosperity, what need is there of friends? For the God himself sufficeth, being willing to assist. Thou appearest to all the Greeks to be fond of thy wife; (and this I say, not stealing under thee imperceptibly with flattery;) by her I implore thee; O wretched me for my woes, to what have I come? but why must I suffer thus? For in behalf of the whole house I make this supplication. O divine brother of my father, conceive that the dead man beneath the earth hears these things, and that his spirit is hovering over thee, and speaks what I speak. These things have I said, with tears and groans, and miseries<sup>r</sup>, and have prayed earnestly, looking for preservation, which all, and not I only seek.

CHOR. I too implore thee, although a woman, yet still I implore thee to succour those in need, but thou art able.

MEN. Orestes, I indeed reverence thy person, and I am willing to labour with thee in thy misfortunes. For thus it is right to endure together the misfortunes of one's relations, if the God gives the ability, even so far as to die, and to kill the adversary; but this ability again I want from the Gods. For I am come having my single spear unaided by allies, having wandered with infinite labours with small assistance of friends left me. In battle therefore we cannot come off superior to Pelasgian Argos; but if we can by soft speeches, to that hope are we equal. For how can any one achieve

<sup>r</sup> Of this passage the Scholiast gives two interpretations; either it may mean *μετὰ δακρύων καὶ γόων εἶπον*: or, *εἶπον ταῦτα εἰς δάκρυα, καὶ γόους, καὶ συμφορὰς, ἤγουν ἵνα μὴ τύχω, τούτων τεύξομαι δὲ, εἰ πετρωθῆναι με εἶσσης.*

great actions with small means? For when the rabble is in full force falling into a rage, it is equally difficult to extinguish as a fierce fire. But if one quietly yields to it as it is spreading, and gives in to it, watching well his opportunity, perhaps it may spend its rage, but when it has remitted from its blast, you may without difficulty have it your own way, as much as you please. For there is inherent in them pity, but there is inherent also vehement passion, to one who carefully watches his opportunity a most excellent advantage. But I will go and endeavour to persuade Tyndarus, and the city, to use their great power in a becoming manner. For a ship, the main sheet stretched out to a violent degree, is wont to pitch, but stands upright again, if you slacken the main sheet. For the God hates too great vehemence, and the citizens hate it; but I must (I speak as I mean) save thee by wisdom, not by opposing my superiors. But I cannot by force, as perchance thou thinkest, preserve thee; for it is no easy matter to erect from one single spear trophies from the evils, which are about thee. For never have we approached the land of Argos by way of supplication; but now there is necessity for the wise to become the slaves of fortune.

ORESTES, CHORUS.

ORES. O thou, a mere cipher in other things except in warring for the sake of a woman; O thou most base in avenging thy friends, dost thou fly, turning away from me? But all Agamemnon's services are gone: thou wert then without friends, O my father, in thy affliction. Alas me! I am betrayed, and there no longer are any hopes, whither turning I may escape death from the Argives. For he was the refuge of my

safety.—But I see this most dear of men, Pylades, coming with hasty step from the Phocæans, a pleasing sight, a man faithful in adversity, more grateful to behold than the calm to the mariners.

PYLADES, ORESTES, CHORUS.

PYL. I came through the city with a quicker step than I ought, having heard of the council of state assembled, and seeing it plainly myself, against thee and thy sister, as about to kill you instantly.—What is this? how art thou? in what state, O most dear to me of my companions and kindred? for all these things art thou to me.

ORES. We are gone—briefly to shew thee my calamities.

PYL. Thou wilt have ruined me too; for the things of friends are common.

ORES. Menelaus has behaved most basely towards me and my sister.

PYL. It is to be expected that the husband of a bad wife be bad.

ORES. He is come, and has done just as much for me as if he had not come.

PYL. What! is he in truth come to this land?

ORES. After a long season; but nevertheless he was very soon discovered to be base to his friends.

PYL. And has he brought in his ship with him his most infamous wife?

ORES. Not he her, but she brought him hither.

PYL. Where is she, who, beyond any woman<sup>s</sup>, destroyed most of the Grecians?

<sup>s</sup> “*Beyond any woman*,” γυνή μία, this is a mode of expression frequently met with in the Attic writers, especially in Xenophon.

ORES. In my palace, if I may indeed be allowed to call this mine.

PYL. But what words didst thou say to thy father's brother?

ORES. *I requested him* not to suffer me and my sister to be slain by the citizens.

PYL. By the Gods, what said he to this request; this I wish to know.

ORES. He declined, from motives of prudence, as bad friends act towards their friends.

PYL. Going on what ground of excuse? This having learnt, I am in possession of every thing.

ORES. The father himself came, he that begat such excellent daughters.

PYL. Tyndarus you mean; perhaps enraged with thee on account of his daughter.

ORES. You are right: he paid more attention to his ties with him, than to his ties with my father.

PYL. And dared he not, being present, to take arms against thy troubles?

ORES. *No*: for he was not born a warrior, but brave among women.

PYL. Thou art then in the greatest miseries, and it is necessary for thee to die.

ORES. The citizens must pass their vote on us for the murder *we have committed*<sup>1</sup>.

PYL. Which vote what will it decide? tell me, for I am in fear.

ORES. Either to die or live: not many words on matters of great import.

PYL. Come fly, and quit the palace with thy sister.

<sup>1</sup> ἐπὶ τῷ φόνοῦ, τουτέστι διὰ τὸν φόνον, ὃν εἰργασάμεθα. Paraph.

ORES. Seest thou not? we are watched by guards on every side.

PYL. I saw the streets of the city lined with arms.

ORES. We are invested as to our persons, as a city by the enemy.

PYL. Now ask me also, what I suffer; for I too am undone.

ORES. By whom? This would be an evil added to my evils.

PYL. Strophius, my father, being enraged, hath driven me an exile from his house.

ORES. Bringing against thee some private charge, or one in common with the citizens?

PYL. Because I perpetrated with thee the murder of thy mother, *he banished me*, calling me unholy.

ORES. O thou unfortunate! it seems that thou also sufferest for my evils.

PYL. We have not Menelaus's manners—this must be borne.

ORES. Dost thou not fear lest Argos should wish to kill thee, as it does also me?

PYL. We do not belong to these to punish, but to the land of the Phocceans.

ORES. The populace is a terrible thing, when they have evil leaders.

PYL. But when they have good ones, they always deliberate good things.

ORES. Be it so: we must speak on our common business.

PYL. On what affair of necessity?

ORES. Supposing I should go to the citizens, and say—

PYL. —that thou hast acted justly?



ORES. *Aye*, avenging my father :

PYL. *I fear* they might not receive thee gladly.

ORES. But shall I die then shuddering in silence ?

PYL. This were cowardly.

ORES. How then can I do ?

PYL. Hast thou any chance of safety, if thou remainest ?

ORES. I have none.

PYL. But going, is there any hope of thy being preserved from thy miseries ?

ORES. Should it chance well, there might be.

PYL. Is not this then better than remaining ?

ORES. Shall I go then ?

PYL. Dying thus, at least thou wilt die more honourably.

ORES. And I have a just cause.

PYL. Only pray for its appearing so.

ORES. Thou sayest well ; this way I avoid the imputation of cowardice.

PYL. More than by tarrying here.

ORES. And some one perchance may pity me—

PYL. *Yes* ; for thy nobleness of birth is a great thing.

ORES. —indignant at my father's death.

PYL. All this in prospect.

ORES. Go I must, for it is not manly to die ingloriously.

PYL. These sentiments I praise.

ORES. Shall we then tell these things to my sister ?

PYL. No, by the Gods.

ORES. Why, there might be tears.

PYL. This then is a great omen.

ORES. Clearly it is better to be silent.

PYL. Thou art a gainer by delay.

ORES. This one thing only opposes me.

PYL. What new thing again is this thou sayest?

ORES. I fear lest the goddesses should stop me with their torments.

PYL. But I will take care of thee.

ORES. It is a difficult and dangerous task to touch a man thus disordered.

PYL. Not for me to touch thee.

ORES. Take care how thou art partaker of my madness.

PYL. Let not this be thought of.

ORES. Wilt thou not then be timid to assist me?

PYL. No, for timidity is a great evil to friends.

ORES. Go on now, the helm of my foot.

PYL. Having a charge worthy of a friend.

ORES. And guide me to my father's tomb.

PYL. To what end is this?

ORES. That I may supplicate him to save me.

PYL. This at least is just.

ORES. But let me not see my mother's monument.

PYL. For she was an enemy. But hasten, that the decree of the Argives condemn thee not before thou goest; leaning thy side, weary with disease, on mine; since I will conduct thee through the city, little caring for the multitude, nothing ashamed; for where shall I shew myself thy friend, if I assist thee not when thou art in perilous condition?

ORES. This it is to have companions, not relationship alone; so that a man who is congenial in manners, though a stranger in blood, is a better friend for a man to have, than ten thousand relatives.

## CHORUS.

The great happiness, and the valour high sounding throughout Greece, and by the channels of the Simois, has again withdrawn from the fortune of the Atridæ, as of old, from the ancient calamity of the house, when the strife of the golden lamb<sup>u</sup> arose among the descendants of Tantalus; most shocking feasts, and the slaughter of noble children: from whence murder responsive to murder fails not to attend on the two sons of Atreus. What seems good is not good, to gash the parents' skin with a fierce hand, and brandish the sword black to the hilt with blood in the sunbeams. But, on the other hand, to act wickedly<sup>x</sup> is great impiety, and the madness of evil-minded men.

But the wretched daughter of Tyndarus in the fear of death shrieked out, "My son, thou darrest impious deeds, "killing thy mother; do not, attending to the gratification of thy father, kindle an everlasting disgrace."

What malady, or what tears, or what pity on earth is greater, than to imbrue one's hand in a mother's blood? What a deed, what a deed having performed, does the son of Agamemnon rave with madness, a prey to the

<sup>u</sup> Thyestes and Atreus, having a dispute about their father Pelops's kingdom, agreed, that whichever should discover the first prodigy should have possession of the throne. There appeared in Atreus's flock a golden lamb, which, however, Aerope his wife secretly had conveyed to Thyestes to shew before the judges. Atreus afterwards invited Thyestes to a feast, and served up before him Aglæis, Orchomenus, and Caleus, three sons he had by his intrigues with Aerope.

<sup>x</sup> Alluding to the murder of Agamemnon by Clytemnestra. This is the interpretation and explanation of the Scholiast; but it is perhaps better translated, "*but on the other hand to play the coward is great impiety, and the error of cowardly-minded men;*" the chorus meaning, that this might have been said of Orestes, had he not avenged his father.

Eumenides marked for death, giddy with his rolling eyes! O wretched on account of his mother, when, though seeing the breast bared from the robe of golden texture, he stabbed the mother in retaliation for the father's sufferings.

ELECTRA, CHORUS.

ELEC. Ye virgins, has the wretched Orestes, overcome with heaven-inflicted madness, rushed any where from this house?

CHOR. By no means; but he is gone to the Argive people, to undergo the trial proposed regarding life, by which you must either live or die.

ELEC. Alas me! what thing has he done? but who persuaded him?

CHOR. Pylades.—But this messenger seems soon about to inform us of what has passed there concerning thy brother.

MESSENGER, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

MESS. O wretched hapless daughter of the chief Agamemnon, revered Electra, hear the unfortunate words which I am come to bring.

ELEC. Alas! alas! we are undone; this thou signifyest by thy speech. For thou comest, as it seems, a messenger of woes.

MESS. It has been carried by the vote of the Pelasgians, that thy brother and thou must die this day.

ELEC. Ah me! the expected event has come, which long since fearing, I pined away with lamentations on account of what was in prospect.—But what was the debate? What arguments amongst the Argives condemned us, and confirmed our sentence of death? Tell

me, old man, whether by the hand raised to stone me, or by the sword must I breathe out my soul, having this calamity in common with my brother?

MESS. I chanced indeed to be entering the gates from the country, anxious to hear both what regarded thee, and what regarded Orestes; for at all times I had a favourable inclination towards thy father: and thy house fed me, poor indeed, but noble in my conduct towards friends. But I see the crowd going and sitting down on an eminence; where they say Danaus first collected the people to a common council, when he suffered punishment at the hands of Ægyptus. But seeing this concourse, I asked one of the citizens, "What new thing is stirring in Argos? Has any message from hostile powers roused the city of the Danaids?" But he said, "Seest thou not this Orestes walking near us, who is about to run in the contest of life and death?" But I see an unexpected sight, which oh that I had never seen! Pylades and thy brother walking together, the one indeed broken with sickness, but the other, like a brother sympathizing with his friend, tending his weakened state with fostering care. But when the assembly of the Argives was full, a herald stood forth and said, "Who wishes to speak *on the question*, whether it is right that Orestes, who has killed his mother, should die, or not?" And on this Talthybius rises, who, in conjunction with thy father, laid waste the Phrygians. But he spoke words of divided import, being the constant slave of those in power; struck with admiration indeed at thy father, but not commending thy brother, (speciously mixing up words of bad import,) because he laid down no good laws towards his parents: but he was continually cast-

ing a smiling glance on Ægisthus's friends. For such is this kind; heralds always dance attendance on the prosperous; but that man is their friend, whoever may chance to have power in the state, and to be in office. But next to him prince Diomed harangued; he indeed was for suffering them to kill neither thee nor thy brother, but *bid them* observe piety by punishing you with banishment. But some indeed murmured their assent, that he spoke well, but others praised him not<sup>y</sup>. And after him rises up some man, intemperate in speech, powerful in boldness, an Argive, yet not an Argive<sup>z</sup>, forced upon us, relying both on the tumult, and on ignorant boldness, prompt by persuasion to involve them in some mischief. (For when a man, sweet in words, holding bad sentiments, persuades the multitude, it is a great evil to the city. But as many as always advise good things with understanding, although not at the present moment, eventually are of service to the state: but the intelligent leader ought to look to this, for the case is the same with the man who speaks words, and the man who approves them.) Who said, that they ought to kill Orestes and thee by stoning. But Tyndarus was privily making up such sort of speeches for him who wished your death to speak. But another man stood up, and spoke in opposition to him, in form indeed not made to catch the eye; but a man endued with the qualities of a man, rarely polluting the city, and the circle of the forum; one who

<sup>y</sup> That is, *blamed him*. So St. Paul, 1 Cor. xi. 21. ἐπαινώσω ὑμᾶς ἐν τούτῳ; οὐκ ἐπαινώ. Ter. And. Act. II. Sc. vi. "Et, quod dicendum hic "siet, Tu quoque perparce nimium, non laudo."

<sup>z</sup> An Argive as far as he was born there, and therefore ἠναγκασμένος; not an Argive, inasmuch as his parents were not of that state. This is supposed to allude to Cleophon. SCHOL.

farmed his own land<sup>a</sup>, which class of persons<sup>b</sup> alone preserve the country, but prudent, and wishing the tenour of his conduct to be in unison with his words, uncorrupted, one that had conformed to a blameless mode of living; he proposed to crown Orestes the son of Agamemnon, who was willing to avenge his father by slaying a wicked and unholy woman, who took this out of the power of men, and would no one have been the cause of arming the hand for war, nor undertaking an expedition, leaving his home, if those who are left destroy what is entrusted to their charge in the house, disgracing their husbands' beds. And to right-minded men at least he appeared to speak well: and none spoke besides, but thy brother advanced and said, "O inhabitants of the land of Inachus, avenging you no less than my father, I slew my mother, for if the murder of men shall become licensed to women, ye no longer can escape dying, or ye must be slaves to your wives. But ye do the contrary to what ye ought to do. For now she that was false to the bed of my father is dead; but if ye do indeed slay me, the law has lost its force, and no man can escape dying, forasmuch as there will no lack of this audacity."

But he persuaded not the people, though appearing to speak well. But that villain, who spoke among the multitude, overcomes him, he that harangued for the killing of thy brother and thee. But scarcely did the wretched Orestes persuade them that you might not

<sup>a</sup> This is the interpretation of one Scholiast; another explains it *οικείας χερσίν εργαζόμενος*. Grotius translates it *agricola*.

<sup>b</sup> The same construction occurs in the Supplicants, 870. *φίλοις ὃ ἀληθίης ἦν φίλος, παροῦσι τε καὶ μὴ παροῦσιν, ὧν* (of which sort of men) *ἀριθμὸς οὐ πολὺς*. PERSON.

die by stoning; but he promised that this day he would quit his life by self-slaughter together with thee:—but Pylades is conducting him from the council, weeping; but his friends accompany him bewailing him, pitying him; but he is coming a sad spectacle to thee, and a wretched sight. But prepare the sword, or the noose for thy neck, for thou must die, but thy nobleness of birth hath profited thee nothing, nor the Pythian Phœbus who sits on the tripod, but hath destroyed thee.

CHOR. O unhappy virgin! how art thou dumb, casting thy muffled countenance towards the ground, as though about to run into a strain of groans and lamentations!

ELEC. I begin the lament, O land of Greece, digging my white nail into my cheek, sad bleeding woe, and dashing my head, which<sup>c</sup> the lovely<sup>d</sup> goddess of the manes beneath the earth has to her share. And let the Cyclopiian land<sup>e</sup> howl, applying the steel to their head to crop their hair over the calamity of our house. This pity, this pity, proceeds for those who are about to die, who once were the princes of Greece. For it is gone, it is gone, the entire race of the children of Pelops has perished, and the happiness which once resided in these blest abodes. Envy from heaven has now seized it, and the harsh decree of blood in the state. Alas! Alas! O race of mortals that endure for a day, full of tears,

<sup>c</sup> Which, *κτύπον* namely: *δύναμις* and *κτύπον* are each governed by *τιθεῖσα*; but it was not easy to find a single verb in English that should be transitive to both these substantives.

<sup>d</sup> *καλλίπαις* lovely, not lovely in her children: so in Phœn. 1634. *εὐτεκνος ξυνωρίς*.

<sup>e</sup> Argos, so called from the Cyclopes, a nation of Thrace, who, being called in as allies, afterwards settled here.



full of troubles, behold how contrary to expectation fate comes. But in the long lapse of time each different man receives by turns his different sufferings<sup>f</sup>. But the whole race of mortals is unstable and uncertain.

Oh! could I go to that rock stretched from Olympus in its loftiness midst heaven and earth by golden chains, that mass of clay borne round with rapid revolutions, that in my plaints I might cry out to my ancient father Tantalus; who begat the progenitors of my family, who saw calamities, what time, in the pursuing of steeds, Pelops in his car drawn by four horses perpetrated, as he drove, the murder of Myrtilus, *by casting him* into the sea, hurling him down to the surge of the ocean, as he guided his car on the shore of the briny sea by Geræstus foaming with its white billows. Whence the baleful curse came on my house since, by the agency of Maia's son<sup>g</sup>, there appeared the pernicious, pernicious prodigy of the golden-fleeced lamb, a birth which took place among the flocks of the warlike Atreus. On which both Discord drove back the winged chariot of the sun, directing it from the path of heaven leading to the west towards Aurora borne on her single horse<sup>h</sup>. And Jupiter drove back the course of the seven moving Pleiads another way: and from that period<sup>i</sup> he sends deaths in succession to deaths, and “ the feast of Thy-

<sup>f</sup> ἑτέροις may perhaps seem to make the construction plainer than ἕτερος; but Porson has received the latter into his text on account of the metre.

<sup>g</sup> Myrtilus was the son of Mercury, who therefore sowed this dissension between the two brothers in revenge for his death by Pelops. See note at line 802.

<sup>h</sup> Some would understand by μονόπωλον not that Aurora was borne on one horse, but that this alteration in the course of nature took place for one day. SCHOL.

<sup>i</sup> καὶ ἀπὸ τῶνδ'ε, ἦτοι μετὰ ταῦτα. Paraph.

“estes,” so named from Thyestes. And the bed of the Cretan Aerope deceitful in a deceitful marriage has come as a finishing stroke on me and my father, to the miserable destruction of our family.

CHOR. But see, thy brother is advancing, condemned by the vote of death, and Pylades the most faithful of all, a man like a brother, supporting the enfeebled limbs of Orestes, walking by his side<sup>k</sup> with the foot of tender solicitude.

ELECTRA, ORESTES, PYLADES, CHORUS.

ELEC. Alas me! for I bewail thee, my brother, seeing thee before the tomb, and before the pyre of thy departed shade: alas me! again and again, how am I bereft of my senses, seeing with my eyes the very last sight of thee!

ORES. Wilt thou not in silence, ceasing from womanish groans, make up thy mind to what is decreed? these things indeed are lamentable, but yet we must bear our present fate.

ELEC. And how can I be silent? We wretched no longer are permitted to view this light of the God.

ORES. Do not thou kill me; I, the unhappy, have died enough already under the hands of the Argives; but pass over our present ills.

ELEC. Oh Orestes! oh wretched in thy youth, and thy fate, and thy untimely death, then oughtest thou to live, when thou art no more.

ORES. Do not by the Gods throw cowardice around

<sup>k</sup> παράσειρος is used to signify a loose horse tied abreast of another in the shaft, and is technically termed “the outrigger.” The metaphorical application of it to Pylades, who voluntarily attached himself to the misfortunes of his friend, is extremely beautiful.

me, bringing the remembrance of my woes so as to cause tears.

ELEC. We shall die; it is not possible not to groan our misfortunes; for the dear life is a cause of pity to all mortals.

ORES. This is the day appointed for us; but we must either fit the suspended noose, or whet the sword with our hand.

ELEC. Do thou then kill me, my brother; let none of the Argives kill me, putting a contumely on the offspring of Agamemnon.

ORES. I have enough of thy mother's blood, but thee I will not slay; but die by thine own hand in whatever manner thou wilt.

ELEC. These things shall be; I will not be deserted by thy sword<sup>1</sup>; but I wish to clasp my hands around thy neck.

ORES. Thou enjoyest a vain gratification, if this be an enjoyment, to throw thy hands around those who are hard at death's door.

ELEC. Oh thou most dear! oh thou that hast the desirable and most sweet name, and one soul with thy sister!

ORES. Thou wilt melt me; and still I wish to answer thee in the endearment of encircling arms, for why am I any longer ashamed? O bosom of my sister, O dear object of my caresses, these embraces are allowed to us miserable beings instead of children and the bridal bed.

ELEC. Alas! How can the same sword (if this request be lawful) kill us, and one tomb wrought of cedar receive us?

<sup>1</sup> Or, "I will not be at all behind thy slaughter."

ORES. This would be most sweet; but thou seest how destitute we are, in respect to being able to share our sepulture.

ELEC. Did not Menelaus speak in behalf of thee, taking a decided part against thy death, the base man, the deserter of my father?

ORES. He shewed it not even in his countenance, but keeping his hopes on the sceptre, he was cautious how he saved his friends. But let be, we will die acting in a manner nobly, and most worthily of Agamemnon. And I indeed will shew my high descent to the city, striking home to my heart with the sword; but thee, on the other hand, it behoveth to act in concert with my bold attempts. But do thou, Pylades, be the umpire of our death, and well compose the bodies of us when dead, and bury us together, bearing us to our father's tomb. And farewell—but I am going to the deed, as thou seest.

PYL. Hold. This one thing indeed first I bring in charge against thee—Dost thou think that I can wish to live when thou diest<sup>m</sup>?

ORES. For how does it concern thee to die with me?

PYL. Dost ask? But how does it to live without thy company?

ORES. Thou didst not slay my mother, as I did, a wretch.

PYL. With thee I did at least; I ought also to suffer these things in common with thee.

ORES. Take thyself back to thy father, do not die with me. For thou indeed hast a city, (but I no longer

<sup>m</sup> εἰ in this passage *interrogat oblique*, see Hoogeveen, xvi. §. 1. 15.

have,) and the mansion of thy father, and a great harbour of wealth. But thou art frustrated in thy marriage with this unhappy virgin, whom I betrothed to thee, revering thy friendship. Nevertheless do thou, contracting other nuptials, be a blest father, but the connection between me and thee no longer subsists. But thou, O darling name of my converse, farewell, be happy, for this is not allowed me, but it is to thee; for we, the dead, are deprived of happiness.

PYL. Surely thou art wide astray from my purposes. Nor may the fruitful plain receive my blood, nor the bright air, if ever I betraying thee, having freed myself, forsake thee; for I committed the slaughter with thee, (I will not deny it,) and I planned all things, for which now thou sufferest vengeance. Die then I must with thee and her together, for her, whose marriage I have courted, I consider as my wife; for what good excuse ever shall I give, going to the Delphian land, to the citadel of the Phocæans, I, who was present with you, your friend, before indeed you were unfortunate, but now, when you are unfortunate, am no longer thy friend? It is not possible—but these things are my care also. But since we are about to die, let us come to a common conference, how Menelaus may be involved in our calamity.

ORES. O thou dearest man: for would I could see this and die!

PYL. Be persuaded then, but defer the slaughtering sword.

ORES. I will defer, if any how I can avenge myself on my enemy.

PYL. Be silent then, for I have but small confidence in women.

ORES. Do not at all fear these, for they are friends that are present.

PYL. Let us kill Helen, which will cause great grief to Menelaus.

ORES. How? for the will is here, if it can be done with glory.

PYL. Stabbing her; but she is lurking in thy house.

ORES. Yes indeed, and is putting her seal on all my effects.

PYL. But she shall seal no more, having Pluto for her bridegroom.

ORES. And how can this be? for she has a train of barbarian attendants.

PYL. Whom? for I would be afraid of no Phrygian.

ORES. Such men as should preside over mirrors and scents.

PYL. For has she brought hither her Trojan fineries?

ORES. *Oh yes!* so that Greece is but a cottage for her.

PYL. A race of slaves is a mere nothing against a race that will not be slaves.

ORES. In good truth, this if I could achieve, I shrink not from two deaths.

PYL. But neither do I indeed, if I could revenge thee at least.

ORES. Disclose thy purpose, and go through it as thou sayest.

PYL. We will enter then the house, as men about to die.

ORES. Thus far I comprehend, but the rest I do not comprehend.

PYL. We will make our lamentation to her of the things we suffer.

ORES. So that she shall weep, though joyed within her heart.

PYL. And the same things will be for us to do afterwards, which she does then.

ORES. Then how shall we finish the contest?

PYL. We will wear our swords concealed beneath our robes.

ORES. But what slaughter can there be before her attendants?

PYL. We will bolt them out, scattered in different parts of the house.

ORES. And him that is not silent we must kill.

PYL. Then the circumstances of the moment will point out what steps to take.

ORES. To kill Helen, I understand the sign.

PYL. Thou seest: but hear on what honourable principles I meditate it. For, if we draw our sword on a more modest woman, the murder would blot our names with infamy. But in the present instance, she shall suffer vengeance for the whole of Greece, whose fathers she slew, and made the brides bereaved of their spouses; there shall be a shout, and they will kindle up fire to the Gods, praying for many blessings to fall to thee and me, inasmuch as we shed the blood of a wicked woman. But thou shalt not be called the matricide, when thou hast slain her, but dropping this name thou shalt arrive at better things, being styled the slayer of the havoc-dealing Helen. It never, never were right that Menelaus should be prosperous, and that thy father, and thee, and thy sister should die, and thy mother; (this I forbear, for it is not decorous to

mention;) and that he should seize thy house, having recovered his bride by the means of Agamemnon's valour. For may I live no longer, if I draw not my black sword upon her. But if then we do not compass the murder of Helen, having fired the palace we will die, for we shall have glory, succeeding in one of these two things, nobly dying, or nobly rescued.

CHOR. The daughter of Tyndarus is an object of detestation to all women, being one that has given rise to scandal against the sex.

ORES. Alas! There is no better thing than a real friend, not riches, not kingdoms; but the popular applause becomes a thing of no account to receive in exchange for a generous friend. For thou contrivedst the destruction that befell Ægisthus, and wast close to me in my dangers. But now again thou givest me to revenge me on my enemies, and art not out of the way—but I will leave off praising thee, since there is some burthen even in this “to be praised to excess.” But I altogether in a state of death, wish to do something to my foes and die, that I may in turn destroy those who betrayed me, and those may groan, who also made me unhappy. I am the son of Agamemnon, who ruled over Greece by general consent; no tyrant, but yet he had the power as it were of a God, whom I will not disgrace, suffering a slavish death, but breathe out my soul in freedom, but on Menelaus will I revenge me. For if we could gain this one thing, we should be prosperous, if from any chance safety should come unhopèd for on the slayers *then*, not the slain; this I pray for. For what I wish is sweet to delight the mind without fear of cost, though with but fleeting words uttered through the mouth.



ELEC. I, O brother, think that this very thing brings safety to thee, and thy friend, and in the third place to me.

ORES. Thou meanest the providence of the Gods: but where is this? for I know that there is understanding in thy mind.

ELEC. Hear me then, and thou too give thy attention.

ORES. Speak, since the existing prospect of good affords some pleasure.

ELEC. Art thou acquainted with the daughter of Helen? Thou knowest her of whom I ask.

ORES. I know her, Hermione, whom my mother brought up.

ELEC. She is gone to Clytemnestra's tomb.

ORES. For what purpose? what hope dost thou suggest?

ELEC. To pour libations on the tomb in behalf of her mother.

ORES. And what is this, thou hast told me of, that regards our safety?

ELEC. Seize her as a pledge as she is coming back.

ORES. What remedy for the three friends is this thou sayest?

ELEC. When Helen is dead, if Menelaus does any harm to thee or Pylades, or me, (for this firm of friendship is all one,) say that thou wilt kill Hermione; but thou oughtest to draw thy sword, and hold it to the neck of the virgin. And if indeed Menelaus save thee, anxious that the virgin may not die; when he sees Helen's corse weltering in blood, give back the virgin for her father to enjoy; but should be, not governing his angry temper, slay thee, do thou also plunge the

sword into the virgin's neck, and I think that he, though at first he come to us very big, will after a season soften his heart; for neither is he brave nor valiant: this is the fortress of our safety that I have; my arguments on the subject have been spoken.

ORES. O thou that hast indeed the mind of a man, but a form among women beautiful, to what a degree art thou more worthy of life than death! Pylades, wilt thou miserably be disappointed of such a woman, or dwelling with her obtain this happy marriage?

PYL. For would it could be so! and she could come to the city of the Phoceans meeting with her deserts in splendid nuptials!

ORES. But when will Hermione come to the house? Since for the rest thou saidst most admirably, if we could succeed in taking the whelp of the impious father.

ELEC. Even now I guess that she must be near the house, for *with this supposition* the space itself of the time coincides.

ORES. It is well: do thou therefore, my sister Electra, waiting before the house, meet the arrival of the virgin. And watch, lest any one, either some ally, or the brother of my father, should be beforehand with us coming to the palace; and make some noise towards the house, either knocking at the doors, or sending thy voice within. But let us, O Pylades, (for thou undertakest this labour with me,) entering in, arm our hands with the sword to one last attempt. O my father, that inhabitest the realms of gloomy night, Orestes thy son invokes thee to come a succour to thy suppliants; for on thy account I wretched suffer unjustly, and am betrayed by thy brother, myself having acted justly;

whose wife I wish to take and destroy; but be thou our accomplice in this affair.

ELEC. O father, come then, if beneath the earth thou hearest thy children calling, who die for thee.

PYL. O thou relation<sup>n</sup> of my father, give ear, O Agamemnon, to my prayers also, preserve thy children.

ORES. I slew my mother.

PYL. But I directed the sword.

ELEC. But I at least incited you, and freed you from delay.

ORES. Succouring thee, my father.

ELEC. Neither did I forsake thee.

PYL. Wilt thou not therefore, hearing these things that are brought against thee<sup>o</sup>, defend thy children?

ORES. I pour libations on thee with my tears.

ELEC. And I with lamentations.

PYL. Cease, and let us haste forth to the work, for, if prayers penetrate under the earth, he hears; but O Jove our ancestor, and thou revered deity of justice, grant us to succeed, him, and myself, and this virgin, for over us three friends one hazard, one cause impends, either for all to live, or all to die!

#### ELECTRA, CHORUS.

ELEC. O dear Mycenian virgins, who have the first place at the Pelasgian seat of the Argives;—

CHOR. What voice art thou uttering, my respected

<sup>n</sup> Strophius, the father of Pylades, married Anaxibia, Agamemnon's sister.

<sup>o</sup> *ὀνειδή, τῶν ἐνεργεσιῶν τὰς ὑπομνήσεις.* Schol. Ter. And. i. 1. "is-tæc commemoratio Quasi exprobratio est inmemoris benefici."

mistress? for this appellation still awaits thee in the city of the Danaids.

ELEC. Arrange yourselves, some of you in this beaten way, and some there, in that other path, to guard the house.

CHOR. But on what account dost thou command this, tell me, my friend.

ELEC. Fear possesses me, lest any one being in the palace, on account of this murderous deed, should contrive evils on evils.

SEMICHOR. Go, let us hasten, I indeed will guard this path, that tends towards where the sun flings his first rays.

SEMICHOR. And I indeed this, which leads towards the west.

ELEC. Now turn the glances of your eyes around in every position, now here, now there, then take some other view.

CHOR. We are, as thou commandest.

ELEC. Now roll your eyelids over your pupils, glance them every way through your ringlets.

SEMICHOR. Is this any one here appearing in the path?—Who is this rustic that is standing about thy palace?

ELEC. We are undone then, my friends; he will immediately shew to the enemy the lurking beasts of prey armed with their swords.

SEMICHOR. Be not afraid, the path is clear, which thou thinkest not.

ELEC. But what?—does all with you remain secure? Give me some good report, whether the space before the hall be empty.

SEMICHOR. All here at least is well, but look to thy

province, for no one of the Danaids is approaching towards us.

SEMICHOR. Thy report agrees with mine, for neither is there a disturbance here.

ELEC. Come now,—I will listen at the door: why do ye delay, ye that are within, to sacrifice the victim, now that ye are in quiet?—They hear not: Alas me! wretched in misery! Are the swords then struck dumb at her beauty? Perhaps some Argive in arms rushing in with the foot of succour will approach the palace.—Now watch more carefully; it is no contest that admits delay; but turn *your eyes* some this way, and some that.

CHOR. I turn each different way, looking about on all sides.

HELEN (*within.*) Oh! Pelasgian Argos! I am miserably slain!

ELEC. Heard ye? The men are employing their head in the murder.—It is the shriek of Helen, as I may conjecture.

SEMICHOR. O eternal might of Jove, come to assist my friends in every way.

HEL. Menelaus, I die! But thou art at hand, and dost not help me!

ELEC. Kill, strike, slay, plunging with your hands the two double-edged swords into the deserter of her father, the deserter of her husband, who destroyed numbers of the Grecians perishing by the spear at the river, whence tears fell in conjunction with tears, fell on account of the iron weapons around the whirlpools of Scamander.

CHOR. Be still, be still: I heard the sound of some one coming along the path around the palace.

ELEC. O most dear women, in the midst of the slaughter behold Hermione is present; let us cease from our clamour, for she comes about to fall into the meshes of our toils. A goodly prey will she be, if she be taken. Again to your stations with a calm countenance, and with a colour that shall not give evidence of what has been done. I too will preserve a pensive cast of countenance, as though perfectly unacquainted with what has happened.

HERMIONE, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

ELEC. O virgin, art thou come from crowning Clytemnestra's tomb, and pouring libations to her manes?

HERM. I am come, having obtained her good services; but some terror has come upon me, on account of the noise in the palace, which I hear being a far distance off the house.

ELEC. But why? There have happened to us things worthy of groans.

HERM. Speak good words; but what news dost thou tell me?

ELEC. It has been decreed by this land, that Orestes and I die.

HERM. No, I hope not so; you, who are my relations.

ELEC. It is fixed; but we stand under the yoke of necessity.

HERM. Was the noise then in the house on this account?

ELEC. For falling down a suppliant at the knees of Helen, he cries out—

HERM. Who? for I know no more, except thou tellest me.

ELEC. The wretched Orestes, that he may not die, and in behalf of me.

HERM. For a just reason then the house lamented.

ELEC. For on what other account should one rather cry out? But come, and join in supplication with thy friends, falling down before thy mother, the supremely blest, that Menelaus will not see us perish. But, O thou, that receivedst thy education at the hands of my mother, pity us, and alleviate our sufferings. Come hither to the trial; but I will lead the way, for thou alone hast the ends of our preservation.

HERM. Behold I direct my footstep towards the house. Be preserved, as far as lies in me.

ELEC. O ye in the house, my dear warriors, will ye not take your prey?

HERM. Alas me! who are these I see?

ORES. (*advancing.*) Thou must be silent; for thou art come to preserve us, not thyself.

ELEC. Hold her, hold her; and pointing a sword to her neck be silent, that Menelaus may know, that having found men, not Phrygian cowards, he has treated them in a manner he should treat cowards. What ho! what ho! my friends, make a noise, a noise, and shout before the palace, that the murder that is perpetrated spread not a dread alarm amongst the Argives, so that they run to assist to the king's palace, before I plainly see the slaughtered Helen lying weltering in her blood within the house, or else we hear the report from some of her attendants. For part of the havoc I know, and part not accurately.

CHOR. With justice came the vengeance of the Gods on Helen. For she filled the whole of Greece with tears on account of the ruthless, ruthless Idean

Paris, who brought the Grecian state to Ilium. But be silent, for the bolts of the royal mansion resound, for some one of the Phrygians comes forth, from whom we shall hear of the affairs within the house, in what state they are.

PHRYGIAN, CHORUS.

PHRY. I have escaped from death by the Argive sword in these barbaric slippers, *climbing* over the cedar beams of the bed and the Doric triglyphs, by the flight of a barbarian<sup>p</sup>. Thou art gone, thou art gone, O my country, my country! Alas me! whither can I escape, O strangers, flying through the hoary air, or the sea, which the Ocean, with head in shape like a bull's, rolling with his arms incircles the earth?

CHOR. But what is the matter, O attendant of Helen, thou man of Ida?

PHRY. O Ilium, Ilium! alas me! O thou fertile Phrygian city, thou sacred mount of Ida, how do I lament for thee destroyed, a sad<sup>q</sup>, sad strain for my barbaric voice, on account of that form of the hapless, hapless Helen, born from a bird, the offspring of the beauteous Leda in shape of a swan, the fiend of the splendid Apollonian Pergamus! Alas! Oh! lamentations! lamentations! O wretched Dardania, warlike school<sup>r</sup> of Ganymede, the companion of Jove!

CHOR. Relate to us clearly each circumstance that happened in the house, for I do not understand your former account, but merely conjecture.

<sup>p</sup> i. e. being a barbarian, and therefore not knowing whither to go.

<sup>q</sup> ἀρμάτειον, such a strain as that raised over Hector, ἐλκομένω, διὰ τοῦ ἄρματος. See two other explanations in the Scholia.

<sup>r</sup> ἰπποσύνα, ἣτις ὑπῆρχε ἰππηλασία τοῦ Γ. BRUNCK.



PHRY. *Αἰλίον, αἰλίον*, the Barbarians begin the song of death in the language of Asia, Alas! alas! when the blood of kings has been poured on the earth by the ruthless swords of death. There came to the palace (that I may relate each circumstance) two Grecians, lions, of the one the leader of the Grecian host was said to be the father, the other the son of Strophius, a man of dark design; such was Ulysses, secretly treacherous, but faithful to his friends, bold in battle, skilled in war, cruel as the dragon. May he perish for his deep concealed design, the worker of evil! But they having advanced within her chamber, whom the archer Paris had as his wife, their eyes bathed with tears, they sat down in humble mien, one on each side of her, on the right and on the left, armed with swords. And around her knees did they both fling their suppliant hands, around the knees of Helen did they fling them. But the Phrygian attendants sprung up, and fled in amazement: and one called out to another in terror, *See*, lest there be treachery. To some indeed there appeared no danger; but to others the dragon stained with his mother's blood appeared bent to infold in his closest toils the daughter of Tyndarus.

CHOR. But where wert thou then, or hadst thou long before fled through fear?

PHRY. After the Phrygian fashion I chanced with the close circle of feathers to be fanning the gale, *that sported* in the ringlets of Helen, before her cheek, after the barbaric fashion. But she was winding with her fingers the flax round the distaff, but what she had spun she let fall on the ground, desirous of making from the Phrygian spoils a robe of purple as an ornament for the tomb, a gift to Clytemnestra. But Orestes entreated

the Spartan girl; “ O daughter of Jove, here, place thy  
 “ footstep on the ground, rising from thy seat, come to  
 “ the place of our ancestor Pelops, the ancient altar,  
 “ that thou mayest hear my words.” And he leads her,  
 but she followed, not dreaming of what was about to  
 happen. But his accomplice, the wicked Phocæan, at-  
 tended to other points. “ Will ye not depart from out  
 “ of the way, but are the Phrygians always vile?” and  
 he bolted us out scattered in different parts of the  
 house, some in the stables of the horses, and some in  
 the out-houses, and some here and there, dispersing  
 them some one way, some another, afar from their  
 mistress.

CHOR. What calamity took place after this?

PHRY. O powerful, powerful Idean mother, alas!  
 alas! the murderous sufferings, and the lawless evils,  
 which I saw, I saw in the royal palace! From beneath  
 their purple robes concealed having their drawn swords  
 in their hands, they turned each his eye on either side,  
 lest any one might chance to be present. But like  
 mountain boars standing over against the lady, they say,  
 “ Thou shalt die, thou shalt die! thy vile husband kills  
 thee, having given up the offspring of his brother to die  
 at Argos.” But she shrieked out ah me! ah me! and  
 throwing her white arm on her breast inflicted on her  
 head miserable blows, and, her feet turned to flight,  
 she stepped, she stepped with her golden sandals; but  
 Orestes thrusting his fingers into her hair, outstrip-  
 ping her flight<sup>s</sup>, bending back her neck over his left  
 shoulder, was about to plunge the black sword into her  
 throat.

<sup>s</sup> Literally, *her Mycænan slipper*.

CHOR. Where then were the Phrygians, who dwell under the same roof, to assist her?

PHRY. With a clamour having burst by means of bars the doors and cells where we were waiting, we run to her assistance, each to different parts of the house, one bringing stones, another spears, another having a long-handled sword in his hand. But Pylades came against us, impetuous, like as the Phrygian Hector or Ajax in his triple-crested helmet, whom I saw, I saw at the gates of Priam: but we clashed together the points of our swords: then indeed, then did the Phrygians give clear proof how inferior we were in the force of Mars to the spear of Greece. One indeed turning away, a fugitive, but another wounded, and another deprecating the death that threatened him: but under favour of the darkness we fled; and the corpses fell, but some staggered, and some lay prostrate. But the wretched Hermione came to the house at the time when her murdered mother fell to the ground, that unhappy woman that gave her birth. And running upon her as Bacchanals without their thyrsus, as a heifer in the mountains they bore her away in their hands, and again eagerly rushed to the daughter of Jove to slay her. But she vanished altogether from the chamber through the palace. O Jupiter and O earth, and light, and darkness! or by her enchantments, or by the arts of magic, or by the stealth of the Gods. But of what followed I know no farther, for I sped in stealth my foot from the palace. But Menelaus having endured many many severe toils, has received back from Troy the violated rites of Helen to no purpose.

CHOR. And see something strange succeeds to these

strange things, for I see Orestes with his sword drawn, walking before the palace with agitated step.

ORESTES, PHRYGIAN, CHORUS.

ORES. Where is he that fled from my sword out of the palace?

PHRY. I supplicate thee, O king, falling prostrate before thee after the barbaric fashion.

ORES. The case before us is not in Ilium, but the Argive land.

PHRY. In every region to live is sweeter than to die, in the opinion of the wise.

ORES. Didst thou not raise a cry for Menelaus to come with succour?

PHRY. I indeed am present on purpose to assist thee; for thou art the more worthy.

ORES. Perished then the daughter of Tyndarus justly?

PHRY. Most justly, even had she three lives for vengeance.

ORES. With thy tongue dost thou flatter, not having these sentiments within?

PHRY. For ought she not? She who utterly destroyed Greece as well as the Phrygians themselves?

ORES. Swear, I will kill thee else, that thou art not speaking to curry favour with me.

PHRY. By my life have I sworn, which I should wish to hold a sacred oath.

ORES. Was the steel thus dreadful to all the Phrygians at Troy also?

PHRY. Remove thy sword, for being so near me it gleams horrid slaughter.

ORES. Art thou afraid, lest thou shouldst become a rock, as though looking on the Gorgon?

PHRY. Lest I should become a corse, but I know not of the Gorgon's head.

ORES. Slave as thou art, dost thou fear death, which will rid thee from thy woes?

PHRY. Every one, although a man be a slave, rejoices to behold the light.

ORES. Thou sayest well; thy understanding saves thee, but go into the house.

PHRY. Thou wilt not kill me then?

ORES. Thou art pardoned.

PHRY. This is a good word thou hast spoken.

ORES. Yet we may change our measures.

PHRY. But this thou sayest not well.

ORES. Thou art a fool, if thou thinkest I could endure to defile me by smiting thy neck, for neither art thou a woman, nor oughtest thou to be ranked among men. But that thou mightest not raise a clamour came I forth out of the house: for Argos, when it has heard a noise, is soon roused, but we have no dread in meeting Menelaus, as far as swords go; but let him come exulting with his golden ringlets flowing over his shoulders, for if he collects the Argives, and brings them against the palace seeking revenge for the death of Helen, and is not willing to let me be in safety, and my sister, and Pylades my accomplice in this affair, he shall see two corses, both the virgin, and his wife.

#### CHORUS.

Alas! alas! O fate, the house of the Atridæ again falls into another, another fearful struggle.

SEMICHOR. What shall we do? shall we carry these tidings to the city, or shall we keep in silence?

SEMICHOR. This is the safer plan, my friends.

SEMICHOR. Behold before the house, behold this smoke leaping aloft in the air portends *something*.

SEMICHOR. They are lighting the torches, as about to burn down the mansion of Tantalus, nor do they forbear from murder.

SEMICHOR. The God rules the events that happen to mortals, whichever way he wills. But some vast power by the instigation of the furies has struck, has struck these palaces to the shedding of blood on account of the fall of Myrtilus from the chariot.

CHOR. But lo! I see Menelaus also here approaching the house with a quick step, having by some means or other perceived the calamity which now is present. Will ye not anticipate him by closing the gates with bolts, O ye children of Atreus, who are in the palace? A man in prosperity is a terrible thing to those in adversity, as now thou art in misery, Orestes.

MENELAUS *below*, ORESTES, PYLADES, ELECTRA,  
HERMIONE *above*, CHORUS.

MEN. I am present, having heard the horrid and atrocious deeds of the two lions, for I call them not men. For I have now heard of my wife, that she died not, but vanished away, this that I heard was empty report, which one deceived by fright related: but these are the artifices of the matricide, and much derision. Open some one the door, my attendants I command to burst open these gates here, that my child at least we may deliver from the hand of these blood-polluted men, and may receive my unhappy, my miserable lady, with

whom those murderers of my wife must die by my hand.

ORES. What ho there! Touch not these gates with thine hands: to Menelaus I speak, thou that towerest in thy boldness, or with this pinnacle will I crush thy head, having rent down the ancient battlement, the labour of the builders. But the gates are made fast with bolts, which will hinder thee from thy purpose of bringing aid, so that thou canst not pass within the palace.

MEN. Ha! what is this? I see the blaze of torches, and these stationed on the battlements, on the height of the palace, and the sword placed over the neck of my daughter to guard her.

ORES. Whether is it thy will to question, or to hear me?

MEN. I wish neither, but it is necessary, as it seems, to hear thee.

ORES. I am about to slay thy daughter if thou wish to know.

MEN. Having slain Helen, dost thou perpetrate murder on murder?

ORES. For would I had gained my purpose not being deluded, as I was, by the Gods.

MEN. Thou hast slain her, and deniest it, and speakest these things to insult me.

ORES. It is a denial that gives me pain, for would that—

MEN. Thou had done what deed? for thou callest forth alarm.

ORES. I had hurled to hell the fury of Greece.

MEN. Give back the body of my wife, that I may bury her in a tomb.

ORES. Ask <sup>it</sup> <sup>er</sup> of the Gods; but I will slay thy daughter.

MEN. The matricide contrives murder on murder.

ORES. The avenger of his father, whom thou gavest up to die.

MEN. Was not the blood of thy mother formerly shed sufficient for thee?

ORES. I should not be weary of slaying wicked women, were I to slay them for ever.

MEN. Art thou also, Pylades, a partaker in this murder?

ORES. By his silence he assents, but if I speak, it will be sufficient.

MEN. But not with impunity, unless indeed thou fliest on wings.

ORES. We will not fly, but will set fire to the palace.

MEN. What? wilt thou destroy thy father's mansion?

ORES. Yes, that thou mayest not possess it, will I, having stabbed this virgin here over the flames.

MEN. Slay her; since having slain thou shalt at least give me satisfaction for these deeds.

ORES. It shall be so then.

MEN. Alas! alas! on no account do this!

ORES. Be silent then; but bear to suffer evil justly.

MEN. What? is it just for thee to live?

ORES. Yes, and to rule over the land.

MEN. What land?

ORES. Here, in Pelasgian Argos.

MEN. Well wouldst thou touch the sacred lavers?

ORES. And pray why not?

MEN. And wouldst slaughter the victim before the battle?

ORES. And thou wouldst most righteously.



MEN. Yes, for I am pure as to my hands.

ORES. But not thy heart.

MEN. Who would speak to thee?

ORES. Whoever loves his father.

MEN. And whoever reveres his mother?

ORES. —Is happy.

MEN. Not thou at least.

ORES. For wicked women please me not.

MEN. Take away the sword from my daughter.

ORES. Thou art false in thy expectations.

MEN. But wilt thou kill my daughter?

ORES. Thou art no longer false.

MEN. Alas me! what shall I do.

ORES. Go to the Argives, and persuade them.

MEN. With what persuasion?

ORES. Beseech the city that we may not die.

MEN. Otherwise ye will slay my daughter?

ORES. The thing is so.

MEN. O wretched Helen!——

ORES. And am not I wretched?

MEN. I brought thee hither from the Trojans to be a victim.

ORES. For would this were so!

MEN. Having endured ten thousand toils.

ORES. Except on my account.

MEN. I have met with dreadful treatment.

ORES. For then, *when thou oughtest*, thou wert of no assistance.

MEN. Thou hast me.

ORES. Thou at least hast caught thyself. But, ho there! set fire to the palace, Electra, from beneath; and thou, Pylades, the most true of my friends, light up these battlements of the walls.

MEN. O land of the Danaï, and inhabitants of war-like Argos, will ye not, ho there! come in arms to my succour? For this man here, having perpetrated the shocking murder of his mother, brings destruction on your whole city, that he may live.

## APOLLO.

Menelaus, cease from thy irritated state of mind; I Phœbus, the son of Latona, in thy presence, am addressing thee. Thou too, Orestes, who standest over that damsel with thy sword drawn, that thou mayest know what commands I bring with me. Helen indeed, whom thou, minded to destroy, working Menelaus to anger, didst fail of thy purpose, she is here, whom ye see wrapt in the bosom of the sky, preserved, and not slain by thy hands. Her I preserved, and snatched from thy sword, commanded by my father Jove. For being the daughter of Jove, it is right that she should live immortal. And she shall have her seat by Castor and Pollux in the bosom of the sky, the guardian of mariners. But take to thyself another bride, and lead her home, since for the beauty of this woman the Gods brought together the Greeks and Trojans, and caused deaths, that they might draw from off the earth the pride of mortals, who had become an infinite multitude. Thus is it with regard to Helen; but thee, on the other hand, Orestes, it behoveth, having passed beyond the boundaries of this land, to inhabit the Parrhasian plain during the revolution of a year, and it shall be called by a name after thy flight, so that the Azanes and Arcadians shall call it Oresteum: and thence having departed to the city of the Athenians, undergo the charge of shedding thy mother's blood laid by the three Furies.

But the Gods the arbiters of the cause shall pass on thee most sacredly their decree on the hill of Mars, in which it behoveth thee to be victorious. But Hermione, to whose neck thou art holding the sword, it is destined for thee, Orestes, to wed, but Neoptolemus, who thinks to marry her, shall never marry her. For it is fated to him to die by the Delphic sword, as he is demanding of me satisfaction for his father Achilles. But to Pylades give thy sister's hand, as thou didst formerly agree, but a happy life now coming on awaits him. But, O Menelaus, suffer Orestes to reign over Argos. But depart and rule over the Spartan land, having it as thy wife's dowry, who exposing thee to numberless evils always was bringing thee to this. But what regards the city I will make all right for him, I, who compelled him to slay his mother.

ORES. O Loxian prophet, thou were not then a false prophet in thine oracles, but a true one. And yet a fear comes upon me, that having heard one of the Furies, I might think that I have been hearing thy voice. But it is well fulfilled, and I will obey thy words. Behold I let go Hermione from slaughter, and approve her alliance, whenever her father shall give her.

MEN. O Helen, daughter of Jove, hail! but I bless thee inhabiting the happy mansions of the Gods. But to thee, Orestes, do I betroth my daughter at Phoebus' commands, but illustrious thyself marrying from an illustrious family, be happy, both thou and I who give her.

APOL. Now depart each of you whither we have appointed, and dissolve your quarrels.

MEN. It is our duty to obey.

ORES. I too entertain the same sentiments, and I receive with friendship thee in thy sufferings, O Menelaus, and thy oracles, O Apollo.

APOL. Go now, each his own way, honouring the most excellent goddess Peace; but I will convey Helen to the mansions of Jove, passing through the pole of the shining stars, where sitting by Juno, and Hercules' Hebe, a goddess, she shall ever be honoured by mortals with libations, in conjunction with the Tyn-  
daridæ, the sons of Jove, presiding over the sea to the benefit of mariners.

CHOR. O greatly glorious Victory, mayest thou uphold my life, and cease not from crowning me!

THE  
PHŒNICIAN VIRGINS.

## PERSONS REPRESENTED.

JOCASTA.

TUTOR.

ANTIGONE.

CHORUS OF PHŒNICIAN VIRGINS.

POLYNICES.

ETEOCLES.

CREON.

MENCECEUS.

TIRESIAS.

MESENTERS.

ŒDIPUS.

*The Scene is in the Court before the royal palace at Thebes.*

## THE ARGUMENT.



**E**TEOCLES having gotten possession of the throne of Thebes, deprived his brother Polynices of his share ; but he having come as an exile to Argos, married the daughter of the king Adrastus ; but, ambitious of returning to his country, and having persuaded his father-in-law, he assembled a great army for Thebes against his brother. His mother Jocasta made him come into the city, under sanction of a truce, and first confer with his brother respecting the empire. But Eteocles being violent and fierce from having possessed the empire, Jocasta could not reconcile her children.—Polynices, prepared as against an enemy, rushed out of the city. Now Tiresias prophesied that victory should be on the side of the Thebans, if Menœceus the son of Creon would give himself up to be sacrificed to Mars. Creon refused to give his son to the city, but the youth was willing, and, his father pointing out to him the means of flight and giving him money, he put himself to death.—The Thebans slew the leaders of the Argives. Eteocles and Polynices in a single combat slew each other, and their mother having found the corpses of her sons laid violent hands on herself ; and Creon her brother received the kingdom. The Argives defeated in battle retired. But Creon, being morose, would not give up those of the enemy who had fallen at Thebes, for sepulture, and exposed the body of Polynices without burial, and banished Œdipus from his country ; in the one instance disregarding the laws of humanity, in the other, giving way to passion, nor feeling pity for him after his calamity.





THE  
PHŒNICIAN VIRGINS.



JOCASTA.

**O** THOU that cuttest thy path through the constellations<sup>a</sup> of heaven, and art mounted on thy golden joined seats, thou sun, whirling thy flame with<sup>b</sup> thy swift steeds, how inauspicious didst thou dart thy ray on that day when Cadmus came to this land having left the sea-washed coast of Phœnicia; who in former time having married Harmonia, daughter of Venus, begat Polydorus; from him they say sprung Labdacus, and from him Laius. But I am<sup>c</sup> the daughter of Menœceus, and Creon my brother was born of the same mother; me they call Jocasta, (for this name<sup>d</sup> my father gave me,) and Laius takes me for his wife; but after that he

<sup>a</sup> That is, through the signs of the Zodiac: *ἀστήρ* differs from *ἄστρον*, the former signifying a single star, the latter many.

<sup>b</sup> The preposition *σὺν* is omitted, as in Homer,

*Ἄντῃ κεν γαίῃ ἰρύσσαιμι.*

The same omission occurs in the *Bacchæ*, *ἀντῆσιν ἐλάταις*, and again in the *Hippolytus*. It is an Atticism.

<sup>c</sup> See note on *Hecuba*, 473.

<sup>d</sup> The word *τοῦνομα* must be supplied after *τότο*, which is implied in the verb *καλοῦσιν*.

was childless, for a long time sharing my bed in the palace, he went and enquired of Apollo, and at the same time demands the mutual offspring of male children in his family; but the God said, “O king of Thebes renowned for its chariots, sow not for such an harvest of children against the will of the Gods, for if thou shalt beget a son, he that is born shall slay thee, and the whole of thy house shall wade through blood.” But having yielded to pleasure, and having fallen into inebriety, he begot to us a son, and having begot him, feeling conscious of his error and the command of the God, gives the babe to some herdsmen to expose at the meads of Juno and the rock of Cithæron, having bored sharp-pointed iron through the middle of his ancles, from which circumstance Greece gave him the name of *Œdipus*. But him the grooms who attend the steeds of Polybus find and carry home, and placed him in the arms of their mistress. But she rested beneath her bosom him that gave me a mother’s pangs, and persuades her husband that she had brought forth. But now my son shewing signs of manhood in his darkening cheek, either having suspected it by instinct, or having learned it from some one, went to the temple of Apollo, desirous of discovering his parents; at the same time went Laius my husband, seeking to gain intelligence of his son who had been exposed, if he were no longer living; and both met at the same point of the road at Phocis where it divides itself; and the charioteer of Laius commands him, “Stranger, withdraw out of the way of princes;” but he moved slowly, in silence, with haughty spirit; but the steeds with their hoofs dyed with blood the tendons of his feet. At this (but why need I relate each horrid circumstance besides the

deed itself?) the son kills his father, and having taken the chariot, sends it as a present to his foster-father Polybus. Now at this time the sphinx preyed vulture-like<sup>e</sup> upon the city with rapacity, my husband now no more, Creon my brother proclaims that he will give my bed as a reward to him who would solve the enigma of the crafty virgin. But by some chance or other Œdipus my son happens to discover the riddle of the sphinx, and he receives as a prize the sceptre of this land, and marries me, his mother, wretched he not knowing it, nor knew his mother that she was lying down with her son. And I bear children to my child, two sons, Eteocles and the illustrious Polynices, and two daughters, one her father named Ismene, the elder I called Antigone. But having discovered in my bed the marriage with his mother, he perpetrated a deed of horror on his own eyes<sup>f</sup> having drenched in blood their pupils with his golden buckles. But after that the cheek of my children grows dark with manly down, they hid their father confined with bolts that his sad fortune might be forgotten, which indeed required the greatest policy. He is still living in the palace, but sick in mind through his misfortunes he imprecates the most unhalloved curses on his children, that they may share this house with the sharpened sword. But these two, dreading lest the Gods should bring to completion these curses<sup>f</sup>, should they dwell together, in friendly compact determined that Polynices the younger son should first go a

<sup>e</sup> The *ζαρός* is a bird of prey of the vulture species. The sphinx was represented as having the face of a woman, the breast and feet of a lion, and the wings of a bird.

<sup>f</sup> *ἀραι* and *ἀρᾶσθαι* are often used by the poets in a good sense for prayers, *εὐχαι* and *εὐχέσθαι* for curses and imprecations.

willing exile from this land, but that Eteocles remaining here should hold the sceptre for a year, changing in his turn; but after that he sat on the throne of power, he moves not from his seat, but drives Polynices an exile from this land. But he having fled to Argos, and having contracted an alliance with Adrastus, assembles together and leads a vast army of Argives; and having marched to these very walls with seven gates, he demands his father's sceptre and his share of the land. But I to quell this strife persuaded my son to come to his brother, confiding in a truce before he grasped the spear. And the messenger who was sent declares that he will come. But, O thou that inhabitest the shining clouds of heaven, Jove, preserve us, give reconciliation to my children; it becomes thee, if thou art wise, not to suffer the same man always to be unfortunate.

TUTOR, ANTIGONE.

TUT. O thou fair bud in thy father's house, Antigone, since thy mother has permitted thee to leave the virgin's apartments for the extreme chamber<sup>s</sup> of the mansion, in order to view the Argive army in compliance with thy entreaties, yet stay, until I shall first investigate the path, lest any citizen should appear in the pass, and to me taunts should come as a slave, and to thee as a princess: and I who well know each circumstance will tell you all that I saw or heard from the Argives, when I went bearing the offer of a truce to thy brother, from this place thither, and again to this place from him. But no citizen approaches this house; come, ascend with thy steps these ancient stairs of cedar, and survey

<sup>s</sup> οἰήσεις, ὑπερῶον, ἡ κλίμαξ. *Hesychius.*

the plains, and by the streams of Ismenus and Dirce's fount how great is the host of the enemy.

ANT. Stretch forth now, stretch forth thine aged hand from the stairs to my youth, raising up the steps of my feet.

TUT. Behold, join thy hand, virgin, thou hast come in lucky hour, for the Pelasgian host is now in motion, and they are separating the bands from one another.

ANT. O awful daughter of Latona, Hecate, the field all brass<sup>h</sup> gleams like lightning.

TUT. For Polynices hath not come tamely to this land, raging with hosts of horsemen, and ten thousand shields.

ANT. Are the gates fastened with bars, and is the brazen bolt fitted to the stone-work of Amphion's wall?

TUT. Take courage; as to the interior the city is safe. But view the first chief, if thou desirest to know.

ANT. Who is he with the white plumed helmet, who commands in the van of the army, moving lightly round on his arm his brazen shield?

TUT. He is a leader, lady.

ANT. Who is he? From whom sprung? Speak, aged man, what is he called by name?

TUT. He indeed is called by birth a Mycenæan, and he dwells at the streams of Lerna<sup>i</sup>, the king Hippomedon.

ANT. Ah! how haughty, how terrible to behold! like to an earth-born giant, starlike in countenance

<sup>h</sup> Milton, *Par. Regained*, b. iii. l. 326.

The field, all iron, cast a gleaming brown.

<sup>i</sup> Lerna, a country of Argolis celebrated for a grove and a lake where the Danaïdes threw the heads of their murdered husbands. It was there also that Hercules killed the famous Hydra.

amidst his painted devices<sup>k</sup>, he corresponds not with the race of mortals.

TUT. Dost thou not see him now passing the stream of Dirce, a general?

ANT. Here is another, another fashion of arms. But who is he?

TUT. He is the son of Œneus, Tydeus, and bears on his breast the Ætolian Mars.

ANT. Is this the prince, O aged man, who is husband to the sister of my brother's wife<sup>l</sup>? In his arms how different of colour, of barbaric mixture!

TUT. For all the Ætolians, my child, bear the target, and hurl with the lance, most certain in their aim.

ANT. But how, O aged man, dost thou know these things so perfectly?

TUT. Having seen the devices of the shields, then I remarked them, when I went to bear the offer of a truce to thy brother, beholding which, I recognise the warriors.

ANT. But who is this, who is passing round the tomb of Zethus, with clustering locks, in his eyes a Gorgon to behold, in appearance a youth?

TUT. A general he is.

ANT. How a crowd in complete armour attends him behind<sup>m</sup>!

TUT. This is Parthenopæus, son of Atalanta.

ANT. But, may Diana who rushes over the moun-

<sup>k</sup> This alludes to the figure of Argus engraved on his shield. See verse 1130.

<sup>l</sup> Tydeus married Deipyle, Polynices Argia, both daughters of Adrastus, king of Argos.

<sup>m</sup> Some suppose *ὑστέρῳ ποδί* to mean with their last steps, that is, with steps which are doomed never to return again to their own country.

tains with his mother destroy him, having subdued him with her arrows, who has come against my city to destroy it.

TUT. May it be so, my child, nevertheless they are come with justice to this land; wherefore also I fear lest the Gods should judge rightly.

ANT. Where, but where is he who was born of one mother with me in hard fate, O dearest old man; tell me, where is Polynices?

TUT. He is standing near the tomb of the seven virgin daughters of Niobe, close by Adrastus. Seest thou him?

ANT. I see indeed, but not distinctly; but somehow I see the resemblance of his form, and his shape shadowed out. Would that with my feet I could perform the journey of the winged cloud through the air to my brother, then would I fling my arms round his dearest neck, after so long a time a wretched exile. How splendid is he, O old man, in his golden armour, glittering like the morning rays of the sun.

TUT. He will come to this house confiding in the truce, so as to fill thee with joy.

ANT. But who, O aged man, is this, who guides his milk-white steeds seated in his chariot?

TUT. The prophet Amphiaraus this, O my mistress, and with him the victims, the libations of the earth delighting in blood.

ANT. O thou daughter of the brightly girded sun, thou moon, golden-circled light, applying what quiet and temperate blows to his steeds does he direct his chariot! But where is he who utters such dreadful insults against this city, Capaneus?

TUT. He is scanning the approach to the towers,

measuring the walls both from their foundation to the top.

ANT. O vengeance, and ye loud-roaring thunders of Jove, and thou blasting fire of the lightning, do thou quell this more-than-mortal arrogance. This is he who will with his spear give to Mycenæ, and to the streams of Lernæan Triæna<sup>n</sup>, and to the Amymonian<sup>o</sup> waters of Neptune, the Theban women, having invested them with slavery. Never, O awful Goddess, never, O daughter of Jove, with golden clusters of ringlets, Diana, may I endure servitude.

TUT. My child, enter the palace, and at home remain in thy virgin chambers, since thou hast arrived at the indulgement of thy desire, as to what you were anxious to behold. For, since confusion has entered the city, a crowd of women is advancing to the royal palace. The race of women is prone to complaint, and if they find but small occasion for words, they add more, and it is a sort of pleasure to women, to speak nothing well-advised one of another<sup>p</sup>.

#### CHORUS.

I have come, having left the Tyrian wave, the first-fruits of Loxias, from the sea-washed Phœnicia, a slave for the shrine of Apollo, that I might dwell under the

<sup>n</sup> Triæna was a place in Argolis, where Neptune stuck his trident in the ground, and immediately water sprung up. *Schol.*

<sup>o</sup> Amymone was daughter of Danaus and Europa; she was employed, by order of her father, in supplying the city of Argos with water, in a great drought. Neptune saw her in this employment, and was enamoured of her. He carried her away, and in the place where she stood he raised a fountain, which has been called Amymone. See Propert. ii. El. 20. v. 47.

<sup>p</sup> ἀλλήλας λέγουσιν is, they say one of another; ἀλλήλαις λέγουσιν, they say amongst themselves.



snowy brows of Parnassus, having sped my way over the Ionian flood by the oar, the west wind with its blasts riding over the barren plains of waters<sup>4</sup> which flow round Sicily, the sweetest murmur in the heavens. Chosen out from my city the fairest present to Apollo, I came to the land of the Cadmeans, the illustrious descendants of Agenor, sent hither to these kindred towers of Laius. And I am made the slave of Apollo in like manner with the golden-framed images. Moreover the water of Castalia awaits me, to lave the virgin pride of my tresses, in the ministry of Apollo. O blazing rock, the flame of fire that seems<sup>r</sup> double above the Dionysian heights of Bacchus, and thou vine, who distillest the daily nectar, producing the fruitful cluster from the tender shoot; and ye divine caves of the dragon<sup>s</sup>, and ye mountain watch-towers of the Gods, and thou hallowed snowy mountain, would that I were the chorus of the immortal God free from alarms encompassing thee around, by the caves of Apollo in the centre of the earth, having left Dirce. But now impetuous Mars having advanced before the walls lights up against this city, which may the Gods avert, hostile war; for common are the misfortunes of friends, and common is it, if this land defended by its seven turrets

<sup>4</sup> By *πεδίων ἀκαρπίστων* is to be understood the sea. The construction is *πεδίων περιρρύτων Σικελίας*, that is, ἡ Σικελίαν περιρρέϊ. The same construction is found in Sophocles, *Œd. Tyr.* l. 885. *δίκας ἀφόβητος*. L. 969. *ἄφαντος ἔγχους*. See also Horace, *Lib. iv. Ode. 4. 43.*

*Ceu flamma per tædas, vel Eurus*

*Per Siculas equitavit undas.*

<sup>r</sup> The fire was on that head of Parnassus which was sacred to Apollo and Diana; to those below it appeared double, being divided to the eye by a pointed rock which rose before it. *Schol.*

<sup>s</sup> The Python which Apollo slew.

should suffer any calamity, to the Phœnician country, alas! alas! common is the affinity<sup>1</sup>, common are the descendants of Io bearing horns; of which woes I have a share. But a thick cloud of shields glares around the city, the likeness of gory battle, bearing which destruction from the Furies to the children of Œdipus Mars shall quickly advance. O Pelasgian Argos, I dread thy power, and vengeance from the Gods, for he rushes not in arms to this war unjustly, who seeks to recover his home.

POLYNICES, CHORUS.

POL. The bolts indeed of the gate-keepers have with ease admitted me, that I might come within the walls; wherefore also I fear, lest, having caught me within their nets, they let not my body go without bloodshed. On which account my eye must be turned about on every side, both that way and this, lest there be treachery. But armed in my hand with this sword, I will give myself confidence of daring. Ha! Who is this; or do we fear a noise? Every thing appears terrible even to the bold, when his foot shall pass across an hostile country. I trust however in my mother, at the same time I scarce trust, who persuaded me to come hither confiding in a truce. But protection is nigh; for the hearths of the altars are at hand, and houses not deserted. Come, I will let go my sword into its dark scabbard, and will question these who they are, that are standing at the palace. Ye female strangers, tell me, from what country do ye approach Grecian habitations?

CHOR. The Phœnician is my paternal country, she

<sup>1</sup> Libye the daughter of Epaphus bore to Neptune Agenor and Belus: Cadmus was the son of Agenor, and Antiope the daughter of Belus.

that nurtured me: and the descendants of Agenor sent me hither from the spoils, the first-fruits to Apollo. And whilst the renowned son of Œdipus was preparing to send me to the revered shrine, and to the altars of Phoebus, in the mean time the Argives marched against the city. But do thou in turn answer me, who thou art, who has come to this bulwark of the Theban land with its seven gates.

POL. My father is Œdipus the son of Laius; Jocasta daughter of Menœceus brought me forth; the Theban people call me Polynices.

CHOR. O thou allied to the sons of Agenor, my lords, by whom I was sent, I fall at thy knees in lowly posture, O king, preserving my country's custom. Thou hast come, thou hast come, after a length of time, to thy paternal land. O venerable matron, come forth quickly, open the doors; dost thou hear, O mother, that producedst this hero? why dost thou delay to leave thy lofty mansion, and to embrace thy child with thine arms?

#### JOCASTA, POLYNICES, CHORUS.

JOC. Hearing the Phœnician tongue, ye virgins, within this mansion, I drag my steps trembling with age. Ah! my son, after length of time, after numberless days, I behold thy countenance; clasp thy mother's bosom in thine arms, throw around her<sup>u</sup> thy kisses, and the dark ringlets of thy clustering hair, shading my neck. Ah! scarce possible is it that thou appearest in

<sup>u</sup> The construction is, ἀμφίβαλλέ μοι τὸ τῶν παρηίδων σοῦ ὄρεγμα: that is, *genarum ad oscula porrectionem*. It cannot be translated literally. The verb ἀμφίβαλλε is to be supplied before ὄρεγμα, and before πλόκαμον. See Orestes, 950.

thy mother's arms so unhopcd for, and so unexpected. How shall I address thee? how shall I perform all, how shall I, walking in rapture around thee on that side and this, both with my hands and words, reap the varied pleasure, the delight of my former joys? O my son, thou hast left thy father's house deserted, sent away an exile by wrougful treatment from thy brother. How longed for by thy friends! how longed for by Thebes! From which time I am both shorn of my hoary locks, letting them fall with tears, with wailing<sup>x</sup>; deprived, my child, of the white robes, I receive in exchange around me these dark and dismal weeds. But the old man in the palace deprived of sight, always preserving with tears regret for the unanimity of the brothers which is separated from the family, has madly rushed on self-destruction with the sword and with the noose above the beams of the house, bewailing the curses imprecated on his children; and with cries of woe he is always hidden in darkness. But thou, my child, I hear, art both joined in marriage, and hast the joys of love in a foreign family, and cherishest a foreign alliance; intolerable to this thy mother and to the aged Laius, the woe of a foreign marriage brought upon us. But neither did I light the torch of fire for you, as is customary in the marriage rites, as befits the happy mother; nor was Ismenus careful of the bridal rites in the luxury of the bath: and the entrance of thy bride was made in silence through the Theban city. May these ills perish, whether the sword, or discord, or thy

<sup>x</sup> Locus videtur corruptus. *Porson*. Valckenaer proposes to read δακρύνεσσ' ἀνείσα λ. π. κ. Markland would supply φωνήν after εἶσα. Another reading proposed is, δακρύνεσσ' ἐνείσα πενθήρη κόνιν. *Lacrymabunda, lugubrem cinerem injiciens.*

father is the cause, or whether fate has rushed with violence upon the house of Œdipus; for the weight of these sorrows have fallen upon me.

CHOR. Parturition with the attendant throes has a wonderful effect on women<sup>y</sup>; and somehow the whole race of women have strong affection towards their children.

POL. My mother, determining wisely, and yet not determining wisely, have I come to men my foes; but it is necessary that all must be enamoured of their country; but whoever says otherwise, pleases himself with vain words, but has his heart there. But so far have I come to trouble and terror, lest any treachery from my brother should slay me, so that having my hand on my sword I proceeded through the city rolling round my eye; but one thing is on my side, the truce and thy faith, which has brought me within my paternal walls: but I have come with many tears, after a length of time beholding the courts and the altars of the Gods, and the schools wherein I was brought up, and the fount of Dirce, from which banished by injustice, I inhabit a foreign city, having a stream of tears flowing through my eyes. But, for from one woe springs a second, I behold thee having thy head shorn of its locks, and these sable garments; alas me! on account of my misfortunes. How dreadful a thing, mother, is the enmity of relations, having means of reconciliation seldom, to be brought about! For how fares the old man my father in the palace, vainly looking upon darkness; and how fare my two sisters? Are they indeed bewailing my wretched banishment?

<sup>y</sup> Cf. Æsch. Prom. 39. τὸ συγγενές τοι δεινὸν, ἢ θ' ὄμιλία, where consult Schutz.

JOC. Some God miserably destroys the race of Ædipus; for thus began it, when I brought forth children in that unhallowed manner, and thy father married me in evil hour, and thou didst spring forth. But why relate these things? What is sent by the Gods we must bear. But how I may ask the questions I wish, I know not, for I fear lest I wound at all thy feelings; but I have a great desire.

POL. But enquire freely, leave nothing out. For what you wish, my mother, this is dear to me.

JOC. I ask thee therefore, first, for the information that I wish to obtain. What is the being deprived of one's country, is it a great ill?

POL. The greatest: and greater is it in deed than in word.

JOC. What is the reason of that? What is that so harsh to exiles?

POL. One thing, and that the greatest, not to have the liberty of speaking.

JOC. This that you have mentioned belongs to a slave, not to give utterance to what one thinks.

POL. It is necessary to bear with the follies of those in power.

JOC. And this is painful, to be unwise with the unwise.

POL. But for interest we must bend to slavery contrary to our nature.

JOC. But hopes support exiles, as report goes.

POL. They look upon them with favourable eyes, at least, but are slow of foot.

JOC. Hath not time shown them to be vain?

POL. They have a certain sweet delight to set against misfortunes.

JOC. But whence wert thou supported, before thou foundest means of sustenance by thy marriage?

POL. At one time I had food for the day, at another I had not.

JOC. And did the friends and hosts of your father not assist you.

POL. Be prosperous, *and thou shalt have friends*<sup>2</sup>: but friends are none, should one be in adversity.

JOC. Did not thy noble birth raise thee to great distinction?

POL. To want is wretched; high birth fed me not.

JOC. Their own country, it appears, is the dearest thing to men.

POL. You cannot express by words how dear it is.

JOC. But how camest thou to Argos? What intention hadst thou?

POL. Apollo gave a certain oracle to Adrastus.

JOC. What is this thou hast mentioned? I am unable to discover.

POL. To unite his daughters in marriage with a boar and a lion.

JOC. And what part of the name of beasts belongs to you, my son.

POL. I know not. The God called me to this fortune.

JOC. For the God is wise. But in what manner didst thou obtain her bed?

POL. It was night; but I came to the portals of Adrastus.

<sup>2</sup> See Porson's note. A similar ellipse is to be found in Luke xiii. 9. *Κἄν μὲν ποιήσῃ καρπὸν· εἰ δὲ μήγε, εἰς τὸ μέλλον ἐκκόψεις αὐτήν·* which is thus translated in our version; "And if it bear fruit, *well*: and if not, *then* after that thou shalt cut it down." See also Iliad A. 135. Aristoph. Plut. 468. ed. Kuster.

JOC. In search of a couch to rest on, as a wandering exile?

POL. This was the case, and then indeed there came a second exile.

JOC. Who was this? how unfortunate then was he also!

POL. Tydeus, whom they say sprung from CÆneus his sire.

JOC. In what then did Adrastus liken you to beasts.

POL. Because we came to blows for lodging.

JOC. In this the son of Talauus understood the oracle?

POL. And gave in marriage to us two his two virgin daughters.

JOC. Art thou fortunate then in thy marriage alliance, or unfortunate?

POL. My marriage cannot be found fault with up to this day.

JOC. But how didst thou persuade an army to follow you hither?

POL. Adrastus swore this oath to his two sons in law, that he would replace both in their own country, but me first. And many princes of the Argives and Mycenæans are at hand, rendering to me a sad, but necessary favour; for I am leading an army against this my own city; but I have called the Gods to witness how unwillingly I have raised the spear against my dearest parents. But the dissolution of these ills extends to thee, my mother, that having reconciled the friendly brothers, you may free from toil me and thyself, and the whole city. It is a proverb long ago chaunted, but nevertheless I will repeat it; wealth is honoured most of all things by men, and has the greatest influence of any thing among men. In pursuit of which I am



come, leading hither ten thousand spears ; for a nobly-born man in poverty is nothing.

CHOR. And see Eteocles here comes to this mediation ; thy business it is ; O Jocasta, being their mother, to speak words, with which thou shalt reconcile thy children.

ETEOCLES, POLYNICES, JOCASTA, CHORUS.

ETEO. Mother, I am present ; giving this grace to thee, I have come ; what must I do ? Let some one begin the conference. Since arranging also around the walls the chariots of the bands, I restrained the city, that I may hear from thee the common terms<sup>a</sup> of reconciliation, for which thou hast permitted this man to come within the walls under sanction of a truce, having persuaded me.

JOC. Stay ; precipitate haste has not justice ; but slow counsels perform most deeds in wisdom. But repress that fierce eye and those blasts of rage ; for thou art not looking on the Gorgon's head cut off at the neck, but thou art looking on thy brother who is come to thee. And do thou again, Polynices, turn thy face towards thy brother ; for looking at the same point with thine eyes, thou wilt both speak better, and receive his words better. But I wish to give you a wise piece of advice. When a friend is enraged with a man his friend, having met him face to face, let him fix his eyes on his friend's eyes, this only ought he to consider, the end for which he is come, but to have no recollection

<sup>a</sup> Βραβεύς, properly, is the judge in a contest, who confers the prizes, and on whose decision the awarding of the prizes depends : βραβευτής is the same. Βραβείον is the prize. Βραβεία, and in the plural βραβεΐαι, the very act of deciding the contest.

of former grievances. Thy words then first, my son, Polynices; for thou art come leading an army of Argives, having suffered injustice, as thou sayest; and may some God be umpire and the reconciler of your strife.

POL. The speech of truth is simple, and those things which are just need not wily interpretations; for they have energy themselves; but the unjust speech, unsound in itself, requires cunning preparations to glose it. But I have previously considered for my father's house, and my own advantage and that of this man; desiring to escape the curses, which Œdipus denounced formerly against us, I myself of my own accord departed from this land, having given him to rule over his own country for the space of a year, so that I myself should have the government again, having received it in turn, and not having come into enmity and blood-shed with this man, to perform some evil deed, and to suffer what is now taking place. But he having assented to this, and having brought the Gods to witness his oaths, has performed nothing of what he promised, but himself holds the regal power and my share of the palace. And now I am ready, having received my own right, to send the army away from out of this land, and to regulate my house, having received it in my turn, and to give it up again to this man for the same space of time, and neither to lay my country waste, nor to apply to its towers the means of ascent by the firmly-fixed ladders. Which, should I not meet with justice, will I endeavour to put in execution: and I call the Gods as witnesses of this, that acting in every thing with justice, I am without justice deprived of my country in the most unrighteous manner. These individual circumstances,

mother, not having collected together intricacies of argument, have I declared, but both to the wise and to the illiterate just, as appears to me.

CHOR. To me indeed, although we have not been brought up according to the Grecian land, nevertheless to me thou appearest to speak with judgment.

ETEO. If the same thing were judged honourable alike by all, and at the same time wise, there would not be doubtful strife among men. But now nothing is similar, nothing the same among mortals, except in names; but the sense is not the same, for I, my mother, will speak having kept nothing back; I would mount to the rising of the stars, and sink beneath the earth, were I able to perform this, so that I might possess the greatest of the Goddesses, kingly power<sup>b</sup>. This prize then, my mother, I am not willing rather to give up to another, than to preserve for myself. For it implies cowardice in him, whoever having lost the greater share, hath received the less; but in addition to this I feel ashamed, that this man having come with arms, and laying the country waste, should obtain what he wishes; for to Thebes this would be a reproach, if through fear of the Mycenæan spear I should give up my sceptre for this man to hold. But he ought, my mother, to effect a reconciliation, not by arms; for speech does every

<sup>b</sup> To Hotspur, of honour:

By heaven, methinks it were an easy leap  
To pluck bright honour from the pale-faced moon:  
Or dive into the bottom of the deep,  
Where fadom-line could never touch the ground,  
And pluck up drowned honour by the locks:  
So he, that doth redeem her thence, might wear  
Without corrival all her dignities.

thing which even the sword of the enemy could do. But if he is desirous of inhabiting this land in any other way, it is in his power; but the other point I will never give up willingly. When it is in my power to rule, ever to be a slave to him? Wherefore come fire, come sword, yoke thy steeds, fill the plains with chariots, since I will not give up my kingly power to this man. For if one must be unjust, it is most glorious to be unjust concerning empire, but in every thing else one should be just.

CHOR. It is not right to speak well, where the deeds are not glorious; for this is not honourable, but galling to justice.

JOC. My son, Eteocles, not every ill is added to age, but experience has it in its power to evince more wisdom than youth<sup>c</sup>. Why, my child, dost thou so desirously court ambition, the most baneful of the deities? do not thou; the Goddess is unjust. But she hath entered into many families and happy states and hath come forth again, to the destruction of those who have to do with her. Of whom thou art madly enamoured; this is more noble, my son, to honour equality, which ever links friends with friends, and states with states, and allies with allies: for equality is sanctioned by law among men. But the lesser share is ever at enmity with the greater, and straight begins the day of hatred. For equality arranged also among mortals measures, and the divisions of weights, and defined numbers. And the dark eye of night, and the light of the sun equally walk their annual round, and neither of them

<sup>c</sup> Ovid. Met. vi. 28. Non omnia grandior ætas,  
Quæ fugiamus, habet; seris venit usus ab annis.

being overcome hath envy of the other. Thus the sun and the night are subservient to men, but wilt not thou brook having an equal share of government, and give his share to him? Then where is justice? Why dost thou honour so unboundedly that prosperous injustice, royalty, and think so highly of her? Is the being conspicuous honourable? At least, it is empty honour. Or dost thou desire to labour much, possessing much in thy house? but what is superfluity? It possesses but a name; since a sufficiency indeed to the temperate is abundance. Neither do men enjoy riches as their own, but having the property of the Gods do we cherish them. And when they list, again do they take them away. Come, if I ask thee, having proposed together two measures, whether it is thy wish to reign, or save the city? Will thou say to reign? But should he conquer thee, and the Argive spears overcome the Cadmæan forces, thou wilt behold this city of the Thebans vanquished, thou wilt behold many captive maidens with violence ravished by men your foes. Bitter then to Thebes will be the power which thou seekest to hold; but yet thou art ambitious of it. To thee I say this: But to thee, Polynices, say I, that Adrastus hath conferred an unwise favour on thee; and foolishly hast thou also come to destroy this city. Come, if thou wilt subdue this land, (may which never happen,) by the Gods, how wilt thou erect trophies of thy spear? And how again wilt thou sacrifice the first-fruits, having conquered thy country; and how wilt thou engrave upon the spoils by the waters of Inachus, “ Having laid Thebes in ashes, Polynices consecrated these shields to the Gods?” Never, my son, may it come to thee to receive such glory from the Greeks. But again,

shouldest thou be conquered, and should the arms of the other prevail, how wilt thou return to Argos having left behind ten thousand dead? Surely some one will say, O! unfortunate marriage alliance! O Adrastus, who placed them on us, through the nuptials of one bride we are lost! thou art hastening two ills, my son, to be deprived of those, and to fail in this. Give up your too great ardour, give it up; the follies of two when they clash together in the same point, are the most hateful ill.

CHOR. O ye Gods, may ye be averters of these ills, and grant to the children of *Œdipus* some means of agreement.

ETEO. My mother, this is not a contest of words, but intervening time is fruitlessly wasted; and thy earnestness avails nothing; for we shall not agree in any other way, than on the terms proposed, that I holding the sceptre be monarch of this land. Forbearing then tedious admonitions let me have my way; and do thou begone from out these walls, or thou shalt die.

POL. By whose hand? Who is there so invulnerable, who having pointed the murderous sword against me, shall not bear the same fate?

ETEO. He is near, not far removed from thee: dost thou look on these my hands?

POL. I see them. But wealth is cowardly, and feeble, loving life.

ETEO. And therefore hast thou come, with such an host against one who is nothing in arms?

POL. For a cautious general is better than one daring.

ETEO. Thou art insolent, having trusted in the truce, which preserves you from death.

POL. A second time again I demand of you the sceptre and my share of the land.

ETEO. I will admit no demand, for I will regulate my own family.

POL. Holding more than your share?

ETEO. I own it; but quit this land.

POL. O ye altars of my paternal Gods,

ETEO. Which thou art come to destroy?

POL. Do ye hear me?

ETEO. Who will hear thee, who art marching against thy country?

POL. And ye shrines of the Gods<sup>d</sup> delighting in the milk-white steeds;

ETEO. Who hate thee.

POL. I am driven out of my own country.

ETEO. For thou hast come to destroy it.

POL. With injustice indeed, Oh ye Gods!

ETEO. At Mycenæ call upon the Gods, not here.

POL. Thou art impious.

ETEO. But not my country's enemy, as thou art.

POL. Who drivest me out without my share.

ETEO. And I will put thee to death in addition.

POL. My father, hearest thou what I suffer?

ETEO. For he hears what wrongs thou doest.

POL. And thou, my mother?

ETEO. It is not lawful for thee to mention thy mother.

POL. O my city!

ETEO. To Argos go, and call on Lerna's stream.

<sup>d</sup> The Scholiast doubts whether these Gods were Castor and Pollux, or Zethus and Amphion, but inclines to the latter. See Herc. Fur. v. 29, 30.

POL. I will go, do not distress thyself; but thee, my mother, I mention with honour.

ETEO. Depart from out of the country.

POL. I will go out; but grant me to see my father.

ETEO. You will not obtain your request.

POL. But my virgin sisters then.

ETEO. Never shalt thou behold these.

POL. O my sisters!

ETEO. Why callest thou on these—being their greatest enemy?

POL. My mother, but thou fare well.

JOC. Do I experience any thing that is well, my son?

POL. I am no longer thy child.

JOC. To many troubles was I born.

POL. For he throws insults on us.

ETEO. For I am insulted in turn.

POL. Where wilt thou stand before the towers?

ETEO. Why dost thou ask me this question?

POL. I will oppose myself to thee, to slay thee.

ETEO. Desire of this seizes me also.

JOC. Wretched me! what will ye do, my children?

POL. The deed itself will shew.

JOC. Will ye not escape your father's curses?

ETEO. Let the whole house perish!

POL. Since soon my blood-stained sword will not remain any longer in inactivity. But I call to witness the land that nurtured me, and the Gods, how dishonoured I am driven from this land, suffering such foul treatment, as a slave and not born of the same father *Œdipus*. And if any thing befalls thee, my city, blame not me, but him; for against my will have I come, and against my will am I driven from this land. And thou,



king Apollo, God of our streets, and ye shrines, farewell, and ye my equals, and ye altars of the Gods receiving the victims; for I know not if it is allowed me ever again to address you. But hope does not yet slumber, in which I have trusted with the favour of the Gods, that having slain this man, I shall be master of this Theban land.

ETEO. Depart from out the country; with truth indeed did your father give you the name of Polynices by some divine foreknowledge, a name corresponding with strife.

#### CHORUS.

Cadmus came from Tyre to this land, before whom the quadrupede heifer bent with willing fall<sup>e</sup>, shewing the accomplishment of the oracle, where the divine word ordered him to colonize the plains of the Aonians productive of wheat, where indeed the fair-flowing stream of the water of Dirce passes over the verdant and deep-furrowed fields, where the teeming mother produced Bacchus, by her marriage with Jove, whom the wreathed ivy twining around him instantly, whilst yet a babe, blessed and covered with its verdant shady branches, an event to be celebrated with Bacchic revel by the Theban virgins and inspired women. There was the blood-stained dragon of Mars, the savage guard, watching with far-rolling eyeballs over the flowing fountains and grassy streams; whom Cadmus having come for water for purification slew with a fragment of

<sup>e</sup> Or, *fell with limbs that had never known yoke*.—V. Ovid: *Mét.* iii. 10.

Bos tibi, Phœbus ait, solis occurret in arvis,  
Nullum passa jugum.

rock, the destroyer of the monster having thrown his arms with blows on his blood-stained head, by the counsel of the divine Pallas born without mother, having thrown the teeth fallen to the earth upon the deep-furrowed plains. Whence the earth sent forth a spectacle, an armed host above the extreme limits of the ground; but iron-hearted slaughter again united them with their beloved earth; and sprinkled with blood the ground which shewed them to the serene gales of the air. And thee, sprung of old from our ancestor Io, Epaphus, O progeny of Jove, on thee have I called, have I called in a foreign tongue, with prayers in foreign accent, come, come to this land, (thy descendants have founded it,) where the two Goddesses Proserpine and the dear Goddess Ceres, queen of all, (since earth nurtures all things,) have held their possessions, send the fire-bearing Goddesses to defend this land; since every thing is easy to the Gods.

ETEOCLES, CHORUS, MESSENGER.

ETEO. Go thou, and bring hither Creon son of Menœceus, the brother of my mother Jocasta, saying this, that I wish to communicate with him counsels of a private nature and those which concern the common welfare of the country, before we go into battle and the ranks of war. And see he spares the trouble of your steps, by his presence; for I see him coming towards my palace.

CREON, ETEOCLES, CHORUS.

CRE. Surely have I visited many places, desiring to see you, O! king Eteocles, and I have gone round to the gates and the guards of the Thebans, seeking you.

ETEO. And indeed I have wished to see you, Creon, for I found attempts at reconciliation altogether fail when I came and entered into conference with Poly-nices.

CRE. I have heard that he aspires to higher thoughts than Thebes, having trusted in his alliance with Adras-tus and his army. But it becomes us to hold these things in dependence on the Gods. But what is most immediately before us, this am I come to acquaint you with.

ETEO. What is this? for I understand not your speech.

CRE. A prisoner is arrived from the Argives.

ETEO. Does he bring us any news of those stationed there?

CRE. The Argive army is preparing quickly to surround the city of the Thebans with thickly-ranged arms.

ETEO. Therefore must we draw our forces out of the Theban city.

CRE. Whither? Dost thou not in the impetuosity of youth see what it behoves thee to see?

ETEO. Without these trenches, as we are quickly about to fight.

CRE. Small are the forces of this land; but theirs innumerable.

ETEO. I know that they are bold in words.

CRE. Argos of the Greeks has some renown.

ETEO. Be confident; quickly will I fill the plain with their slaughter.

CRE. I would it were so: but this I see is a work of much labour.

ETEO. Know that I will not restrain my forces within the walls.

CRE. And yet the whole of victory is prudence.

ETEO. Dost thou wish then that I have recourse to other measures?

CRE. To every measure indeed, rather than hazard all on one battle.

ETEO. What, if we were to attack them by night from ambush?

CRE. If, having failed, at least you can have a safe retreat hither.

ETEO. Night brings the same advantage to all, but more to the daring.

CRE. Dreadful is it to fail in the darkness of night.

ETEO. But shall I lead my force against them while at their meal!

CRE. That would cause terror; but we must conquer.

ETEO. The ford of Dirce is indeed deep to pass.

CRE. Every thing is inferior to a good guard.

ETEO. What then, shall I charge the Argive army with my cavalry?

CRE. And there the army is fenced round with chariots.

ETEO. What then shall I do? give up the city to the enemy?

CRE. By no means; but deliberate if thou art wise.

ETEO. What more prudent forethought is there?

CRE. They say that they have seven men, as I have heard.

ETEO. What have they been commanded to do? for their strength is small.

CRE. To head their bands, to besiege the seven gates.

ETEO. What then shall we do? I will not wait this indecision.

CRE. Do thou thyself also choose seven men for the gates.

ETEO. To head divisions, or for single combat?

CRE. To head divisions, having selected the bravest.

ETEO. I understand you; to guard the approach to the walls.

CRE. And with them other generals; one man sees not every thing.

ETEO. Having chosen them for boldness, or prudence in judgment.

CRE. For both; for one without the other availeth nothing.

ETEO. It shall be so: and having gone to the circuit of the seven towers, I will appoint chiefs at the gates, as you advise, having opposed equal champions against equal foes. But to mention the name of each would be a great delay, the enemy encamped under our very walls. But I will go, that I may not be idle with my hand. And may it befall me to find my brother opposed to me, and being joined with me in battle, to take him with my spear, and to slay him, who came to desolate my country. But it is thy duty to attend to the marriage of my sister Antigone and thy son Hæmon, if I fail ought of success; but the firm vow made before I now confirm at my going out. Thou art my mother's brother, why need I use more words? Treat her worthily, both for thine own and my sake. But my father incurs the punishment of the rashness he brought upon himself, having quenched his sight; I praise him not; even us will he put to death with his execrations, should he gain his point. But one thing is left undone by us, if the soothsayer Tiresias have any oracle to deliver, to enquire this of him; but I will send thy son,

Creon, Menœceus, of the same name with thy father, to bring Tiresias hither. With pleasure will he enter into conversation with you; but I lately reviled him with his divining art, so that he is offended with me. But this charge I give the city with thee, Creon; if my arms should conquer, that the body of Polynices be never buried in this Theban land; but that the man who buries him shall die, although he be a friend. This I have told you: but my attendants I tell, bring out my arms, and my panoply which covers me, that we may go this appointed contest of the spear with victorious justice. But to Caution, the most valued of the Goddesses, will we address our prayers to preserve this city.

#### CHORUS.

O Mars, cause of infinite woe, why, I pray, art thou so delighted with blood and death, so discordant with the revels of Bacchus? Thou dost not in the circle of beautiful dancers in the bloom of youth, having let flow thy hair<sup>f</sup>, on the breath of the flute modulate strains, in which there is a lovely power to renew the dance. But with thy armed men, having excited the army of Argives against Thebes with blood, thou dancest before the city in a most inharmonious revel, thou movest not thy foot maddened by the Thyrsus clad in fawn-skins, but thy solid-hoofed steed with thy chariot and horse's bits; and

<sup>f</sup> Valckenaer proposes reading instead of ὄραις or ὄρας, αὔραις, writing the passage αὔραις βόστρονχον ἀμπετάσας, "per auras leves crine jactato:" which seems peculiarly adapted to this place, where the poet places the tumultuous rage of Mars in contrast with the sweet enthusiasm of the Bacchanalians, who are represented as flying over the plains with their hair streaming in the wind.

bounding at the streams of Ismenus, thou art borne rapidly in the chariot-course, having excited against the race of those sown by Cadmus, a raging host that grasp the shield, well armed, adverse to us at the walls of stone: surely discord is some dreadful Goddess, who devised all these calamities against the princes of this land, the Labdacidæ involved in woe. O thou forest of heavenly foliage, most productive of beasts, thou snowy eye of Diana, Cithæron, never oughtest thou to have nourished him doomed to death, the son of Jocasta, Œdipus, the babe who was cast out from his home, marked by the golden clasps. Neither ought that winged virgin the Sphinx, that mountain monster, that grief to this land, to have come, with her most inharmonious lays; who formerly approaching our walls, bore in her four talons the descendants of Cadmus to the inaccessible light of heaven, whom the infernal Pluto sends against the Thebans; but other ill-fated discord among the children of Œdipus springs up in the palace and in the city. For that which is not honourable, never can be honourable, as neither can children the unhallowed offspring of the mother, the pollution of the father. But she came to a kindred bed. Thou didst produce, O! Theban land, thou didst produce formerly (as I heard the foreign report<sup>g</sup>, I heard it formerly at home,) the race sprung from teeth from the fiery-crested dragon fed on beasts, the proudest honour of Thebes. But to the nuptials of Harmonia the Gods came of old, and by the harp and by the lyre of Amphion uprose the walls of Thebes the tower of the double streams<sup>h</sup>, at

<sup>g</sup> ἀκοή is here to be understood in the sense of τὸ ἀκούμενον, as we find αἰσθησις for αἰσθητὸν, νοῦς for τὸ νοούμενον.

<sup>h</sup> The words διδύμων ποταμῶν do not refer to Dirce, but to Thebes,

the midst of the pass of Dirce, which waters the verdant plain before Ismenus. And Io, our ancient mother, doomed to bear horns, brought forth a line of Theban kings. But this city receiving ten thousand goods one in change for another, hath stood in the highest chaplets of war.

TIRESIAS (*led by his daughter,*) MENCÆCEUS, CREON,  
CHORUS.

TIR. Lead onward, my daughter, since thou art an eye to my blind steps, as the star to the mariners. Placing my steps hither on this level plain, proceed lest we stumble; thy father is feeble; and preserve carefully in thy virgin hand my calculations which I took, having learnt the auguries of the birds, sitting in the sacred seats where I foretell the future. My child, Mencæceus, son of Creon, tell me, how far is the remainder of the journey through the city to thy father? Since my knees are weary, and with difficulty I accomplish such a long journey.

CRE. Be of good cheer; for thou hast steered thy foot, Tiresias, near to thy friends; but take hold of him, my son. Since every chariot<sup>i</sup>, and the foot of the aged man is used to expect the assistance of another's hand.

TIR. Well: I am present; but why didst thou call me with such haste, Creon?

CRE. We have not as yet forgotten; but recover thy

Thebes being called πόλις διπόταμος. The construction is πύργος διδύμων ποταμῶν. Thus in Pindar οἶκημα ποταμοῦ means οἶκημα παρὰ ποταμῶν. Olymp. 2. Antistr. 1.

<sup>i</sup> A corrupt passage. See Porson's note.



strength, and collect thy breath, having thrown aside the fatigue occasioned by the journey.

**TIR.** I am relaxed in my limbs with toil, brought hither from the Athenians the day before this. For there also was a contest of the spear with Eumolpus, where I made the descendants of Cæcrops splendid conquerors. And I wear this golden chaplet, as thou seest, having received the first-fruits of the spoil of the enemy.

**CRE.** Thy victorious garlands I make an happy omen, For we, as thou well knowest, are tossing in a storm of war with the Greeks, and great is the hazard of Thebes. The king Eteocles has therefore gone forth adorned with his armour already to battle with the Argives. But to me has he sent that I might learn from you, by doing what we should be most likely to preserve the city.

**TIR.** For Eteocles' sake indeed I would have stopped my mouth, and repress the oracles, but to thee, since thou desirest to know them, will I declare them: for this land labours under the malady of old, O Creon, from the time when Læius became the father of children in spite of the Gods, and begat the wretched Œdipus, a husband for his mother. But the cruel lacerations of his eyes were in the wisdom of the Gods, and a warning to Greece. Which things the sons of Œdipus seeking to conceal among themselves by the lapse of time, as about forsooth to escape from the Gods, erred through their ignorance, for they, neither giving the honour due to their father, nor allowing him a free liberty, infuriated the unfortunate man: and he breathed out against them dreadful threats, being both in affliction, and moreover dishonoured. And I, what things omitting to do, and

what words omitting to speak on the subject, have nevertheless fallen into the hatred of the sons of Œdipus? But death from their mutual hands is near them, O Creon. And many corpses fallen around corpses having mingled the weapons of Argos and Thebes, shall cause bitter lamentations to the Theban land. And thou, O wretched city, art sapped from thy foundations, unless men will obey my words. For this were the first thing, that not any of the family of Œdipus should be citizens, nor king of the territory, inasmuch as they are possessed by demons, and are they that will overthrow the city. And since the evil triumphs over the good, there is one other thing requisite to ensure preservation. But, as this is neither safe for me to say, and distressing to those on whom the lot has fallen, to give to the city the balm of preservation, I will depart, farewell; for being an individual with many shall I suffer what is about to happen, if it must be so: for what can I do<sup>k</sup>!

CRE. Stay here, old man.

TIR. Lay not hold upon me.

CRE. Remain; why dost thou fly me?

TIR. Thy fortune flies thee, but not I.

CRE. Tell me the means of preserving the citizens and their city.

TIR. Thou wishest now indeed, and soon thou wilt not wish.

CRE. And how am I not willing to preserve my country?

TIR. Art thou willing then to hear, and art thou eager?

<sup>k</sup> τί γὰρ πάθω; *Quid enim agam?* est formula eorum, quos invitos natura vel fatum, vel quæcumque alia cogit necessitas. *Valckenaer.*

CRE. For towards what ought I to have a greater eagerness?

TIR. Hear now then my prophecies.—But this first I wish to ascertain clearly, where is Menœceus who brought me hither?

CRE. He is not far off, but close to thee.

TIR. Let him depart then afar from my oracles.

CRE. He that is my son will keep secret what ought to be kept secret.

TIR. Art thou willing then that I speak in his presence?

CRE. *Yes*: for he would be delighted to hear of the means of preservation.

TIR. Hear now then the tenor of my oracles; what things doing ye may preserve the city of the Cadmeans. It is necessary for thee to sacrifice this thy son Menœceus for the country, since thou thyself callest for this fortune.

CRE. What sayest thou, what word is this thou hast spoken, old man?

TIR. As circumstances are, thus also oughtest thou to act.

CRE. O thou, that hast said many evils in a short time!

TIR. To thee at least; but to thy country great and salutary.

CRE. I heard not, I attended not: let the city go where it will.

TIR. This is no longer the same man; he retracts again what he said.

CRE. Farewell! depart; for I have no need of thy prophecies.

TIR. Has truth perished, because thou art unfortunate?

CRE. By thy knees I implore thee, and by thy reverend locks.

TIR. Why kneel to me? the evils thou askest are hard to be controlled.

CRE. Keep it secret; and speak not these words to the city.

TIR. Dost thou command me to be unjust? I cannot be silent.

CRE. What then wilt thou do to me? Wilt thou slay my son?

TIR. These things will be a care to others; but by me will it be spoken.

CRE. But from whence has this evil come to me, and to my child?

TIR. Well dost thou ask me, and comest to the drift of my discourse. It is necessary that he stabbed in that cave, where the earth-born dragon lay, the guardian of Dirce's fountain, give his gory blood a libation to the earth on account of the ancient wrath of Mars against Cadmus, who avenges the slaughter of the earth-born dragon; and these things done, ye shall obtain Mars as your ally. But if the earth receive fruit in return for fruit, and mortal blood in return for blood, ye shall have that land propitious, which formerly sent forth a crop of men from seed armed with golden helmets; but there must of this race die one, who is the son of the dragon's jaw. But thou art left among us of the race of those sown men, pure in thy descent, both by thy mother's side and in the male line; and thy children too: Hæmon's marriage however precludes his being slain, for he is not a youth, for, although he has not approached her bed, he has yet contracted the marriage. But this youth, devoted to this city, by

dying may preserve his native country. And he will cause a bitter return to Adrastus and the Argives, casting back death over their eyes, and Thebes will he make illustrious: of these two fates choose the one; either preserve thy child or the state. Every information from me thou hast:—lead me, my child, towards home:—but whoever exercises the art of divination, is a fool; if indeed he chance to shew disagreeable things, he is rendered hateful to those to whom he may prophesy; but speaking falsely to his employers from motives of pity, he is unjust as touching the Gods.—Phœbus alone should speak in oracles to men, who fears nobody.

CREON, MENECEUS, CHORUS.

CHOR. Creon, why art thou mute compressing thy voice in silence, for to me also there is no less consternation.

CRE. But what can one say?—It is clear however what my answer will be. For never will I go to this degree of calamity, to expose my son a victim for the state. For all men live with an affection towards their children, nor would any give up his own child to die. Let no one praise me for the deed, and slay my children. But I myself, for I am arrived at a mature period of life, am ready to die to liberate my country. But haste, my son, before the whole city hears it, disregarding the intemperate oracles of prophets, fly as quickly as possible, having quitted this land. For he will tell these things to the authorities and chiefs, going to the seven gates, and to the officers: and if indeed we get before him, there is safety for thee, but if thou art too late, we are undone, thou diest.

MEN. Whither then fly? To what city? what friends?

CRE. Wheresoever thou wilt be farthest removed from this country.

MEN. Therefore it is fitting for thee to speak, and for me to do.

CRE. Having passed through Delphi—

MEN. Whither is it right for me to go, my father?

CRE. To the land of Ætolia.

MEN. And from this whither shall I proceed?

CRE. To Thesprotia's soil.

MEN. To the sacred seat of Dodona?

CRE. Thou understandest.

MEN. What then will there be to protect me?

CRE. The conducting deity.

MEN. But what means of procuring money?

CRE. I will supply gold.

MEN. Thou sayest well, my father. Go then, for having proceeded to salute<sup>1</sup> thy sister, whose breast I first sucked, Jocasta I mean, deprived of my mother, and reft from her, an orphan, I will depart and save my life. But haste, go, let not thy purpose be hindered.

#### MENŒCEUS, CHORUS.

MEN. Ye females, how well removed I my father's fears, having deceived him with words, in order to gain my wishes; who sends me out of the way, depriving the city of its good fortune, and gives me up to cowardice. And these things are pardonable indeed in an old man, but in my case it deserves not pardon to become the deserter of that country which gave me birth. That ye

<sup>1</sup> Προσηγορήσων is to be joined with μολών, not with εἶμι. In confirmation of this see line 1011.

may know then, I will go, and preserve the city, and will give up my life for this land. For it is a disgraceful thing, that those indeed who are free from the oracle, and are not concerned with any compulsion of the Gods, standing at their shields in battle, shall not be slow to die fighting before the towers for their country; and I, having betrayed my father, and my brother, and my own city, shall depart coward-like from out of the land; but wherever I live, I shall appear vile. No: by that Jove that dwelleth amidst the constellations, and sanguinary Mars, who set up those sown men, who erst sprung from the earth, to be kings of this country. But I will depart, and standing on the summit of the battlements, stabbing myself over the dark deep lair of the dragon, where the prophet appointed, will give liberty to the country—the word has been spoken. But I go, by my death about to give no mean gift to the state, and will rid this land of its affliction. For if every one, seizing what opportunity he had in his power of doing good, would persist in it, and bring it forward for his country's weal, states, experiencing fewer calamities, henceforward might be prosperous.

CHOR. Thou camest forth, thou camest forth, O winged monster, production of the earth, and the viper of hell, the ravager of the Cadmeans, big with destruction, big with woes, in form half-virgin, a hostile prodigy, with thy ravening wings, and thy talons that preyed on raw flesh, who erst from Dirce's spot bearing aloft the youths, accompanied by an inharmonious lay, thou broughtest, thou broughtest cruel woes to our country; cruel was he of the Gods, whoever was the author of these things. And the moans of the matrons, and the moans of the virgins, resounded in the house,

in a voice, in a strain of misery, they lamented some one thing, some another, in succession through the city. And the groaning and the noise was like to thunder, when the winged virgin bore out of sight any man from the city. But at length came by the mission of the Pythian oracle Œdipus the unhappy to this land of Thebes, to us then indeed delighted, but again came woes. For he, wretched man, having gained the glorious victory over the enigmas, contracts a marriage, an unfortunate marriage with his mother, and pollutes the city. And fresh woes does the unfortunate man cause to succeed with slaughter, devoting by curses his sons to the unhallowed contest.—With admiration, with admiration we look on him, who is gone to kill himself for the sake of his country's land; to Creon indeed having left lamentations, but about to make the seven-towered gates of the land greatly victorious. Thus may we be mothers, thus may we be blest in our children, O dear Pallas, who destroyedst the blood of the dragon by the hurled stone, driving the attention of Cadmus to the action, whence with rapine some fiend of the Gods rushed on this land.

MESSENGER, JOCASTA, CHORUS.

MESS. Ho there! who is at the gate of the palace? Open, conduct Jocasta from out of the house.—What ho! again—after a long time indeed, but yet come forth, hear, O renowned wife of Œdipus, ceasing from thy lamentations, and thy tears of grief.

JOC. O most dear man, surely thou comest bearing the news of some calamity, of the death of Eteocles, by whose shield thou always didst go, warding off the weapons of the enemy. What new message, I pray,



dost thou come to deliver? Is my son dead or alive? Tell me.

MESS. He lives, be not alarmed for this, for I will rid thee of this fear.

JOC. But what? In what state are our seven-towered ramparts?

MESS. They stand unshaken, nor is the city destroyed.

JOC. Came they in danger from the spear of Argos?

MESS. To the very extreme of danger; but the arms of Thebes came off superior to the Mycenæan spear.

JOC. Tell me one thing, by the Gods, whether thou knowest any thing of Polynices (since this is a concern to me also) whether he sees the light.

MESS. Thus far in the day thy pair of children lives.

JOC. Be thou blest. But how did ye stationed on the towers drive off the spear of Argos from the gates? Tell me, that I may go and delight the old blind man in the house with the news of his country's being preserved.

MESS. After that the son of Creon, he that died for the land, standing on the summit of the towers, plunged the black-handled sword into his throat, the salvation of this land, thy son placed seven cohorts, and their leaders with them at the seven gates, guards against the Argive spear; and he drew up the horse ready to support the horse, and the heavy-armed men to reinforce the shield-bearers, so that to the part of the wall which was in danger there might be succour at hand. But from the lofty citadel we view the army of the Argives with their white shields having quitted Tumessus and now come near the trench at full speed they reached the city of the land of Cadmus. And the

pæan and the trumpets at the same time from them resounded, and off the walls from us. And first indeed Parthenopæus the son of the huntress (*Atalanta*) led his division horrent with their thick shields against the Neïtan<sup>m</sup> gate, having a family device in the middle of his shield, Atalanta destroying the Ætolian boar with her distant-wounding bow. And against the Prætan gate marched the prophet Amphiaræus, having victims in his car, not bearing an insolent emblem, but modestly having his arms without a device. But against the Ogygian gate stood Prince Hippomedon, bearing an emblem in the middle of his shield, the Argus gazing with his spangled<sup>n</sup> eyes, some eyes indeed with the rising of the stars awake<sup>o</sup>, and some with the setting closed, as we had the opportunity of seeing afterwards when he was dead. But Tydeus was drawn up at the Homoloïan gate, having on his shield a lion's skin rough with his mane, but in his right hand he bore a torch, as the Titan Prometheus<sup>p</sup>, intent on firing the city. But thy son Polynices drew up his array at the Crenean gate; but the swift Potnian mares, the emblem on his shield, were starting through fright, well cir-

<sup>m</sup> So called after Neïs the son of Amphion and Niobe, or from *νεάται*, "Newgate." SCHOL.

<sup>n</sup> Argus himself might be called *στικτός*, but not his eyes, hence *πυκνοὺς* is proposed by Heinsius. Abreschius receives *στικτοῖς* in the sense of *οἷς στικτός ἐστι*.

<sup>o</sup> The Scholiast makes *βλέποντα* the accusativè singular to agree with *παρόπτην*. Musgrave takes it as agreeing with *ὄμματα*; in this latter case *κρύπτοντα* is used in a neuter signification.

<sup>p</sup> This is Musgrave's interpretation, by putting the stop after *ὤς*, which also Porson adopts; others would join *ὤς* with *πρόσωπ*. It seems however more natural that the torch should be referred to Tydeus's emblem, than to himself.

cularly<sup>9</sup> grouped within *the orb* at the handle of the shield, so that they seemed infuriated. But Capaneus, not holding less notions than Mars on the approaching battle, drew up his division against the Electran gate. Upon the iron embossments of his shield was an earth-born giant bearing upon his shoulders a whole city, which he had torn up by main force with bars, an intimation to us what our city should suffer. But at the seventh gate was Adrastus, having his shield filled with an hundred vipers, bearing on his left arm a representation of the hydra, the boast of Argos, and from the midst of the walls the dragons were bearing the children of the Thebans in their jaws. But I had the opportunity of seeing each of these, as I took the word of battle to the leaders of the divisions. And first indeed we fought with bows, and javelins, and distant wounding slings, and fragments of rocks; but when we were conquering in the fight, Tydeus shouted out, and thy son of a sudden, “O sons of the Danaï, why delay we, ere  
 “we are galled with their missile weapons, to make a  
 “rush at the gates all in a body, light armed men,  
 “horsemen, and those who drive the chariots?” And when they heard the cry, no one was backward; but many fell, their heads besmeared with blood; of us also you might have seen before the walls frequent divers toppling to the ground; and they moistened the parched earth with streams of blood. But the Arcadian, no Argive, the son of Atlanta, as some whirlwind falling on the gates, calls out for fire and a spade, as though he would dig up the city. But Periclymenus the son of

<sup>9</sup> Commentators and interpreters are much at variance concerning the word *σπρόφιγξιν*. For his better satisfaction on this passage the reader is referred to the Scholia.

the God of the Ocean stopped him in his raging, hurling at his head a stone, a waggon-load, a pinnacle<sup>r</sup> rent from the battlement; and dashed in pieces his head with its auburn hair, and crushed the suture of the bones, and besmeared with blood his lately blooming cheeks; nor shall he carry back his living form to his mother, glorious in her bow, the daughter of Mœnalus. But when thy son saw this gate was in a state of safety, he went to another, and I followed. But I see Tydeus, and many armed with shields around him darting with their Ætolian lances at the highest battlements of the towers, so that our men put to flight quitted the heights of the ramparts; but thy son, as a hunter, collects them together again; and posted them a second time on the towers; and we hasten on to another gate, having relieved the distress in this quarter. But Capaneus, how can I express the measure of his rage! For he came bearing the ranges of a long-reaching ladder, and made this high boast, “That not even “the hallowed fire of Jove should hinder him from “taking the city from its highest turrets.” And these things soon as he had proclaimed, though assailed with stones, he clambered up, having contracted his body under his shield, climbing the slippery footing of the bars<sup>s</sup> of the ladder: but when he was now mounting the battlements of the walls Jupiter strikes him with his thunder; and the earth resounded, insomuch that all

<sup>r</sup> γείσσα is in apposition to λαῶν in the preceding line. Cf. Orestes, 1585.

<sup>s</sup> Commentators are divided on the meaning of ἐνήλατα. One Scholiast understands it to mean the uprights of the ladder in which the bars are fixed. Eustathius considers ἐνηλάτων βάρηρα a periphrasis for βάρηρα, ἐνήλατα being the βάρηρα or βαθυμίδες, which ἐνεκλήλανται τοῖς ὀρθοῖς ξύλοις.

trembled; and his limbs were hurled, as it were by a sling, from the ladder separately from one another, his hair to heaven, and his blood to the ground, and his limbs, like the whirling of Ixion on his wheel, were carried round; and his scorched body falls to the earth. But when Adrastus saw that Jove was hostile to his army, he withdrew the host of the Argives without the trench. But ours on the contrary, when they saw the auspicious sign from Jove, drove out their chariots, horsemen and heavy-armed, and rushing into the midst of the Argive arms engaged in fight: and there were all the sorts of misery together: they died, they fell from their chariots, and the wheels leaped up and axles upon axles; and corpses were heaped together with corpses.—We have preserved then our towers from being overthrown to this present day; but whether for the future this land will be prosperous, rests with the Gods.

CHOR. To conquer is glorious; but if the Gods have the better intent, may I be fortunate!

JOC. Well are the ways of the Gods, and of fortune; for my children live, and my country has escaped; but the unhappy Creon seems to feel the effects of my marriage, and of Œdipus's misfortunes, being deprived of his child; for the state indeed, happily, but individually, to his misery: but recount to me again, what after this did my two sons purpose to do?

MESS. Forbear the rest; for in every circumstance hitherto thou art fortunate.

JOC. This hast thou said so as to raise suspicion; I must not forbear.

MESS. Dost thou want any thing more than that thy sons are safe?

JOC. In what follows also I would hear if I am fortunate.

MESS. Let me go: thy son is deprived of his armour-bearer.

JOC. Thou concealest some ill and coverest it in obscurity.

MESS. I cannot speak thy ills after thy happiness.

JOC. *But thou shalt*, unless fleeing from me thou fleest through the air.

MESS. Alas! alas! Why dost thou not suffer me to depart after a message of glad tidings, but forcest me to tell calamities?—Thy sons are intent on most shameful deeds of boldness—to engage in single combat apart from the whole army, having addressed to the Argives and Thebans in common a speech, such as they never ought to have spoken. But Eteocles began, standing on the lofty turret, having commanded to proclaim silence to the army. And he said, “ O generals of the Grecian land, and chieftains of the Danai, who have come hither, and O people of Cadmus, neither for the sake of Polynices barter your lives, nor for my cause. For I myself, taking this danger on myself, alone will enter the lists with my brother; and if indeed I slay him, I will dwell in the palace alone; but should I be subdued, I will give it up to him alone. But you, ceasing from the combat, O Argives, shall return to your land, not leaving your lives here; of the Theban people also there is enough that lieth dead.” Thus much he spake; but thy son Polynices rushed from the ranks, and approved his words. But all the Argives murmured their applause, and the people of Cadmus, as thinking this plan just. And after this the generals made a truce, and in the space between the two armies pledged an oath to abide by it. And now the two sons of the aged Œdipus clad

their bodies in an entire suit of brazen armour. And their friends adorned them, the champion of this land indeed the chieftains of the Thebans; and him the principal men of the Danaï. And they stood resplendent, and they changed not their colour, raging to let forth their spears at each other. But their friends on either side as they passed by, encouraging them with words, thus spoke. “Polynices, it rests with thee to erect the statue of Jove, emblem of victory, and to confer a glorious fame on Argos.” But to Eteocles on the other hand; “Now thou fightest for the state, now if thou come off victorious, thou art in possession of the sceptre.” These things they said exhorting them to the combat. But the seers sacrificed the sheep, and scrutinized the shooting of the flames, and the bursting of *the gall*, the moisture adverse<sup>t</sup> to the fire, and the extremity of the flame, which bears a twofold import, both the sign of victory<sup>u</sup>, and the sign of being defeated<sup>v</sup>. But if thou hast any power, or words of wisdom, or the soothing charms of incantation, go, stay thy children from the fearful combat, since great the danger, and dreadful will be the sequel of the contest, *namely*, tears for thee, deprived this day of thy two children.

JOC. O my child, Antigone, come forth from before the palace; the state of thy fortune suits not now the

<sup>t</sup> Musgrave would render ὑγρότητ' ἐναντίαν by “mobilitatem male coalescentem;” in this case it would indicate the bad omen, and be opposed to ἄκραν λαμπράδα, which then should be translated “the pointed flame.” Valckenaer considers the passage as desperately corrupt. See Musgrave's note.

<sup>u</sup> If the flame was clear and vivid.

<sup>v</sup> If it terminated in smoke and blackness.

dance, nor the virgin's chamber, but it is thy duty, in conjunction with thy mother, to hinder two excellent men and thy brothers verging towards death from falling by each other's hands.

ANTIGONE, JOCASTA, CHORUS.

ANT. With what new horrors, O mother of my being, dost thou call out to thy friends before the house?

JOC. O my daughter, the life of thy brothers is gone from them.

ANT. How sayest thou?

JOC. They are drawn out in single combat.

ANT. Alas me! what wilt thou say, my mother?

JOC. Nothing of pleasant import; but follow.

ANT. Whither? leaving my virgin chamber.

JOC. To the army.

ANT. I am ashamed to go among the crowd.

JOC. Thy present state admits not bashfulness.

ANT. But what shall I do then?

JOC. Thou shalt quell the strife of the brothers.

ANT. Doing what, my mother?

JOC. Falling before them with me.

ANT. Lead to the space between the armies; we must not delay.

JOC. Haste, daughter, haste, since, if indeed I reach my sons before they engage, I still exist in heaven's fair light, but if they die, I shall lie dead with them.

CHORUS.

Alas! alas! shuddering with horror, shuddering is my breast; and through my flesh came pity, pity for the unhappy mother, on account of her two children, whether of them then will distain with blood the other,



(alas me for my sufferings, O Jove, O earth,) the own brother's neck, the own brother's life, in arms, in slaughter? Wretched, wretched I, over which corpse then shall I raise the lamentation for the dead? O earth, earth, the two beasts of prey, bloodthirsty souls, brandishing the spear, will quickly distain with blood the fallen, fallen enemy. Wretches, that they ever came to the thought of a single combat! In a foreign strain will I mourn with tears my elegy of groans due to the dead. Destiny is at hand—death is near; this day will decide the event. Ill-fated, ill-fated murder because of the furies! But I see Creon here with clouded brow advancing towards the house, I will cease therefore from the groans I am uttering.

CREON, CHORUS.

CRE. Ah me! what shall I do? whether am I to groan in weeping myself, or the city, which a cloud of such magnitude encircles as to cast us amidst the gloom of Acheron? For my son has perished having died for the city, having achieved a glorious name, but to me a name of sorrow. Him having taken just now from the dragon's den, stabbed by his own hand, I wretched bore in my arms; and the whole house resounds with shrieks; but I, myself aged, am come after my aged sister Jocasta, that she may wash and lay out my son now no more. For it behoves the living well to revere the God below by paying honours to the dead.

CHO. Thy sister is gone out of the house, O Creon, and the girl Antigone attending the steps of her mother.

CRE. Whither? and for what hap? tell me.

CHO. She heard that her sons were about to come to a contest in single battle for the royal palace.

CRE. How sayest thou? whilst I was fondly attending to my son's corse, I arrived not so far *in knowledge*, as to be acquainted with this also.

CHO. But thy sister has indeed been gone some time; but I think, O Creon, that the contest, in which their lives are at stake, has already been concluded by the sons of Œdipus.

CRE. Ah me! I see indeed this signal, the downcast eye and countenance of the approaching messenger, who will relate every thing that has taken place.

MESSENGER, CREON, CHORUS.

MESS. O wretched me! what language or what words can I utter? we are undone——

CRE. Thou beginnest thy speech with no promising prelude.

MESS. Oh wretched me! doubly do I lament, for I bear great calamities.

CRE. In addition to the calamities that have happened dost thou still speak of others?

MESS. Thy sister's sons, O Creon, no longer behold the light.

CRE. Ah! alas! thou utterest great ills to me and to the state.

MESS. O mansions of Œdipus, do ye hear these things of thy children, who have perished by similar fates?

CHO. Aye, so that, had they but sense, they would weep.

CRE. O most heavy misery! Oh me wretched with woes! alas! unhappy me!

MESS. If that thou knewest the evils yet in addition to these.

CRE. And how can there be more fatal ills than these?

MESS. Thy sister is dead with her two children.

CHO. Raise, raise the cry of woe, and smite your heads with the blows of your white hands.

CRE. Oh unhappy Jocasta, what an end of thy life and of thy marriage hast thou endured in the riddles of the Sphinx<sup>x</sup>! But how took place the slaughter of her two sons, and the combat arising from the curse of Œdipus? tell me.

MESS. The success of the country before the towers indeed thou knowest; for the circuit of the wall is not of such vast extent, but that thou must know all that has taken place. But after that the sons of the aged Œdipus had clad their limbs in brazen armour, they came and stood in the midst of the plain between the two armies, ready for the contest, and the fierceness of the single battle. And having cast a look towards Argos, Polynices uttered his prayer; “ O venerable “ Juno, (for I am thine, since in marriage I joined my- “ self with the daughter of Adrastus, and dwell in that “ land,) grant me to slay my brother, and to cover with “ blood my hostile hand bearing the victory.” And Eteocles looking at the temple of Pallas, glorious in her golden shield, prayed; “ O Daughter of Jove, grant “ me with my hand to hurl my victorious spear from “ this arm home to the breast of my brother, and slay “ him who came to lay waste my country.” And when the sound of the Tuscan trumpet was raised, as the torch, the signal for the fierce battle, they sped with

<sup>x</sup> The construction of this passage is the same as that of II. Δ. 155. *θανατόν νύ τοι ὄρκι' ἔταμνον.* “ Fœdus, quod pepigi, tibi mortis causa “ est.” *Porson.*

dreadful rush towards each other; and like wild boars whetting their savage tusks, they met, their cheeks all moist with foam; and they rushed forward with their lances; but they couched beneath the orbs of their shields, in order that the steel might fall harmless. But if either perceived the other's eye raised above the verge, he drove the lance at his face, intent to be beforehand with him: but dexterously they shifted their eyes to the open ornaments of their shields, so that the spear was made of none effect. And more sweat trickled down the spectators than the combatants, through the fears of their friends. But Eteocles, stumbling with his foot against a stone, which rolled under his tread<sup>y</sup>, places his limb without the shield. But Polynices ran up with his spear, when he saw a stroke opened to his steel, and the Argive spear passed through the shank. And all the host of the Danaï shouted for joy. And the hero, who first was wounded, when he perceived his shoulder exposed in this effort, pierced the breast of Polynices with his lance, and gave joy to the citizens of Cadmus, but he broke the point of his spear. But being come to a strait for a spear, he retreated backward on his leg, and taking a stone of marble, he hurled it, and crashed *his antagonist's* spear in the middle: and the battle was on equal terms, both being deprived of the spear in their hands. Then seizing the handles of their swords they met at close quarters, and, as they clashed their shields together, raised a great tumult of battle around them. And Eteocles having a sort of idea of its success, made use

<sup>y</sup> Beck, by putting the stop after *πίτρον*, makes *ὑπόδρομον* to agree with *κῶλον*, "his limb diverted from its tread."

of a Thessalian stratagem, *which he had learnt* from his connexion with that country. For giving up his present mode of attack, he brings his left foot behind, protecting well the pit of his own stomach; and stepping forward his right leg, he plunged the sword through the navel, and drove it to the vertebræ. But the unhappy Polynices bending together his side and his bowels falls weltering in blood. But the other, as he were now the victor, and had subdued him in the fight, casting his sword on the ground, went to spoil him, not fixing his attention on himself, but on that his purpose. Which thing also deceived him; for Polynices, he that fell first, still breathing a little, preserving his sword e'en in his deathly fall, with difficulty indeed, but he did stretch his sword to the heart of Eteocles. And holding the dust in their gripe they both fall near one another, and determined not the victory.

CHO. Alas! alas! to what degree, O Œdipus, do I groan for thy misfortunes! but the God seems to have fulfilled thy imprecations.

MESS. Hear now then woes even in addition to these—For when her sons having fallen were breathing their last, at this moment the wretched mother rushes before them, and when she perceived them stricken with mortal wounds she shrieked out, “Oh my sons, I am come too late a succour;” and throwing herself by the side of her children in turn, she wept, she lamented with moans her long anxiety in suckling them *now lost*: and their sister, who accompanied to stand by her in her misery, at the same time *broke forth*; “O supporters of my mother’s age! Oh ye that have betrayed my hopes of marriage, my dearest brothers!”—But king Eteocles heaving from his breast his gasping breath, heard his

mother, and putting out his cold clammy hand, sent not forth indeed a voice; but from his eyes spoke her in tears to signify affection. But Polynices, who yet breathed, looking at his sister and his aged mother, thus spoke: “ We perish, Oh my mother; but I grieve  
 “ for thee, and for this my sister, and my brother who  
 “ lies dead, for being my friend, he became my enemy,  
 “ but still my friend.—But bury me, O mother of my  
 “ being, and thou my sister, in my native land, and  
 “ pacify the exasperated city, that I may obtain thus  
 “ much at least of my country’s land, although I have  
 “ lost the palace. And close my eyelids with thy hand,  
 “ my mother,” (and he places it himself upon his eyes,)  
 “ and fare ye well! for now darkness surroundeth me.”  
 And both breathed out their lives together. And the mother, when she saw what had taken place, beyond endurance grieving, snatched the sword from the dead body, and perpetrated a deed of horror; for she drove the steel through the middle of her throat, and lies dead on those most dear to her, having each in her arms embraced. But the people rose up hastily to a strife of opinions; we indeed, as holding, that my master was victorious; but they, that the other was; and there was also a contention between the generals, those on the other side *contended*, that Polynices first struck with the spear, but those on our’s, that there was no victory where the combatants died. And in the mean time Antigone withdrew from the army; but they rushed to arms; but fortunately by a sort of foresight the people of Cadmus had sat upon their shields: and we gained the advantage of falling on the Argives not yet accoutred in their arms. And no one made a stand, but flying they covered the plain; and immense

quantities of blood were spilt of the corpses that fell, but when we were victorious in the fight, some indeed raised the image of Jove emblem of victory, but some of us stripping the shields from the Argive corpses sent the spoils within the city. But others with Antigone are bearing hither the dead for their friends to lament over. But these contests have in some respect turned out most happy for this state, but in other respect most unhappy.

CHO. No longer the misfortunes of the house come to our ears, we may also see before the palace these three fallen corpses, who have shared the dark realms by a united death.

[*The dead bodies borne.*]

ANTIGONE, CREON, CHORUS.

ANT. Not veiling the softness of my cheek on which my ringlets fall, nor caring for the purple glow of virginity under my lids, the blush of my countenance, I am borne along the bacchanal of the dead, rending the fillet from my hair, rejecting the saffron robe of delicateness, having the mournful office of conducting the dead. Alas! alas! woe is me! Oh Polynices, thou well answeredst to thy name! Alas me! Oh Thebes! but thy strife, no strife, but murder consummated with murder<sup>2</sup>, hath destroyed the house of Œdipus with dreadful, with mournful blood. But what groan responsive to my sufferings or what lament of music shall I invoke to my tears, to my tears, O house, O house, bearing these three kindred bodies, my mother, and her children, the

<sup>2</sup> The construction is *φόνος κρανθείς φόνοφ*: *αἵματι* depends on *ἐν* understood.

joy of the fury? who destroyed the entire house of Œdipus, what time intelligently<sup>a</sup> he unfolded the difficult song of the fierce monster, having thereby slain the body of the fierce musical Sphinx. Alas me! my father; what Grecian, or what Barbarian, or what other of those noble in birth, of mortal blood, in time of old ever bore such manifest sufferings of so many ills? Wretched I, how do I lament! What bird, sitting on the highest boughs of the oak or pine will sing responsive to my lamentations, who have lost my mother? who weep the strain of grief in addition to these moans *for my brothers*, about to pass my long life in floods of tears.—Which shall I bewail? On which first shall I scatter the first offerings rent from my hair? On my mother's two breasts of milk, or upon the death-wounds of my two brothers? Alas! alas! Leave thine house, bringing thy sightless eye, O aged father, Œdipus, shew thy wretched age, who within thy palace, having poured the gloomy darkness over thine eyes, draggest on a long<sup>b</sup> life. Dost thou hear wandering in the hall, —resting thy aged foot upon the couch in a state of misery?

ŒDIPUS, CREON, ANTIGONE, CHORUS.

ŒD. Why, O virgin, hast thou with thy most doleful tears called me forth leaning on the support of a blind foot<sup>c</sup> to the light, a bed-ridden man from his darksome

<sup>a</sup> Most MSS. have *ξυνετός*. Here then is a remarkable instance of the same word having both an active and a passive signification in the same sentence.

<sup>b</sup> *μακρόπρουν*, not *μακρόπουν* is Porson's reading, *μακρόπρουνς ζωή* is explained "vita in qua longo tempore spiratur; ergo longa."

<sup>c</sup> See note at Hecuba 65.



chamber, grey-headed, an obscure phantom of air—a dead body beneath the earth—a flitting dream?

ANT. O father, thou shalt receive words of unhappy tidings; no longer do thy children behold the light, nor thy wife, who ever was employed in attending as a staff on thy blind foot, my father: alas me!

ÆD. Alas me, for my sufferings! for well may I groan and vociferate these things. The three souls, tell me, my child, by what fate, how quitted they this light?

ANT. Not for the sake of reproaching thee, nor exulting over thee, but for grief I speak: thy evil genius heavy with swords, and fire, and wretched combats has rushed down upon thy children, O my father.

ÆD. Alas me! ah! ah!

ANT. Why dost thou thus groan?

ÆD. Alas me! my children!

ANT. Thou wouldest grieve indeed, if looking on the chariot of the Sun drawn by its four steeds, thou couldest direct the sight of thine eyes to these bodies of the dead.

ÆD. The evil of my sons indeed is manifest; but my wretched wife, by what fate, O my child, did she perish?

ANT. Causing to all tears of grief they could not contain, to her children she bared her breast, a suppliant she bared it, holding it up in supplication. But the mother found her children at the Electran gate, in the mead where the lotus abounds, contending with their lances in the common war, as lions bred in the same cave, with the blood-wounds now a cold, a gory libation, which Pluto received, and Mars gave. And having seized the brazen-wrought sword from the dead she plunged it into her flesh, but with grief for her children

she fell amidst her children. But all these sufferings, O my father, has the God heaped this day upon our house, whoever he be, that adds this consummation.

CHO. This day hath been the beginning of many woes to the house of Œdipus; but may life be more fortunate!

CRE. Now indeed cease from your grief, for it is time to think of the sepulture. But hear these words, O Œdipus; Eteocles, thy son, hath given to me the dominion of this land, giving them as a marriage portion to Hæmon, and *with them* the bed of thy daughter Antigone. I therefore will not suffer thee any longer to dwell in this land. For clearly did Tiresias say, that never, whilst thou dost inhabit this land, will the state be prosperous. But depart; and this I say not from insolence, nor being thine enemy, but on account of thy evil genius, fearing lest the country suffer any harm.

ŒD. O Fate, from the beginning how wretched and unhappy didst thou form me, if ever other man was formed! whom, even before I came into the light from my mother's womb, when yet unborn Apollo foretold that I should be the murderer of my father Laius, alas! wretch that I am! And when I was born, again my father who gave me life, seeks to take my life, considering that I was born his enemy: for it was fated that he should die by my hands, and he sends me, poor wretch, as I craved the breast, a prey for the wild beasts: where I was preserved—for would that Cithæron, it ought, had sunk to the bottomless chasms of Tartarus, for that it did not destroy me; but the God fixed it my lot to serve under Polybus my master: but I, unhappy man, having slain my own father, ascended the bed of my wretched mother, and begat children,

my brothers, whom I destroyed, having received down the curse from Læius, and given it to my sons. For I was not by nature so utterly devoid of understanding, as to have devised such things against my eyes, and against the life of my children, without the interference of some one of the Gods. Well!—what then shall I ill-fated do? who will accompany me the guide of my dark steps? She that lies here dead! living, well know I, she would. But my noble pair of sons? I have no sons.—But still in my vigour can I myself procure my sustenance? Whence?—Why, O Creon, dost thou thus utterly kill me? for kill me thou wilt, if thou shalt cast me out of the land. Yet will I not appear base, stretching my hands around thy knees, for I cannot belie my former nobleness, not even though my plight is miserable.

CRE. Well has it been spoken by thee, that thou wilt not touch my knees, but I cannot permit thee to dwell in the land. But of these corpses, the one we must even now bear to the house; but the body of Polynices cast out unburied beyond the borders of this land. And these things shall be proclaimed to all the Thebans: “ whoever shall be found either crowning the corse, or “ covering it with earth, shall receive death for his “ offence.” But thou, ceasing from thy groans for the three dead, retire, Antigone, within the house, and behave as beseems a virgin, expecting the approaching day in which the bed of Hæmon awaits thee.

ANT. Oh father, in what a state of woes do we miserable beings lie! How do I lament for thee! more than for the dead! For it is not that one of thy ills is heavy, and the other not heavy, but thou art in all things unhappy, my father.—But thee I ask, our new

lord, wherefore dost thou insult my father here, banishing him from his country? Why make thy laws against an unhappy corse?

CRE. The determination of Eteocles this, not mine.

ANT. It is absurd, and thou a fool to enforce it.

CRE. How so? Is it not just to execute injunctions?

ANT. No, if they are base at least, and spoken with ill intent.

CRE. What? will he not with justice be given to the dogs?

ANT. No, for thus do ye not demand of him lawful justice.

CRE. *We do*; since he was the enemy of the state, who least ought to be an enemy.

ANT. Hath he not paid then his life to fortune?

CRE. And in his burial too let him now satisfy vengeance.

ANT. What outrage having committed, if he came after his share of the kingdom?

CRE. This man, that you may know once for all, shall be unburied.

ANT. I will bury him; even though the city forbid it.

CRE. Thyself then wilt thou at the same time bury near the corse.

ANT. But that is a glorious thing, for two friends to lie near.

CRE. Lay hold of her, and bear her to the house.

ANT. By no means—for I will not let go this body.

CRE. The God has decreed it, O virgin, not as thou wilt.

ANT. And this too is decreed—that the dead be not insulted.

CRE. Around him none shall place the moist dust.

ANT. Nay, by his mother here Jocasta, I entreat thee, Creon.

CRE. Thou labourest in vain, for thou canst not obtain this.

ANT. But suffer thou me at any rate to bathe the body.

CRE. This would be one of the things forbidden by the state.

ANT. But let me put bandages round his cruel wounds.

CRE. In no way shalt thou shew respect to this corse.

ANT. Oh most dear, but I will at least kiss thy lips.

CRE. Thou shalt not prepare calamity against thy wedding by thy lamentations:

ANT. What? while I live, shall I ever marry thy son?

CRE. There is strong necessity for thee, for by what means wilt thou escape the marriage?

ANT. That night then shall find me one of the Danaïdæ.

CRE. Dost mark with what audacity she hath insulted us?

ANT. The steel be witness, and the sword by which I swear.

CRE. But why art thou so eager to get rid of this marriage?

ANT. I will take my flight with my most wretched father here.

CRE. There is nobleness in thee; but there is some degree of folly.

ANT. And I will die with him too, that thou mayest farther know.

CRE. Go—thou shalt not slay my son—quit the land.

ŒDIPUS, ANTIGONE, CHORUS.

ŒD. O daughter, I praise thee indeed for thy zealous intentions.

ANT. But if I were to marry, and thou suffer banishment alone, my father?

ŒD. Stay and be happy; I will bear with content mine own ills.

ANT. And who will minister to thee, blind as thou art, my father?

ŒD. Falling wherever it shall be my fate, I will lie on the ground.

ANT. But Œdipus, where is he? and the renowned Enigmas?

ŒD. Perished! one day blest me, and one day destroyed.

ANT. Ought not I then to have a share in thy woes?

ŒD. To a daughter exile with a blind father is shameful.

ANT. Not to a right-minded one however, but honourable, my father.

ŒD. Lead me now onward, that I may touch thy mother.

ANT. There: touch the aged woman with thy most dear hand.

ŒD. O mother! Oh most hapless wife!

ANT. She doth lie miserable, having all ills at once on her.

ŒD. But where is the fallen body of Eteocles, and of Polynices?

ANT. They lie extended before thee near one another.

ŒD. Place my blind hand upon their unhappy faces.

ANT. There: touch thy dead children with thy hand.

ŒD. O ye dear wrecks, unhappy, of an unhappy father.

ANT. O name of Polynices, most dear indeed to me.

ŒD. Now, my child, is the oracle of Apollo come to pass.

ANT. What? but dost thou mention evils in addition to these evils?

ŒD. That I must die an exile at Athens.

ANT. Where? what citadel of Attica will receive thee?

ŒD. The sacred Colonus, and the temple of the Equestrian God. But stay—minister to thy blind father here, since thou art desirous of sharing his exile.

ANT. Go to thy wretched banishment: stretch forth thy dear hand, O aged father, having me as thy guide, as the gale that wafts the ship.

ŒD. Behold, I go, my child, be thou my unhappy conductor.

ANT. We are, we are indeed unhappy above all Theban virgins.

ŒD. Where shall I place my aged footstep? Bring my staff, my child.

ANT. This way, this way come; here, here place thy foot, thou that hast the strength of a dream.

ŒD. Alas! alas! for my most wretched flight!—To drive me, old as I am, from my country—Alas! alas! the dreadful, dreadful things that I have suffered!

ANT. What suffered! what suffered<sup>d</sup>! Vengeance sees not the wicked, nor repays the foolishness of mortals.

ŒD. That man am I, who mounted aloft to the victorious heavenly song, having solved the dark enigma of the virgin Sphinx.

ANT. Dost thou bring up again the glory of the Sphinx? Forbear from speaking of thy former successes. These wretched sufferings awaited thee, O father, being an exile from thy country to die any where. Leaving with my dear virgins tears for my loss, I depart far from my country, wandering in state not like a virgin's.

ŒD. Oh! the excellency of thy mind!

ANT. In the calamities of a father at least it will make me glorious. Wretched am I, on account of the insults offered to thee and to my brother, who has perished from the family, a corse denied sepulture, unhappy, whom, even if I must die, my father, I will cover with secret earth.

ŒD. Go, shew thyself to thy companions.

ANT. They have enough of my lamentations.

ŒD. But make thy supplications at the altars.

ANT. They have a satiety of my woes.

ŒD. Go then, where stands the fane of Bacchus unapproached, on the mountains of the Mænades.

ANT. To whom I formerly, clad in the skin of the Theban fawn, danced the sacred step of Semele on the mountains, conferring a thankless favour on the Gods?

<sup>d</sup> The old reading was *τί τλάς*; *τί τλάς*; making it the present tense. Brunck first edited it as it stands in Porson. Antigone repeats the last word of her father.



**ŒD.** O ye inhabitants of my illustrious country, behold, I, this Œdipus, who alone stayed the violence of the bloodthirsty Sphinx, now, dishonoured, forsaken, miserable, am banished from the land. Yet why do I bewail these things, and lament in vain? For the necessity of fate proceeding from the Gods a mortal must endure.

**CHO.** O greatly glorious Victory, mayest thou uphold my life, and cease not from crowning me!



**M E D E A.**

## PERSONS REPRESENTED.

NURSE.

TUTOR.

MEDEA.

CHORUS OF CORINTHIAN WOMEN.

CREON.

JASON.

ÆGEUS.

MESSENGER.

SONS OF MEDEA.

*The Scene lies in the vestibule of the palace of Jason at Corinth.*

## THE ARGUMENT.



**J**ASON, having come to Corinth, and bringing with him Medea, espouses Glauce, the daughter of Creon, King of Corinth. But Medea, on the point of being banished from Corinth by Creon, having asked to remain one day, and having obtained her wish, sends to Glauce, by the hands of her sons, presents as an acknowledgment for the favour, a robe and a golden chaplet. Which she puts on and perishes; Creon also having embraced his daughter is destroyed. But Medea when she had slain her children, escapes to Athens, in a chariot drawn by winged dragons, which she received from the Sun, and there marries Ægeus son of Pandion.



# M E D E A.



## NURSE OF MEDEA.

**WOULD** that the vessel Argo had not winged her way to the Colchian land through the Cyanean Symplegades<sup>a</sup>, and that the pine felled in the forests of Pelion had never fallen, nor had caused the hands of the chiefs to row<sup>b</sup>, who went in search of the golden fleece for Pelias; for neither then would my mistress Medea have sailed to the towers of the Iolcian land, deeply smitten in her mind with the love of Jason: nor having persuaded the daughters of Pelias to slay their father would she have inhabited this country of Corinth with her husband and her children, pleasing indeed by her flight<sup>c</sup> the citizens to whose land she came, and herself concurring in every respect with Jason; which is the surest support of conjugal happiness, when the wife is not estranged from the husband. But now every thing

<sup>a</sup> The Cyanææ Petra, or Symplegades, were two rocks in the mouth of the Euxine sea, said to meet together with prodigious violence, and crush the passing ships. See Pindar. Pyth. iv. 386.

<sup>b</sup> ἑρεμῶσαι signifies to make to row; ἑρεμῆσαι, to row. In the same sense the two verbs derived from πόλεμος are used, πολεμῶω signifying ad bellum excito; πολεμέω, bellum gero.

<sup>c</sup> Elmsley reads φυγή in the nominative case, “*a flight indeed pleasing,*” etc.

is at variance, and the dearest ties are weakened. For having betrayed his own children, and my mistress, Jason reposes in royal wedlock, having married the daughter of Creon, who is prince of this land. But Medea the unhappy, dishonoured, calls on his oaths, and recalls the hands they plighted, the greatest pledge of fidelity, and invokes the Gods to witness what return she meets with from Jason. And she lies without tasting food, having sunk her body in grief, dissolving all her tedious time in tears, after she had once known that she had been injured by her husband, neither raising her eye, nor lifting her countenance from the ground; but as the rock, or the wave of the sea, does she listen to her friends when advised. Save that sometimes having turned her snow-white neck she to herself bewails her dear father, and her country, and her house, having betrayed which she hath come hither with a man who has now dishonoured her. And she wretched hath discovered from affliction what it is not to forsake one's paternal country. But she hates her children, nor is she delighted at beholding them: but I fear her, lest she form some new design: for violent is her mind, nor will it endure to suffer ills. I know her, and I fear her, lest she should force the sharpened sword through her heart, or even should murder the princess and him who married her, and after that receive some greater ill. For she is violent; he who engages with her in enmity will not with ease at least sing the song of victory. But these her children are coming hither having ceased from their exercises, nothing mindful of their mother's ills, for the mind of youth is not wont to grieve.



TUTOR, WITH THE SONS OF MEDEA, NURSE.

TUT. O thou ancient possession of my mistress's house, why dost thou stand at the gates preserving thus thy solitude, bewailing to thyself our misfortunes? How, doth Medea wish to be left alone without thee?

NUR. O aged man, attendant on the children of Jason, to faithful servants the affairs of their masters turning out ill are a calamity, and lay hold upon their feelings. For I have arrived at such a height of grief that desire hath stolen on me to come forth hence and tell the misfortunes of Medea to the earth and heaven.

TUT. Does not she wretched yet receive any respite from her grief?

NUR. I envy thy ignorance; her woe is at its rise, and not even yet at its height.

TUT. O unwise woman, if it is allowable to say this of one's lords, since she knows nothing of later ills.

NUR. But what is this, O aged man? grudge not to tell me.

TUT. Nothing: I have repented even of what was said before.

NUR. Do not, I beseech you by your beard, conceal it from your fellow-servant; for I will preserve silence, if it be necessary, on these subjects.

TUT. I heard from some one who was saying, not appearing to listen, having approached the places where dice is played, where the elder sit, around the hallowed fount of Pirene, that the king of this land, Creon, intends to banish from the Corinthian country these children, together with their mother; whether this report be true, however, I know not; but I wish this may not be the case.

banish

NUR. And will Jason endure to see his children suffer this, even although he is at enmity with their mother?

TUT. Ancient alliances are deserted for new, and he is no friend to this family.

NUR. We perish then, if to the old we shall add a new ill, before the former be exhausted<sup>d</sup>.

TUT. But do thou, for it is not seasonable that my mistress should know this, restrain your tongue, and be silent on this report.

NUR. O my children, do you hear what your father is towards you? Yet may he not perish, for he is my master, yet he is found to be treacherous towards his friends.

TUT. And what man is not? dost thou only now know this, that every one loves himself dearer than his neighbour<sup>e</sup>, some indeed with justice, but others even for the sake of gain, unless it be that<sup>f</sup> their father loves not these at least on account of new nuptials.

NUR. Go within the house, my children, for all will be well. But do thou keep these as much as possible out of the way, and let them not approach their mother, deranged through grief. For but now I saw her looking with wildness in her eyes on these, as about to execute some design, nor will she cease from her fury, I well know, before she overwhelm some one with it; upon her enemies however and not her friends may she execute her dark purposes.

<sup>d</sup> Literally, *Before we have drained this to the very dregs.* So Virgil, *Æn.* iv. 14. *Quæ bella exhausta canebat!*

<sup>e</sup> Ter. And. Act. ii. Sc. 5. *Omnes sibi malle melius esse quam alteri.* Act. iv. Sc. 1. *Proximus sum egomet mihi.*

<sup>f</sup> Elmsley reads *καὶ* for *εἰ*, "*And their father,*" etc.

MEDEA (*within.*) Wretch that I am, and miserable on account of my misfortunes, alas me! would I might perish!

NUR. Thus it is, my children; your mother excites her heart, excites her fury. Hasten as quick as possible within the house, and come not near her sight, nor approach her, but guard against the fierce temper and violent nature of her self-willed mind. Go now, go as quick as possible within. But it is evident that the cloud of grief raised up from the beginning will quickly burst forth with greater fury; what I pray will her soul, great in rage, implacable, irritated by ills, perform!

fierce

MED. Alas! alas! I wretched have suffered, have suffered treatment worthy of great lamentation; O ye accursed children of an hated mother, may ye perish with your father, and may the whole house fall.

divina

NUR. Alas! alas! me miserable! but why should your children share their father's error? Why dost thou hate these? Alas me, my children, how beyond measure do I grieve least ye suffer any evil! Dreadful are the dispositions of tyrants, and somehow in few things controlled, in most absolute, they with difficulty lay aside their passion. The being accustomed then<sup>s</sup> to live in mediocrity of life is the better: may it be my lot then to grow old if not in splendour, at least in security. For, in the first place, even to mention the name of moderation carries with it superiority, but to use it is by far the best conduct for men; but excess of fortune brings more power to men than is convenient<sup>h</sup>; and has brought greater woes upon families, when the Deity be enraged.

<sup>s</sup> In Elmsley τὸ γὰρ εἰθίσθαι, "for the being accustomed," etc.

<sup>h</sup> δὺναται here signifies ἰσχύει, σθένει; and in this sense it is repeatedly

## NURSE, CHORUS.

CHOR. I heard the voice, I heard the cry of the unhappy Colchian; is not she yet appeased? but, O aged matron, tell me; for within the apartment with double doors I heard her cry; nor am I delighted, O woman, with the griefs of the family, since those things which are done are not grateful.

NUR. The family is not; these things are gone already: for he possesses the bed of royalty; but she, my mistress, is melting away her life in her chamber, in no way soothing her mind by the advice of any one of her friends.

MED. Alas! alas! may the flame of heaven rush through my head, what does it profit me to live any longer. Alas! alas! may I rest myself in death, having left an hated life.

CHOR. Dost thou hear, O Jove, and earth, and light, the cry which the wretched bride utters? why I pray should this insatiable love of the marriage bed hasten thee, O vain woman, to death? Pray not for this. But if thy husband courts a new bed, be not thus<sup>i</sup> enraged with him. Jove will avenge these wrongs for thee; waste not thyself so, bewailing thy husband.

MED. O great Themis and revered Diana, do ye behold what I suffer, having bound my accursed husband by powerful oaths? Whom may I at some time see and his bride torn piecemeal with their very houses,

used: *οὐδένα καιρὸν*, in this place, is not to be interpreted "intemperate," but "immoderate, supra modum." For this signification consult Stephens's Thesaurus, word *καιρός*. *Elmsley*.

<sup>i</sup> ὄρε is used in this sense v. 49, 687. 901, of this Play.

who dare to injure me first. — O my father, O my city, whom I basely abandoned, having slain my brother.

NUR. Do ye hear what she says, and how she invokes Themis hearing the vow, and Jove who is considered the dispenser of oaths to mortals? It is not possible that my mistress will lull her rage to rest on any trivial circumstance.

CHOR. By what means could she come into our sight, and hear the voice of our discourse, if she would by any means remit her fierce anger and her fury of mind. Let not my zeal however be wanting ever to my friends. But go and conduct her hither from without the house, my friend, and tell her this: hasten, before she injure in any way those within, for this grief of her's is increased to a great height.

NUR. I will do it, but I fear that I shall not persuade my mistress; nevertheless I will give you this favour of my labour. And yet with the aspect of a lioness that has just brought forth does she look sternly on her attendants when any one approaches near attempting to address her. But thou wouldest not err in calling men of old foolish and nothing wise, who invented songs, for festivals, for banquets, and for suppers, the delights of life that charm the ear; but no mortal has discovered how to sooth with music and with varied strains those bitter pangs, from which death and dreadful misfortunes overthrow families. And yet for men to assuage these griefs with music were gain; but where the plenteous banquet is furnished, why raise they the song in vain? for the present bounty of the feast brings pleasure of itself to men.

CHOR. I heard the dismal sound of groans, and in a

shrill voice she vents her bitter<sup>k</sup> anguish on the traitor to her bed, her faithless husband—and suffering wrongs she calls upon the Goddess Themis, arbitress of oaths, daughter of Jove, who conducted her to the opposite coast of Greece, across the sea by night, over the salt straits of the boundless ocean.

MEDEA, CHORUS.

MED. Ye Corinthian dames, I have come from out my palace; do not in any wise blame me; for I have known many men who have been<sup>l</sup> renowned, some who have lived far from public notice, and others in the world; but those of a retired turn have gained for themselves a character of infamy and indolence. For justice dwells not in the eyes of man<sup>m</sup>, whoever, before he can well discover the disposition of a man, hates him at sight, in no way wronged by him. But it is necessary for a stranger exactly to conform himself to the state, nor would I praise the native, whoever becoming insolent, is insolent to his fellow-citizens through ignorance. But this unexpected event that hath fallen upon me hath destroyed my spirit:—I am going, and having given up the pleasure of life I am desirous to meet death, my friends. For he on whom my all

<sup>k</sup> μογερά is best taken with Reiske as the accusative plural, though the Scholiast considers it the nominative singular. *Elmsley.*

<sup>l</sup> γεγῶτας need not be translated as νομιζομένους, the sense is ὄντας: so ἀνθάδης γεγῶς, line 225.

<sup>m</sup> That is, the character of man cannot be discovered by the countenance: so Juvenal,

Fronti nulla fides.

ὄστις though in the singular number refers to βροτῶν in the plural: a similar construction is met with in Homer, II. Γ. 279.

ἀνθρώπους τίνυσθον, ὅ τις κ' ἐπίερκον ἠρόσση.

rested, as you well know, my husband, has turned out the basest of men. But of all things as many as have life and intellect, we women are the most wretched race. Who indeed first must purchase a husband with excess of money, and receive him a lord of our persons; for this is a still greater ill than the former. And in this is the greatest risk, whether we receive a bad one or a good one; for divorces bring not good fame to women, nor is it possible to repudiate one's husband. But on passing to new tempers and new laws, one need be a prophetess, as one cannot learn of one's self, what sort of consort one shall most likely experience. And if with us carefully performing these things an husband shall dwell not imposing on us a yoke with severity, en- viable is our life; if not, to die is better. But a man, when he is displeased living with those at home, having gone abroad is wont to relieve the uneasiness of thought, having recourse either to some friend or compeer. But we must look but to one person. But they say of us that we live a life of ease at home, but they are fighting with the spear; judging ill, since I would rather thrice stand in arms, than once suffer the pangs of child-birth. But, for the same argument comes not home to you and me, this is thy city, and thy father's house, thine are both the luxuries of life, and the so- ciety of friends; but I being destitute, cityless, am wronged by my husband, brought as a prize from a foreign land, having neither mother, nor brother, nor relation to afford me shelter from this calamity. So much then I wish to obtain from you, if any plan or method be de- vised by me to repay with justice these injuries on my husband, and on him who gave his daughter, and on

her to whom he was married<sup>n</sup>, that you would be silent; for a woman in other respects is full of fear, and timid to look upon deeds of courage and the sword; but when she is injured in her bed, no other disposition is more blood-thirsty.

CHOR. I will do this; for with justice, Medea, wilt thou avenge thyself on thy husband, and I do not wonder that you lament your misfortunes. But I see Creon monarch of this land advancing, the messenger of new counsels.

CREON, MEDEA, CHORUS.

CRE. Thee of gloomy countenance, and enraged with thy husband, Medea, I command to depart in exile from out of this land, taking with thee thy two children, and not to delay in any way, since I am the arbiter of this edict, and I will not return back to my palace, until I shall drive thee beyond the boundaries of this realm.

MED. Alas! alas! I wretched am utterly destroyed, for my enemies stretch out every cable against me; nor is there any easy escape from this storm, but I will speak, although suffering injurious treatment; for what, Creon, dost thou drive me from this land?

CRE. I fear thee, (there is no need for me to wrap my words in obscurity,) lest thou do my child some

<sup>n</sup> Grammarians teach us that *γαμῆν* is applied to the husband, *γαμῆσαι* to the wife; and this rule will generally be found to hold good. We must either then read ἡ τ' ἐγῆματο, which Porson does not object to, and Elmsley adopts; or understand ἐγῆματο in an ironical sense, in the spirit of Martial's *Uxori nubere nolo meæ*: in the latter case ἡ τ' ἐγῆματο should be read, (not ἡν τ',) as being the proper syntax.



irremediable mischief. And many circumstances are in unison with this dread. Thou art wise, and skilled in many evil sciences, and thou art exasperated, deprived of thy husband's bed. And I hear that thou threatenest, as they tell me, to wreak some deed of vengeance on the betrother, and the espouser, and the espoused; against this then, before I suffer, will I guard. Better is it for me now to incur enmity from you, than softened by your words afterwards greatly to lament it.

MED. Alas! alas! not now for the first time, but often, Creon, hath this opinion injured me, and worked me much woe. But whatever man is prudent, let him never educate his children too deep in wisdom. For, independent of the other charges of idleness which they meet with, they find hostile envy from their fellow-citizens. For holding out to fools some new-discovered wisdom, thou wilt seem to be useless and not wise. And being judged superior to others who seem to have some varied knowledge, thou wilt appear offensive in the city. But even I myself share this fortune; for being wise, to some I am an object of envy, but to others unsuited; but I am not very wise. Thou then fearest me, lest thou suffer some grievous mischief°. My affairs are not in a state, fear me not, Creon, so as to offend against princes. For in what hast thou injured me? Thou hast given thy daughter to whom thy mind led thee; but I hate my husband: but thou, I think, didst these things in prudence. And now I envy not that thy affairs are prospering; make your alliances, be successful; but suffer me to dwell in this land, for

° The primary signification of *πλημμελής* is *absonus, out of tune*: hence is easily deduced the signification in which it is often found in Euripides. The word *πλημμελήσας* occurs in the *Phœnissæ*, l. 1669.

although injured will I keep silence, overcome by my superiors.

CRE. Thou speakest soft words to the ear, but within my mind I have my fears, lest thou meditate some evil intent. And so much the less do I trust thee than before. For a woman that is quick to anger, and a man likewise, is easier to guard against, than one that is crafty and keeps silence. But begone as quick as possible, make no more words; since this is decreed, and thou hast no art, by which thou wilt stay with us, being hostile to me.

MED. No I beseech you by your knees, and your newly married daughter.

CRE. Thou wastest words; for thou wilt never persuade me.

MED. Wilt thou then banish me, nor reverence my prayers?

CRE. For I do not love thee better than my own family.

MED. O my country, how I remember thee now!

CRE. For next to my children it is much the dearest thing to me.

MED. Alas! alas! how great an ill is love to man!

CRE. That is, I think, as fortune also shall attend it.

MED. Jove, let it not escape thine eye, who is the cause of these misfortunes.

CRE. Begone, fond woman, and free me from these cares.

MED. Care indeed<sup>p</sup>; and do not I experience cares?

<sup>p</sup> Elmsley approves of the reading adopted by Porson, though he has given in his text

*πονοῦμεν ἡμεῖς, κ' οὐ πόγων κεχρήμεθα.*

“*We are oppressed with cares, and want not other cares,*” as being more likely to have come from Euripides.

CRE. Quickly shalt thou be driven hence by force by the hands of my domestics.

MED. No, I pray not this at least: but I implore thee, Creon.

CRE. Thou wilt give trouble, woman, it seems<sup>9</sup>.

MED. I will go; I do not ask to obtain this of you.

CRE. Why then dost thou resist, and wilt not depart from these realms?

MED. Permit me to remain here this one day, and to bring my purpose to a conclusion, in what way we shall fly, and to make provision for my sons, since their father in no way regards providing for his children; but pity them, for thou also art the father of children; and it is probable that thou hast tenderness; for of myself I have no care whether I may suffer banishment, but I weep for them experiencing this calamity.

CRE. My disposition is least of all imperious, and through feeling pity in many cases have I injured myself. And now I see that I am doing wrong, O lady, but nevertheless thou shalt obtain thy request; but this I warn thee, if to-morrow's light of the God of day shall behold thee and the children within the confines of these realms, thou shalt die: this word is spoken in truth. But now if thou must stay, remain here yet one day, for thou wilt not do any horrid deed of which I have dread.

#### MEDEA, CHORUS.

CHOR. Unhappy woman! alas wretched on account

<sup>9</sup> ὡς ζοικας is here used for the more common expression ὡς ζοικεν. So Herodotus, Clio clv. οὐ παύσσονται οἱ Λυδοὶ, ὡς οἴκασι, πράγματα παρέχοντες, καὶ αὐτοὶ ἔχοντες. See also Hecuba 801.

of thy griefs! whither wilt thou turn? what hospitality, or house, or country wilt thou find a refuge for these ills? how the Deity hath led thee, Medea, into a pathless tide of woes!

MED. Ill hath it been done on every side. Who will gainsay it? but these things are not in this way, do not yet think it. Still is there a contest to those lately married, and to those allied to them no small affliction. For dost thou think I ever would have fawned upon this man, if I were not to gain something, or form some plan? I would not even have addressed him. I would not even have touched him with my hands. But he hath arrived at such a height of folly, as that, when it was in his power to have crushed my plans, by banishing me from this land, he hath granted me to stay this day in which three of mine enemies will I put to death, the father, the bride, and my husband. But having in my power many resources of destruction against them, I know not, my friends, which I shall first attempt. Whether shall I consume the bridal house with fire, or force the sharpened sword through her heart having entered the chamber by stealth where the couch is spread? But one thing is against me; if I should be caught entering the house and prosecuting my plans, by my death I shall afford laughter for my foes. Best then is it to pursue the straight path, in which I am most skilled, to take them off by poison. Let it be so. And suppose them dead: what city will receive me? What hospitable stranger affording a land of safety and a faithful home will protect my person? There is none. Waiting then yet a little time, if any tower of safety shall appear to us, I will proceed to this murder in treachery and silence. But if ill fortune that leaves me

without resource force me, I myself having grasped the sword, although I should die, will kill them, and will rush to the extreme height of daring. For never, I swear by my mistress whom I revere most of all, and have chosen for my assistant, Hecate, who dwells in the inmost recesses of my house, shall any one of them wring my heart with grief with impunity. Bitter and mournful to them will I make these nuptials, and bitter this alliance, and my flight from this laud. But come, spare none of these sciences in which thou art skilled, Medea, deliberating and plotting. Proceed to the deed of terrors: now is the time of resolution: seest thou what thou art suffering? Ill doth it become thee to incur ridicule from the race of Sisyphus, and from the nuptials of Jason, who art sprung from a noble father, and from the sun. And thou art skilled. Besides also we women are by nature, to good actions of the least capacity, but the most cunning inventors of every ill.

CHOR. The waters of the hallowed streams flow upwards to their sources, and justice and every thing is reversed. The counsels of men are treacherous, and no longer is the faith of heaven firm. But fame changes, so that my sex may have the glory<sup>r</sup>. Honour cometh to the female race; no longer shall opprobrious fame oppress the women. But the Muses shall cease from their ancient strains, from celebrating our perfidy. For Phoebus, leader of the choir, gave not to our genius the heavenly music of the lyre, since they would in turn

<sup>r</sup> Beck interprets this passage, "Mea quidem vita ut non habeat laudem, "fama obstat." Heath translates it, "Jam in contrariam partem tendens "fama efficit, ut mea quoque vita laudem habeat." We are told by the Scholiast, that by *βιωρὰν* is to be understood *φύσιν*.

have raised a strain against the race of men. But time of old hath much to say both of our life and the life of men. But thou hast sailed from thy father's house with maddened heart, having passed through the double rocks of the ocean, and thou dwellest in a foreign land, having lost the shelter of thy widowed bed, wretched woman, and art driven dishonoured and exile from this land. The reverence of oaths is gone, nor does shame any longer dwell in mighty Greece, but hath fled away through the air. But thou helpless woman hast neither father's house to afford you shelter from your woes, and another more powerful queen of the nuptial bed rules over the house.

JASON, MEDEA, CHORUS.

JAS. Not now for the first time, but often have I perceived that fierce anger is an irremediable ill. For though it was in your power to inhabit this land and this house, bearing with gentleness the determination of thy superiors, by thy rash words thou shalt be banished from this land. And to me indeed it is of no importance; never cease from saying that Jason is the worst of men. But for what has been said by thee against the royal family, think it the greatest good fortune that thou art punished by banishment only. I indeed was always employed in diminishing the anger of the enraged princes, and was willing that thou shouldst remain. But thou remittest not of thy folly, always reviling the ruling powers; wherefore thou shalt be banished from the land. But nevertheless even after this am I come, not wearied with my friends, providing thus much, O woman, that thou mightest not depart with thy children, either without money, or in want of any thing. Ban-

ishment draws many misfortunes with it. For although thou hatest me, I never could wish thee evil.

MED. O thou vilest of men, (for this is the greatest reproach I have in my power with my tongue to tell thee, for thy unmanly cowardice,) hast thou come to us, hast thou come, who art most hateful? This is not fortitude, or confidence, to look in the face of friends whom thou hast injured, but the worst of all diseases among men, impudence. But thou hast done well in coming. For both I shall be lightened in my heart whilst reviling thee, and thou wilt be pained at hearing me. But I will first begin to speak from the first circumstances. I preserved thee (as those Greeks well know as many as embarked with thee on board the same ship *Argo*) when sent to master the fire-breathing bulls with the yoke, and to sow the fatal seed: and having slain the dragon who watching around the golden fleece guarded it with spiry folds, a sleepless guard, I raised up to thee a light of safety. But I myself having betrayed my father, and my house, came to the *Peliotic Iolcos*<sup>s</sup> with thee, with more readiness than prudence. And I slew *Pelias* by a death which it is most miserable to die, by the hands of his own children, and I freed thee from every fear. { And having experienced these services from me, thou vilest of men, thou hast betrayed me and hast procured for thyself a new bed, children being born to thee, for if thou wert still childless, it would be pardonable in thee to be enamoured of this alliance. But the faith of oaths is vanished: nor

<sup>s</sup> *Iolcos* was a city of *Thessaly*, distant about seven stadia from the sea, where the parents of *Jason* lived: *Pelion* was both a mountain and city of *Thessaly*, close to *Iolcos*; whence *Iolcos* is called *Peliotic*.

can I discover whether thou thinkest that the former Gods are not still in power, or whether new laws are now laid down for men, since thou art at least conscious of being perjured towards me. Alas! this right hand which thou hast often touched, and these knees, since in vain have I been polluted by a wicked husband, and have failed in my hopes. Come, (for I will converse with thee as with a friend, not expecting to receive any benefit from thee at least, but nevertheless I will; for when questioned thou wilt appear more base;) now whither shall I turn? Whether to my father's house, which I betrayed for thee, and my country, and came hither? or to the miserable daughters of Pelias? friendly would they indeed receive me in their house, whose father I slew. For thus it is: I am in enmity with my friends at home; but those whom I ought not to injure, by obliging thee, I make my enemies. On which account in return for this thou hast made me to be called happy by many dames through Greece, and in thee I, wretch that I am, have an admirable and faithful husband, if cast out at least I shall fly this land, deserted by my friends, lonely with thy lonely children. Fair renown indeed to the new married bridegroom, that his children are wandering in poverty, and I also who preserved thee. O Jove, why I pray hast thou given to men certain proofs of the gold which is adulterate, but no mark is set by nature on the person of men by which one may distinguish the bad man.

CHOR. Dreadful is that anger and irremediable, when friends with friends kindle strife.

JAS. It befits me, it seems, not to be weak in argument, but as the prudent pilot of a vessel, with all the sail that can be hoisted, to run from out of thy violent



abuse, O woman. But I, since thou thus much vauntest thy favours, think that Venus alone both of Gods and men was the protectress of my voyage. But thou hast a fickle mind, but it is an invidious account to go through, how love compelled thee with his inevitable arrows to preserve my life. But I will not follow up arguments with too great accuracy, for where thou hast assisted me it is well. Moreover thou hast received more at least from my safety than thou gavest, as I will explain to thee. First of all thou dwellest in Greece instead of a foreign land, and thou learnest what justice is, and to enjoy laws, not to be directed by mere force. And all the Grecians have seen that thou art wise, and thou hast renown; but if thou wert dwelling in the extreme confines of that land, there would not have been fame of thee. But may neither gold in my house be my lot, nor to attune the strain more sweet than Orpheus if my fortune be not conspicuous. So much then have I said of my toils; for thou first broughtest forward this debate of words. But with regard to those reproaches which thou heapest on me for my royal marriage, in this will I shew first that I have been wise, in the next place moderate, thirdly a great friend to thee, and my children: but be silent. After I had come hither from the Iolcian land bringing with me many grievous calamities; what measure more fortunate than this could I have invented, than, an exile as I was, to marry the daughter of the monarch? not, by which thou art grated, loathing thy bed, nor smitten with desire of a new bride, nor having emulation of a numerous offspring, for those born to me are sufficient, nor do I find fault with that; but that (which is of the greatest consequence) we might live honourably, and might not

be in want, knowing well that every friend flies out of the way of a poor man; and that I might bring up my children worthy of my house, and that having begotten brothers to those children sprung from thee, I might place them on the same footing, and having united the family, I might flourish; for both thou hast some need of children, and to me it were advantageous to advance my present progeny by means of the children which might arise; have I determined ill? not even thou couldest say so, if thy bed did not gall thee. But thus far have you come, that your bed being safe, you women think that you have every thing. But if any misfortune befall that, the most excellent and fairest objects you make the most hateful. It were well then that men should generate children from some other source, and that the female race should not exist, and thus there would not have been any evil among men†.

CHOR. Jason, thou hast well adorned these arguments of thine, but nevertheless to me, although I speak reluctantly, thou appearest, in betraying thy wife, to act unjustly.

MED. Surely I am in many things different from many mortals, for in my judgment, whatever man being unjust, is deeply skilled in argument, merits the severest punishment. For vaunting that with his tongue he

† For the same sentiment more fully expressed, see Hippolytus 616—625. See also Paradise Lost, x. 890.

Oh why did God,  
 Creator wise, that peopled highest heaven  
 With spirits masculine, create at last  
 This novelty on earth, this fair defect  
 Of nature, and not fill the world at once  
 With men, as angels, without feminine!

can well gloze over injustice, he dares to work deceit, but he is not over wise. Thus do not thou also be now plausible to me, nor skilled in speaking, for one word will overthrow thee: it behoved thee, if thou wert not a bad man, to have contracted this marriage having persuaded me, and not without the knowledge of thy friends.

JAS. Well wouldest thou have lent assistance to this report, if I had mentioned the marriage to thee, who not even now endurest to lay aside this unabated rage of heart.

MED. This did not move thee, but a foreign bed would lead in its result to an old age without honour.

JAS. Be well assured of this, that I did not form this alliance with the princess, which I now hold, for the sake of the woman, but, as I said before also, wishing to preserve thee, and to beget royal children brothers to my sons, a support to our house.

MED. Let not a splendid life of bitterness be my lot, nor wealth, which rends my heart.

JAS. Dost thou know how to alter thy prayers, and appear wiser? Let not good things ever seem to you bitter, nor when in prosperity seem to be in adversity.

MED. Insult me, since thou hast a refuge, but I destitute shall fly this land.

JAS. Thou chocest this thyself, blame no one else.

MED. By doing what? by marrying and betraying thee?

JAS. By imprecating unhallowed curses on the royal family.

MED. From thy house at least am I laden with curses.

JAS. I will not dispute more of this with thee. But

if thou wishest to receive either for thyself or children any part of my wealth as an assistant on thy flight, speak, since I am ready to give with an unsparing hand, and to send tokens of hospitality to my friends, who will treat you well; and refusing these thou wilt be foolish, woman, but ceasing from thine anger, thou wilt gain better treatment.

*and* MED. I will neither use thy friends, nor will I receive ought; do not give to me, for the gifts of a bad man bring no assistance.

JAS. Then I call the Gods to witness, that I wish to assist thee and thy children in every thing; but good things please thee not, but thou rejectest thy friends with audacity, wherefore shalt thou grieve the more.'

MED. Begone, for thou art captured by desire of thy new bride, tarrying so long without the palace; wed her, for perhaps, but with the assistance of the God shall it be said, thou wilt make such a marriage alliance, as thou wilt hereafter wish to renounce. /

CHOR. The loves, when they come too impetuously, have given neither good report nor virtue among men, but if Venus come with moderation, no other Goddess is so benign. Never, O my mistress, mayest thou send forth against me from thy golden bow thy inevitable shaft, having steeped it in desire. But may temperance preserve me, the noblest gift of heaven; never may dreaded Venus, having smitten my mind for another's bed, heap upon me jealous passions and unabated quarrels, but approving the peaceful union, may she quick of perception sit in judgment on the bed of women. O my country, and my house, never may I be an outcast of my city, having a life scarce to be endured through poverty, the most lamentable of all woes. By death, by

death, may I before that be subdued, having lived to accomplish that day; but no greater misfortunes is there than to be deprived of one's paternal country. We have seen it, nor have we to speak from other's accounts; for thee, neither city or friend hath pitied, though suffering the most dreadful anguish. Thankless may he perish who desires not to assist his friends, having unlocked the pure treasures of his mind; never shall he be friend to me.

ÆGEUS, MEDEA, CHORUS.

ÆG. Medea, hail! for no one hath known a more honourable salutation to address to friends than this.

MED. Hail thou also, son of the wise Pandion, Ægeus, coming from what quarter dost thou tread the plain of this land?

ÆG. Having left the ancient oracle of Phœbus.

MED. But wherefore wert thou sent to the prophetic centre of the earth?

ÆG. Enquiring of the God how offspring may arise to me.

MED. By the Gods, tell me, dost thou live this life hitherto childless?

ÆG. Childless I am, by the disposal of some deity.

MED. Hast thou a wife, or knowest thou not the marriage bed?

ÆG. I am not destitute of the connubial bed.

MED. What then did Apollo tell thee respecting thy offspring?

ÆG. Words deeper than a man can form opinion of.

MED. Is it allowable for me to know the oracle of the God?

ÆG. Certainly, inasmuch as it needs also a deep-skilled mind.

MED. What then did he say? Speak, if I may hear.

ÆG. That I was not to loose the projecting foot of the vessel—

MED. Before thou didst what, or came to what land?

ÆG. Before I revisit my paternal hearth.

MED. Then as desiring what dost thou direct thy voyage to this land?

ÆG. There is one Pittheus, king of the country of Trazene.

MED. The most pious son, as report says, of Pelops.

ÆG. To him I wish to communicate the oracle of the God.

MED. For he is a wise man, and versed in such matters.

ÆG. And to me at least the dearest of all my friends in war.

MED. Mayest thou prosper, and obtain what thou desirest.

ÆG. But why is thine eye and thy colour thus faded?

MED. Ægeus, my husband is the worst of all men.

ÆG. What sayest thou? tell me all thy troubles.

MED. Jason wrongs me, having never suffered wrong from me.

ÆG. Having done what? tell me more clearly.

MED. He hath here a wife besides me, mistress of the house.

ÆG. Hath he dared to commit this disgraceful action?

MED. Be assured he has ; but me his former friends are dishonoured.

ÆG. Enamoured of her, or hating thy bed?

MED. Smitten with violent love indeed, he was faithless to his friends.

ÆG. Let him perish then, since, as you say, he is a bad man.

MED. He was charmed to receive an alliance with princes.

ÆG. And who gives the bride to him? finish the account, I beg.

MED. Creon, who is monarch of this Corinthian land.

ÆG. Pardonable was it then that thou art grieved, O lady.

MED. I perish, and in addition to this am I banished from this land.

ÆG. By whom? thou art mentioning another fresh misfortune.

MED. Creon drives me an exile out of this land of Corinth.

ÆG. And does Jason suffer it? I praise not this.

MED. By his words he does not, but in reality he wishes to endure my banishment: but by this thy beard I entreat thee, and by these thy knees, and I become thy suppliant, pity me, pity this unfortunate woman, nor behold me going forth in exile abandoned, but receive me at thy hearth in thy country and thy house. Thus by the Gods shall thy desire of children be accomplished to thee, and thou thyself shall die in happiness. But thou knowest not what this fortune is that thou hast found; but I will free thee from being childless, and I will cause thee to raise up offspring, such charms I know.

ÆG. On many accounts, O lady, am I willing to confer this favour on thee, first on account of the Gods, then of the children, whose birth thou holdest forth; for on this point else I am totally sunk in despair. But thus am I determined; if thou comest to my country, I will endeavour to receive thee with hospitality, being a just man; so much however I beforehand apprise thee of, O lady, I shall not be willing to lead thee with me from this land; but if thou comest thyself to my house, thou shalt stay there in safety, and to no one will I give thee up. But do thou of thyself withdraw thy foot from this country, for I wish to be without blame even among strangers.

MED. It shall be so, but if there were a pledge of this given to me, I should have all things from thee in a noble manner.

ÆG. Dost thou not trust me? what is thy difficulty?

MED. I trust thee; but the house of Pelias is mine enemy, and Creon too; to these then, wert thou bound by oaths, thou wouldest not give me up from the country, should they attempt to drag me thence. But having agreed by words alone, and without calling the Gods to witness, thou mightest be their friend, and perhaps be persuaded by an embassy; for weak is my state, but theirs are riches, and a royal house.

ÆG. Thou hast spoken much prudence, O lady. But if it seems fit to thee that I should do this, I refuse not. For to me also this seems the safest plan, that I should have some pretext to shew to your enemies, and thy safety is better secured; propose the Gods that I am to invoke.

MED. Swear by the earth, and by the sun the father of my father, and join the whole race of Gods.



ÆG. That I will do what thing, or what not do? speak.

MED. That thou wilt neither thyself ever cast me forth from out of thy country, nor, if any one of my enemies desire to drag me thence, that thou wilt whilst living, give me up willingly.

ÆG. I swear by the earth, and the hallowed<sup>u</sup> majesty of the sun, and by all the Gods, to abide by what I hear from thee.

MED. It is sufficient; but what wilt thou endure shouldst thou not abide by this oath?

ÆG. That which befalls impious men.

MED. Go with blessings; for every thing is well. And I will come as quick as possible to thy city, having performed what I intend, and having obtained what I desire.

CHOR. But may the son of Maia the king, the guide, conduct thee safely to thy house, and the plans of those things, which thou anxiously keepest in thy mind, mayest thou bring to completion, since, Ægeus, thou hast appeared to us to be a noble man. /

#### MEDEA, CHORUS.

MED. O Jove, and thou vengeance of Jove, and thou light of the sun, now, my friends, shall I obtain a splendid victory over my enemies, and I have struck into the path. Now is there hope that my enemies will suffer punishment. For this man, where I was most at a loss, hath appeared a harbour to my plans. From him will I make fast my cable from the stern, having come to the town and citadel of Pallas. But now will I communicate all my plans to thee; but receive my

<sup>u</sup> Elmsley reads λαμπρόν, "splendid."

words not as attuned to pleasure. Having sent one of my domestics, I will ask Jason to come into my presence; and when he is come, I will address gentle words to him, as that it appears to me that these his actions are both honourable, and are advantageous and well determined on<sup>x</sup>. And I will entreat him that my sons may stay; not that I would leave my children in a hostile country for my enemies to insult, but that by deceit I may slay the king's daughter. For I will send them bearing presents in their hands, both a fine wrought robe, and a golden twined wreath<sup>y</sup>. And if she take the ornaments and place them round her person, she shall perish miserably, and every one who shall touch the damsel; with such charms will I anoint the presents. Here however I finish this account; but I bewail the deed such as must next be done by me; for I shall slay my children; there is no one who shall rescue them from me; and having heaped in ruins the whole house of Jason, I will go from out this land, flying the murder of my dearest children, and having dared a deed most unhallowed. For it is not to be borne, my friends, to be derided by one's enemies. Let things take their course; what gain is it to me to live longer?

<sup>x</sup> Elmsley has

“ὡς καὶ δοκεῖ μοι ταῦτα, καὶ καλῶς ἔχειν  
γάμους τυράννων, οὓς προδοῦς ἡμᾶς ἔχει,  
καὶ ζύμφορ' εἶναι, καὶ καλῶς ἐγνωσμένα.”

“that these things appear good to me, and that the alliance with the princes, which he, having forsaken me, has contracted, are both advantageous and well determined on.”

<sup>y</sup> In Elmsley this line is omitted, and instead of it is inserted

“νύμφη φέροντας, τήνδε μὴ φεύγειν χθόνα.”

“offering them to the bride, that they may not be banished from this country.”

I have neither country, nor house, nor refuge from my ills. Then erred I, when I left my father's house, persuaded by the words of a Grecian man, who with the will of the Gods shall suffer punishment from me. For neither shall he ever hereafter behold the children he had by me alive, nor shall he raise a child by his new wedded wife, since it is fated that the wretch should wretchedly perish by my spells. Let no one think me mean-spirited and weak, nor of a gentle temper, but of a contrary disposition, to my foes relentless, and to my friends kind: for the lives of such sort are most glorious.

CHOR. Since thou hast communicated this plan to me, desirous both of doing good to thee, and assisting the laws of mortals, I dissuade thee from doing this.

MED. It cannot be otherwise, but it is pardonable in thee to say this, not suffering the cruel treatment that I do.

CHOR. But wilt thou dare to slay thy two sons, O lady?

MED. For in this way will my husband be most afflicted.

CHOR. But thou at least will be the most wretched woman.

MED. Be that as it may: all intervening words are superfluous: but go, hasten, and bring Jason hither; for I make use of thee in all matters of trust. And thou wilt mention nothing of the plans determined on by me, if at least thou meanest well to thy mistress, and art a woman.

CHOR. The Athenians happy of old, and the descendants of the blessed Gods, feeding on the most exalted wisdom of a country sacred and unconquered,

always tripping elegantly through the purest atmosphere, where they say that of old the golden-haired Harmonia gave birth to the chaste nine Pierian Muses<sup>z</sup>. And they report also that Venus drawing in her breath from the stream of the fair-flowing Cephissus, breathed over their country gentle sweetly breathing gales of air; and always entwining in her hair the fragrant wreath of roses, sends the loves as assessors to wisdom; the assistants of every virtue. How then will the city of hallowed rivers<sup>a</sup>, or the country which conducts thee to friends, receive the murderer of her children, the unholy one? Consider in conjunction with others of the slaughter of thy children, consider what a murder thou wilt undertake. Do not by thy knees, by every plea<sup>b</sup>, by every prayer, we entreat you, do not murder your children; but how wilt thou acquire confidence either of mind or hand or in heart against thy children, attempting a dreadful deed of boldness? But how having darted thine eyes upon thy children, wilt thou endure the perpetration of the murder without tears? Thou wilt not<sup>c</sup> be able when thy children fall suppliant at thy feet, to imbrue thy savage hand in their wretched life-blood.

<sup>z</sup> Although the Scholiast reprobates this interpretation, it seems to be the best, nor is it any objection, that *Μνημοσύνη* is elsewhere represented as the Mother of the Muses; so much at variance is the poetry of Euripides with the received mythology of the ancients. *Elmsley*.

<sup>a</sup> The construction is *πόλις ἱερῶν ποταμῶν*; thus Thebes, Phœniss. 1. 831, is called *πύργος διδύμων ποταμῶν*. A like expression occurs in 2 Sam. xii. 27. I have fought against Rabbah, and have taken *the city of waters*, *πόλιν τῶν ὑδάτων* in the Septuagint version.

<sup>b</sup> *Elmsley* reads *πάντες*, “*we all entreat thee.*”

<sup>c</sup> *Elmsley* reads *ἢ δυνάσει* with the note of interrogation after *θυμῷ*; “*or how wilt thou be able,*” etc.

## JASON, MEDEA, CHORUS.

JAS. I am come, by thee requested ; for although thou art enraged, thou shalt not be deprived of this at least ; but I will hear what new service thou dost desire of me, lady.

MED. Jason, I entreat you to be forgiving of what has been said, but right is it that you should bear with my anger, since many friendly acts have been done by us two. But I reasoned with myself and rebuked myself ; wayward woman, why am I maddened and am enraged with those who consult well for me ? and why am I in enmity with the princes of the land and with my husband, who is acting in the most advantageous manner for us, having married a princess, and begetting brothers to my children ? Shall I not cease from my rage ? What injury do I suffer, the Gods providing well for me ? Have I not children ? And I know that I am flying the country, and am in want of friends. Revolving this in my mind I perceive that I had much imprudence, and was enraged without reason. Now then I approve of this, and thou appearest to me to be prudent, having added this alliance to us ; but I was foolish, who ought to share in these plans, and to join in adorning and to stand by the bed, and to delight with thee that thy bride was enamoured of thee ; but we women are as we are, I will not speak evil of the sex ; wherefore it is not right that you should put yourself on an equality with the evil, nor repay folly for folly. I give up, and say that then I erred in judgment, but now I have determined on these things better. O my children, my children, come forth, leave the house, come forth, salute, and address your father with me, and be

reconciled to your friends from your former hatred together with your mother. For there is amity between us, and my rage hath ceased. Take his right hand. Alas! my misfortunes; how I feel some hidden ill in my mind. Will ye, my children, in this manner, and for a long time enjoying life, stretch out your dear hands? Wretch that I am! how near am I to weeping and full of fear!—But at last cancelling this dispute with your father, I have filled thus my tender sight with tears.

CHOR. In my eyes also the moist tear is arisen; and may not the evil advance to a greater height than it is at present.

JAS. I approve of this, lady, nor do I blame the past; for it is reasonable that the female sex be enraged with a husband who barter them for another union.—But thy heart has changed to the more proper side, and thou hast discovered, but after some time, the better counsel: these are the actions of a wise woman. But for you, my sons, your father not without thought hath formed many provident plans, with the assistance of the Gods. For I think that you will be yet the first in this Corinthian country, together with your brothers. But advance and prosper: and the rest your father, and whatever God is propitious, will effect. And may I behold you blooming arrive at the prime of youth, superior to my enemies. And thou, why dost thou bedew thine eyes with the moist tear, having turned aside thy white cheek, and why dost thou not receive these words from me with pleasure?

MED. It is nothing. I was thinking of my sons.

JAS. Be of good courage; for I will arrange well for them.

MED. I will be so, I will not mistrust thy words ; but a woman is of soft mould, and was born to tears.

JAS. Why, I pray, dost thou so grieve for thy children ?

MED. I brought them into the world, and when thou wert praying that thy children might live, a feeling of pity came upon me if that would be. But for what cause thou hast come to a conference with me, partly hath been explained, but the other reasons I will mention. Since it appeareth fit to the royal family to send me from this country, for me also this appears best, I know it well, that I might not dwell here, a check either to thee or to the princes of the land ; for I seem to be an object of enmity to the house ; I indeed will set out from this land in flight ; but to the end that the children may be brought up by thy hand, entreat Creon that they may not leave this land.

JAS. I know not whether I shall persuade him ; but it is right to try.

MED. But do thou then exhort thy bride to ask her father, that my children may not leave this country.

JAS. Certainly I will, and I think at least that she will persuade him, if indeed she be one of the female sex.

MED. I also will assist you in this task, for I will send to her presents which (I well know) far surpass in beauty any now among men, both a fine-wrought robe, and a golden-twined chaplet, my sons carrying them. But as quick as possible let one of my attendants bring hither these ornaments. Thy bride shall be blessed not in one instance, but in many, having met with you at least the best of husbands, and possessing ornaments which the sun my father's father once gave to his de-

scendants. Take these nuptial presents, my sons, in your hands, and bear and present them to the blessed royal bride; she shall receive gifts not indeed to be despised.

JAS. Why, O fond woman, dost thou rob thy hands of these; thinkest thou that the royal palace is in want of vests? in want of gold? keep these presents, give them not away; for if the lady esteems me of any value, she will prefer pleasing me to riches, I know full well.

MED. But do not oppose me; gifts, they say, persuade even the Gods<sup>d</sup>, and gold is more powerful than a thousand arguments to men. Hers is fortune, her substance the God now increases, she in youth governs all. But the sentence of banishment on my children I would buy off with my life, not with gold alone. But my children enter you the wealthy palace, to the new bride of your father, and my mistress, entreat her, beseech her, that you may not leave the land, presenting these ornaments; but this is of the greatest consequence, that she receive these gifts in her own hand. Go as quick as possible, and may you be bearers of good tidings to your mother in what she desires to obtain, having succeeded favourably.

CHOR. Now no longer is there any hope of life for thy children, no longer is there hope; for already are they going to death. The bride shall receive the destructive present of the golden chaplet, she wretched shall receive them, and around her golden tresses shall

<sup>d</sup> An allusion to that well known saying in Plato, de Repub. l. 3. *Δῶρα θεοῖς πιίθει, δῶρ' αἰδοίους βας λῆας.* Ovid. de Arte Am. iii. 635.

Munera, crede mihi, capiunt hominesque deosque.



she place the attire of death, having received the presents in her hands. The beauty and the divine glitter of the robe will persuade her to place around her head the golden twined chaplet. Already with the dead shall the bride be adorned; into such a net will she fall, and such a destiny will she, hapless woman, meet with; nor will she escape her fate. But thou, oh unhappy man! oh wretched bridegroom! son-in-law of princes, unknowingly thou bringest on thy children's destruction, and thy wife a bitter death: hapless man, how much art thou fallen from thy state<sup>e</sup>! But I lament for thy grief, O wretch, mother of these children, who will murder thy sons on account of a bridal bed; deserting which, in defiance of thee, thy husband dwells with another wife.

TUTOR, MEDEA, CHORUS.

TUT. Thy sons, my mistress, are reprieved from banishment, and the royal bride received thy presents in her hands with pleasure, and hence is peace to thy children.

MED. Ah!

TUT. Why dost thou stand in confusion, when thou art fortunate?

MED. Alas! alas!

TUT. This behaviour is not consonant with the message I have brought thee.

MED. Alas! again.

TUT. Have I reported any ill fortune unknowingly, and have I failed in my hope of being the messenger of good?

<sup>e</sup> Vertit Portus, *O infelix, quantam calamitatem ignoras. Mihi sensus videtur esse, quantum a pristina fortuna excidisti.* ELMSLEY.

MED. Thou hast said what thou hast said, I blame not thee.

TUT. Why then dost thou bend down thine eye, and shed tears?

MED. Strong necessity compels me, O aged man, for this the Gods and I deliberating ill have contrived.

TUT. Be of good courage; thou also wilt return home yet through thy children.

MED. Others first will I send to their home<sup>f</sup>, O wretched me!

TUT. Thou art not the only one who art separated from thy children; it behoves a mortal to bear calamities with meekness.

MED. I will do so; but go within the house, and prepare for the children what is needful for the day. O my sons, my sons, you indeed have a city, and a house, in which having forsaken me, wretch that I am, you shall dwell, ever deprived of a mother. But I am now going an exile into a foreign land, before I could have delight in you, and see you flourishing, before I could adorn your marriage, and wife, and nuptial bed, and hold up the torch<sup>g</sup>. O unfortunate woman that I am, on account of my wayward temper. In vain then my children have I brought you up, in vain have I toiled, and been consumed with cares, suffering the strong agonies of child-bearing. Surely once there was a time when I hapless woman had many hopes in you,

<sup>f</sup> Medea here makes use of the ambiguous word *κατάζω*, which may be understood by the Tutor in the sense of "bringing back to their country," but implies also the horrid purpose of destroying her children: *τόδε 'κατάζω' ἀντὶ τοῦ πέμψω εἰς τὸν Αἴθην*, as the Scholiast explains it.

<sup>g</sup> It was the custom for mothers to bear lighted torches at their children's nuptials. See *Iphig. Aul.* i. 372.

that you would both tend me in my age, and when dead would with your hands decently compose my limbs, a thing desired by men. But now this pleasing thought hath indeed perished; for deprived of you I shall pass a life of misery, and bitter to myself. But you will no longer behold your mother with your dear eyes, having passed into another state of life. Alas! alas! why do you look upon me with your eyes, my children? Why do ye smile that last smile? Alas! alas! what shall I do? for my heart is sinking. Ye females, when I behold the cheerful look of my children, I have no power. Farewell my counsels: I will take my children with me from this land. What does it avail me grieving their father with the ills of these, to acquire twice as much pain for myself? never will I at least do this. Farewell my counsels. And yet what do I suffer? do I wish to incur ridicule, having left my foes unpunished? This must be dared. But the bringing forward words of tenderness in my mind arises also from my cowardice. Go my children into the house; and he for whom it is not lawful to be present at my sacrifice, let him take care himself to keep away<sup>h</sup>. But I will not stain my hand. Alas! alas! do not thou then, my soul, do not thou at least perpetrate this. Let them escape, thou wretch, spare thy sons. There shall they live with us and delight thee. No, I swear by the infernal deities who dwell with Pluto, never shall this be, that I will give up my children to be insulted by my enemies. At all events they must die, and since they must, I who

<sup>h</sup> ὅτῳ δὲ, φησὶν, οὐκ εὐσεβὲς φαίνεται παρεῖναι τῷ φόρῳ, καὶ δέχεσθαι τοιαύτας θυσίας, οὗτος ἀπότῳ.—τῷ δὲ αὐτῷ μελήσει συναπτόιον τὸ μὴ παρῆναι. ἘΣΧΟΙ.

brought them into the world will perpetrate the deed. This is fully determined by fate, and shall not pass away. And now the chaplet is on her head, and the bride is perishing in the robes; of this I am well assured. But, since I am now going a most dismal path, and these will I send by one still more dismal, I desire to address my children: give, my sons, give thy right hand for thy mother to kiss. O most dear hand, and those lips dearest to me, and that form and noble countenance of my children, be ye blessed, but there<sup>i</sup>; for every thing here your father hath taken away. O the sweet embrace, and that soft skin, and that most fragrant breath of my children. Go, go; no longer am I able to look upon you, but am overcome by my ills. I know indeed the ills that I am about to dare, but my rage is master of my counsels<sup>k</sup>, which is indeed the cause of the greatest calamities to men.

CHOR. Already have I often gone through more refined reasonings, and have come to greater arguments than suits the female mind to investigate; for we also have a muse, which dwelleth with us, for the sake of teaching wisdom; but not with all, for haply thou wilt find but a small number of the race of women out of many not ungifted with the muse<sup>l</sup>. And I say that those

<sup>i</sup> But there; that is, in the regions below.

<sup>k</sup> Ovid, *Metamorph.* vii. 20.

Vide meliora proboque,

Deteriora sequor.

<sup>l</sup> Elmsley reads.

παῦρον δὲ γένος (μίαν ἐν πολλαῖς  
εὐροῖς ἂν ἴσως)  
οὐκ κ. τ. λ.

“But a small number of the race of women (you may perchance find one among many) not ungifted with the muse.”

men who are entirely free from wedlock, and have not begotten children, surpass in happiness those who have families; those indeed who are childless, through inexperience whether children are born a joy or anguish to men, not having them themselves, are exempt from much misery. But those who have a sweet blooming offspring of children in their house, I behold worn with care the whole time; first of all how they shall bring them up honourably, and how they shall leave means of sustenance for their children. And still after this, whether they are toiling for good or bad sons, this is still in darkness. But one ill to mortals, the last of all, I now will mention. For suppose they have both found sufficient store, and the bodies of their children have arrived at manhood, and that they are good; but if this fortune shall happen to them, death, bearing away their sons, vanishes with them to the shades of darkness. How then does it profit that the Gods heap on mortals yet this grief in addition to others, the most bitter of all, for the sake of children?

MEDEA, MESSENGER, CHORUS.

MED. For a long time waiting for the event, my friends, I am anxiously expecting what will be the result thence. And I see indeed one of the domestics of Jason coming hither, and his quickened breath shews that he will be the messenger of some new ill.

MESS. O thou, that hast impiously perpetrated a deed of terror, Medea, fly, fly, leaving neither the ocean chariot<sup>m</sup>, nor the car whirling o'er the plain.

<sup>m</sup> A similar expression is found in Iphig. Taur. v. 410. *νάϊον ὄχημα*. A ship is frequently called *ἄρμα θαλάσσης*: so Virgil, *Æn.* vi. *Classique immittit habenas*.

MED. But what is done that requires this flight?

MESS. The princess is just dead, and Creon her father destroyed by thy charms.

MED. Thou hast spoken most glad tidings; and hereafter from this time shalt thou be among my benefactors and friends.

MESS. What sayest thou? Art thou in thy senses, and not mad, lady? who having destroyed the king and family, rejoicest at hearing it, and fearest not such things?

MED. I also have something to say to these words of thine at least; but be not hasty, my friend; but tell me how they perished, for twice as much delight wilt thou give me if they died miserably.

MESS. As soon as thy two sons were come with their father, and had entered the bridal house, we servants, who were grieved at thy misfortunes, were delighted; and immediately there was much conversation in our ears, that thy husband and thou had brought the former quarrel to a friendly termination. One kissed the hand, another the auburn head of thy sons, and I also myself followed with them to the women's apartments through joy. But my mistress, whom we now reverence instead of thee, before she saw thy two sons enter, held her cheerful eyes fixed on Jason; afterwards however she covered her eyes, and turned aside her white cheek, disgusted at the entrance of thy sons; but thy husband quelled the anger and rage of the young bride, saying this; Be not angry with thy friends, but cease from thy rage, and turn again thy face, esteeming those as friends, whom thy husband does. But receive the gifts, and ask thy father to give up the sentence of banishment against these children for my sake. But

when she saw the ornaments, she refused not, but promised her husband every thing; and before thy sons and their father were gone far from the house, she took and put on the variegated robes, and having placed the golden chaplet around her tresses she arranges her hair in the radiant mirror, smiling at the lifeless image of her person. And after, having risen from her seat, she goes across the chamber, elegantly tripping with snow-white foot; rejoicing greatly in the presents, looking much and oftentimes with her eyes on her outstretched neck<sup>n</sup>. After that however there was a sight of horror to behold. For having changed colour, she goes staggering back trembling in her limbs, and is scarce in time to prevent herself from falling on the ground, by sinking into a chair. And some aged female attendant, when she thought that the wrath either of Pan or some other Deity<sup>o</sup> had visited her, offered up the invocation, before at least she sees the white foam bursting from her mouth, and her mistress rolling her eye-balls from their sockets, and the blood no longer in the flesh; then she sent forth a loud shriek of far different sound from the strain of supplication; and straightway one rushed to the apartments of her father, but another to her newly married husband, to tell the calamity befallen the bride, and all the house was filled with frequent hurrys to and fro. And by this time a swift runner, ex-

<sup>n</sup> Elmsley is of opinion that *the instep* and not *the neck* is meant by *τένων*.

<sup>o</sup> The ancients attributed all sudden terrors, and sudden sicknesses, such as epilepsies, for which no cause appeared, to Pan, or to some other Deity. The anger of the God they endeavoured to avert by an hymn, which had the nature of a charm.

erting his limbs, might have reached<sup>p</sup> the goal of the course of six plethra<sup>q</sup>; but she, wretched woman, from being speechless, and from a closed eye having groaned deeply writhed in agony; for a double pest was warring against her. The golden chaplet indeed placed on her head, was sending forth a stream of all devouring fire wonderful to behold, but the fine wrought robes, the presents of thy sons, were devouring the white flesh of the hapless woman. But she having started from her seat flies, all on fire, tossing her hair and head on this side and that side, desirous of shaking off the chaplet; but the golden wreath firmly kept its hold; but the fire, when she shook her hair, blazed out with double fury, and she sinks upon the ground overcome by her sufferings, difficult for any one except her father to recognize. For neither was the expression of her eyes clear, nor her noble countenance; but the blood was dropping from the top of her head mixed with fire. But her flesh was dropping off her bones, as the tear from the pine tree, by the hidden fangs of the poison; a sight of horror. But all feared to touch the body, for we had her fate to warn us. But the hapless father, through ignorance of her suffering, having come with haste into the apartment, falls on the corpse, and groans immediately; and having folded his arms round her, kisses her, saying

<sup>p</sup> Elmsley has *ἀνθήπτρετο*, which is the old reading: this makes no difference in the construing or the construction, as, in the line before, he reads *ἀνέλω*, where Porson has *ἀνέλω*.

<sup>q</sup> The space of time elapsed is meant to be marked by this circumstance. *Musgrave. Porson.* Thus we find in M of the *Odyssey*, l. 439, the time of day expressed by the rising of the judges; in A of the *Iliad*, l. 86, by the dining of the woodman. When we recollect that the ancients had not the inventions that we have whereby to measure their time, we shall cease to consider the circumlocution as absurd or out of place.



these words; O miserable child, what Deity hath thus cruelly destroyed thee? who makes an aged father bowing to the tomb<sup>r</sup> bereaved of thee? Alas me! let me die with thee my child. But after he had ceased from his lamentations and cries, desiring to raise his aged body, he was held, as the ivy by the boughs of the laurel, by the fine wrought robes; and dreadful was the struggle, for he wished to raise his knee, but she held him back; but if he drew himself away by force he tore the aged flesh from his bones. But at length the wretched man swooned away, and gave up his life; for no longer was he able to endure the agony. But they lie corse, the daughter and aged father near one another; a calamity that demaunds tears. And let thy affairs indeed be not matter for my words; for thou thyself wilt know a refuge from punishment. But the affairs of mortals not now for the first time I deem a shadow, and I would venture to say that those persons who seem to be wise and are researchers of arguments, these, I say, run into the greatest folly. For no mortal man is happy; but wealth pouring in, one man may be more fortunate than another, but happy he cannot be.

CHOR. The Deity, it seems, will in this day justly heap on Jason a variety of ills. O hapless lady, how we pity thy sufferings, daughter of Creon, who art gone to the house of darkness, through thy marriage with Jason.

MED. The deed is determined on by me, my friends, to slay my children as soon as possible, and to hasten

<sup>r</sup> The same expression occurs in the *Heraclidæ*, l. 168. The Scholiast explains it thus; *τυμβογέροντα, τὸν πλησίον θανάτου ὄντα τήμβους δὲ καλοῦσι τοὺς γέροντας, παρόσον πλησίον εἰσὶ τοῦ θανάτου καὶ τοῦ τάφου.*

from this land; and not by delaying to give my sons for another hand more hostile to murder. But come, be armed, my heart; why do we delay to do dreadful but necessary deeds. Come, O wretched hand of mine, grasp the sword, grasp it, advance to the bitter goal of life, and be not cowardly, nor remember thy children how dear they are, how thou broughtest them into the world; but for this short day at least forget thy children; hereafter lament. For although thou slayest them, nevertheless they at least were dear, but I a wretched woman.

CHOR. O thou earth, and thou all-illuminating beam of the sun, look down upon, behold this abandoned woman, before she move her blood-stained hand itself about to inflict the blow against her children; for from thy golden race they sprung; but fearful is it for the blood of Gods to fall by the hand of man. But do thou, O heaven-born light, restrain her, stop her, remove from this house this blood-stained and miserable Erinnys agitated by the Furies. The care of thy children perishes in vain, and in vain, and in vain hast thou produced a dear race, O thou who didst leave the most inhospitable entrance of the Cyanean rocks, the Symplegades. Hapless woman, why does such grievous rage settle on thy mind; and hostile slaughter ensue? For kindred pollutions are difficult of purification to mortals; correspondent calamities falling from the Gods to the earth upon the houses of the murderers<sup>s</sup>.

FIRST SON. (*within*) Alas! what shall I do? whither shall I fly from my mother's hand?

<sup>s</sup> ἀντοφόνταις may be taken as an adjective to agree with δόμοις, or the construction may be ἄχνη πίπνοντα ἀντοφόνταις ἐπὶ δόμοις, in the same manner as λίθος ἔπεσέ μοι ἐπὶ κεφαλῇ. *Elmsley.*

SECOND SON. I know not, dearest brother, for we perish.

CHOR. Hearest thou the cry? hearest thou the children? Oh wretch, O ill-fated woman. Shall I enter the house? It seems right to me to ward off the murderous blow from the children.

SONS. Nay, by the Gods assist us, for it is in needful time; since now at least are we near the destruction of the sword.

CHOR. Miserable woman, art thou then a rock, or iron, who cuttest down with death by thine own hand the fair crop of children which thou producedst thyself? one indeed I hear of, one woman of those of old, who laid violent hands on her children, Ino, maddened by the Gods when the wife of Jove sent her in banishment from her home; and she miserable woman falls into the sea through the impious murder of her children, directing her foot over the sea shore, and dying with her two sons, there she perished; what then I pray can be more dreadful than this? O thou bed of woman, fruitful in ills, how many evils hast thou already brought to men!

#### JASON, CHORUS.

JAS. Ye females, who stand near this mansion, is she who hath done these deeds of horror, Medea, in this house; or hath she withdrawn herself in flight? For now it is necessary for her either to be hidden beneath the earth, or to raise her winged body into the vast expanse of air, if she would not suffer vengeance from the king's house. Does she trust that after having slain the princes of this land, she shall herself escape from this house with impunity?—But I have not such care for her as for my children; for they whom she has

injured will punish her. But I came to preserve my children's life, lest Creon's relations by birth do any injury<sup>t</sup>, avenging the impious murder perpetrated by their mother.

CHOR. Unhappy man! thou knowest not at what misery thou hast arrived, Jason, for else thou wouldest not have uttered these words.

JAS. What is this, did she wish to slay me also?

CHOR. Thy children are dead by their mother's hand.

JAS. Alas me! What wilt thou say? thou hast killed me, woman.

CHOR. Think now of thy sons as no longer living.

JAS. Where did she slay them, within or without the house?

CHOR. Open those doors, and thou wilt see the slaughter of thy sons.

JAS. Undo the bars, as quick as possible, attendants; unloose the hinges, that I may see this double evil, my sons slain, and may punish her.

MED. Why dost thou shake and unbolt these gates, seeking the dead and me who did the deed. Cease from this labour; but if thou wantest ought with me, speak if thou wishest any thing; but never shalt thou touch me with thy hands; such a chariot the sun my father's father gives me, a defence from the hostile hand<sup>u</sup>.

<sup>t</sup> μή με τι δράσωσι' had been "lest they do me any injury." Elmsley conceives that *νν* is the true reading, which might easily have been corrupted into *μοι*.

<sup>u</sup> Here Medea appears above in a chariot drawn by dragons, bearing with her the bodies of her slaughtered sons. *Schol.* See Horace, *Epod.* 3.

Hoc delibutis ulta donis pellicem,  
Serpente fugit alite.

JAS. O thou ~~abomination!~~ ~~thou most detested wo-~~ man, both by the Gods ~~and by me,~~ and by all the race of man; who hast dared to plunge the sword in thine own children, thou who bore them, and hast destroyed me childless. And having done this thou beholdest both the sun and the earth, having dared a most impious deed. Mayest thou perish! but I am now wise, not being so then when I brought thee from thy house and from a foreign land to a Grecian habitation, a great pest, traitress to thy father and the land that nurtured thee. But the Gods have sent thy evil genius on me. For having slain thy brother at the altar, thou embarkedst on board the gallant vessel Argo. Thou beganst indeed with such deeds as these; and being wedded to me, and bearing me children, thou hast destroyed them on account of another bed and marriage. There is not one Grecian woman who would have dared a deed like this, in preference to whom at least, I thought worthy to wed thee, an alliance hateful and destructive to me, a lioness, no woman, having a temper more savage than the Tuscan Scylla. But I cannot gall thy heart with ten thousand reproaches, such shameless confidence is implanted in thee. Go, thou worker of ill, and stained with the blood of thy children. But for me it remains to bewail my fate, who shall neither enjoy my new nuptials, nor shall I have it in my power to address whilst alive my sons whom I begot and educated, but I have lost them.

MED. Surely I could make long reply to these words, if father Jupiter did not know what treatment thou receivedst from me, and what thou didst in return; but you were mistaken, when you expected, having dishonoured my bed, to lead a life of pleasure, mocking

me, and so was the princess, and so was Creon, who proposed the match to thee, when he expected to drive me from this land with impunity. Wherefore, if thou wilt, call me lioness, and Scylla who dwelt in the Tuscan cave. For thy heart, as is right, I have wounded.

JAS. And thou thyself grievest at least, and art a sharer in these ills.

MED. Be assured of that; but this lessens<sup>x</sup> the grief, that thou canst not mock me.

JAS. My children, what a wicked mother have ye found!

MED. My sons, how did ye perish by your father's fault!

JAS. Nevertheless my hand slew them not.

MED. But injury, and thy new nuptials.

JAS. And on account of thy bed didst thou think fit to slay them?

MED. Dost thou deem this a slight evil to a woman?

JAS. Whoever at least is modest; but in thee is every ill.

MED. These are no longer living, for this will gall thee.

JAS. These are living, alas me! avenging furies on thy head.

MED. The Gods know who began the injury.

JAS. They know indeed thy execrable mind.

MED. Thou art hateful to me, and I detest thy bitter speech.

JAS. And I in sooth thine; the separation at least is without pain.

<sup>x</sup> *λύει* may also be interpreted, with the Scholiast, in the sense of *λυσιτελεῖ*, "the grief delights me." The translation given in the text is proposed by Porson, and approved of by Elmsley.

MED. How then? what shall I do? for I also am very desirous.

JAS. Suffer me, I beg, to bury and mourn over these dead bodies.

MED. Never indeed; since I will bury them with this hand bearing them to the shrine of Juno, the Goddess guardian of the citadel, that no one of my enemies may insult them, tearing up their graves. But in this land of Sisyphus will I institute in addition to this a solemn festival and sacrifices hereafter to expiate this unhallowed murder. But I myself will go to the land of Erectheus, to dwell with Ægeus son of Pandion. But thou wretch, as is fit, shalt die wretchedly, struck on thy head with a relick of thy ship Argo, having seen the bitter end of my marriage.

JAS. But may the fury of the children, and Justice the avenger of murder, destroy thee.

MED. But what God or Deity hears thee, thou perjured man, and traitor to the rights of hospitality?

JAS. Ah! thou abominable woman, and murderer of thy children.

MED. Go to thy home, and bury thy wife.

JAS. I go, even deprived of both my children.

MED. Thou dost not yet mourn enough: stay, and grow old<sup>y</sup>.

JAS. Oh my dearest sons!

MED. To their mother at least, but not to thee.

JAS. And yet thou slewest them.

MED. To grieve thee.

<sup>y</sup> Elmsley has

μένε καὶ γῆρας.  
 "Stay yet for old age."

JAS. Alas, alas! I hapless man long to kiss the dear mouths of my children.

MED. Now thou addressest, now salutest them, formerly rejecting them with scorn.

JAS. Grant me, by the Gods, to touch the soft skin of my sons.

MED. It is not possible. Thy words are thrown away in vain.

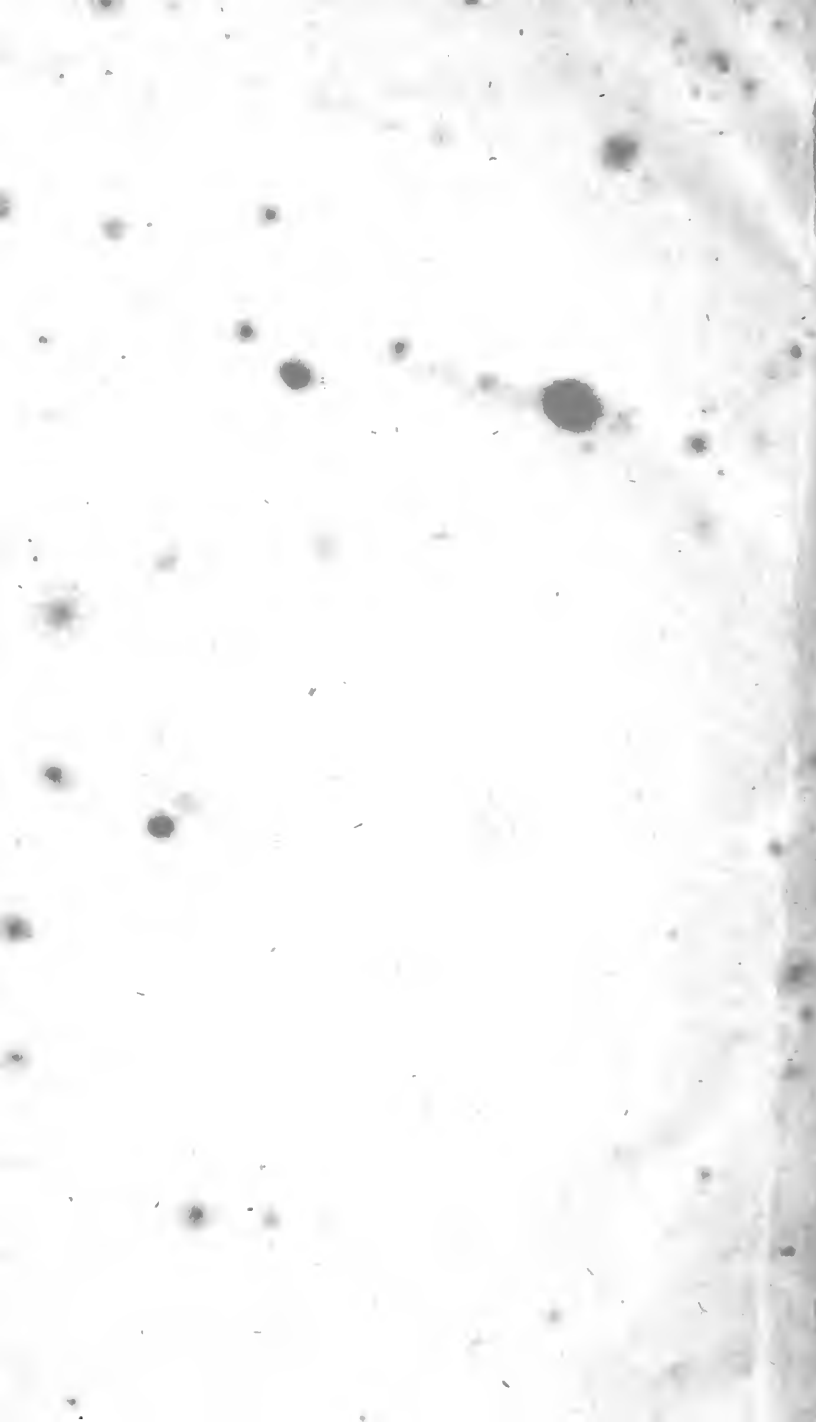
JAS. Dost thou hear this, O Jove, how I am rejected, and what I suffer from this accursed and child-destroying lioness? But as much indeed as is in my power and I am able, I lament and mourn over these; calling the Gods to witness, that having slain my children, thou preventest me from touching them with my hands, and from burying the bodies, whom, oh that I had never begotten, and seen them thus destroyed by thee.

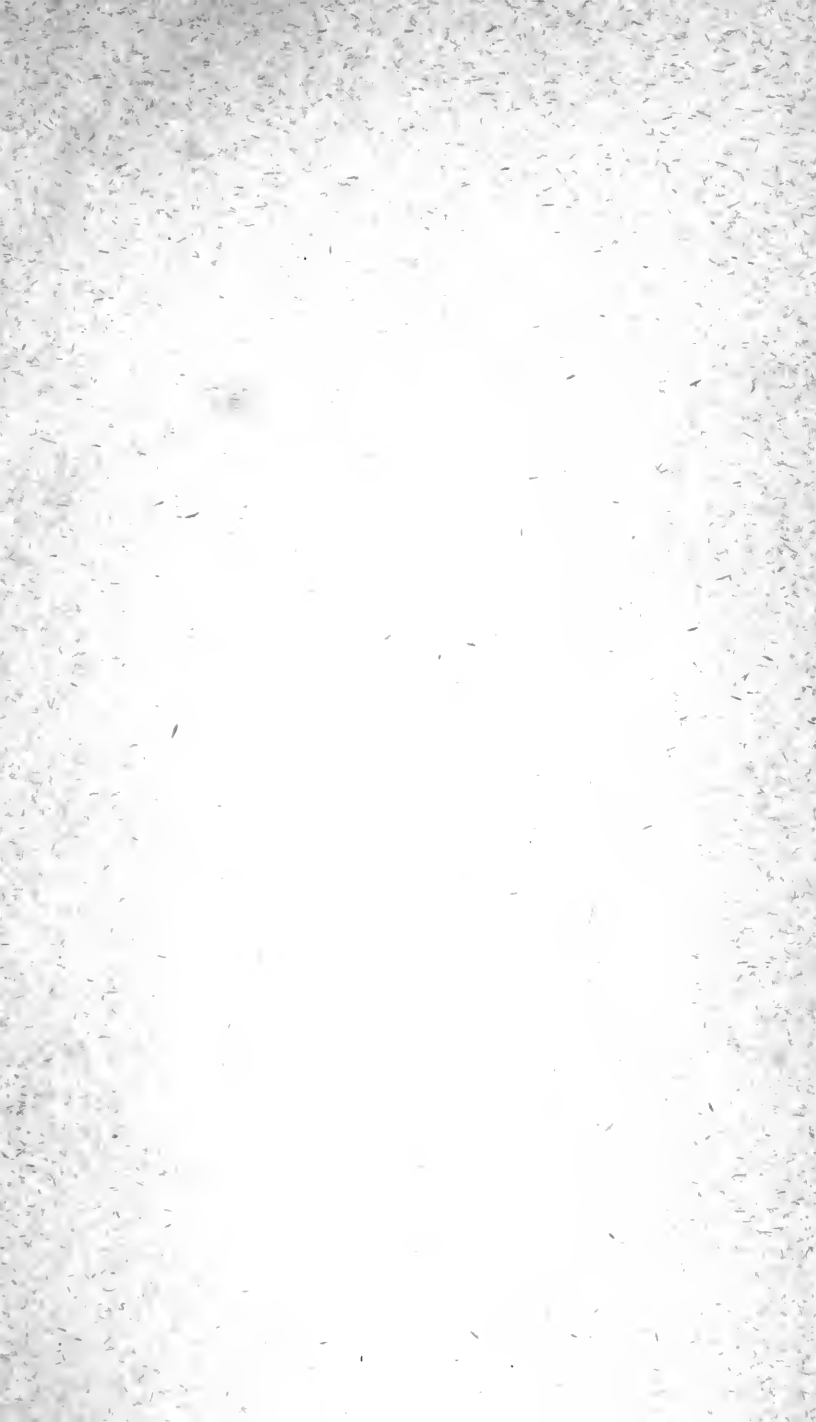
CHOR. Jove is the dispenser of various fates in heaven, and the Gods perform many things contrary to our expectations, and those things which we looked for are not accomplished; but the God hath brought to pass things unthought of. In such manner hath this affair ended.

FINIS.











PA Euripides  
3975 Hecuba, Orestes, Phoenician  
A3 virgins, and Medea. 3d ed.,  
1820 rev. and corrected

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